

SWPWO



Southwest PA Woodland Owners

Nov. 2019

November 13, 2019, Wednesday-Forest Management Practices Using

Drones: This meeting will focus on recent developments in the world of UAS (otherwise known as drones). Harold Thistle will introduce the talk discuss various legal and considerations and some ongoing research work with drones. Jaewon Kim (Graduate Student, WVU) will discuss UAV release of weevils to suppress mile-a-minute weed, one of our toughest local invasive plants. We will finish with a demonstration of drone flight technology conducted by Eric Armstrong of the West Greene High School drone program. The meeting begins at 7 PM at the Greene County Airport hangar. Directions are as follows: Airport address is 417 Roy Furman Hwy. From 21 E, take left at light to enter airport. Follow road to the right and circle in front of the Airport restaurant building. Take 2nd left turn after restaurant. Turn right just before the second row of hangars. The meeting is being held in the last hangar in this second row.

November 16, Saturday, 1-4 PM Demonstration of Forest Management Practices Using Drones-

Visit Rebecca Triggers tree farm where drones have been successfully used as part of forestland management practices to control mile-a-minute weed. We will see a demo of mile-a-minute weed weevil droppings from drones. Rebecca will also take us around the farm and show us various management activities she has implemented in her woodlands. Directions to her farm will be handed out at the Wednesday meeting. Or meet at the Greene County Fairgrounds, Building #10 (west side of grounds) for directions. Convoy will leave at 12:30 PM.

Burnham Woodlot: History

(This is part of a series where members are invited to share their stories of their woodlots. John and Maureen Burnham will start us of.)

The property was originally settled in 1785. Virginia and Donald Burnham, my parents, purchased the original parcel in 1956, and my parents and I added three additional parcels through 1980.

Memories-My first introduction to the farm was in 1956 when my father purchased the 333 1/3 acre tract as vacation property. The house was less than palatial.

- There were no walls upstairs where the previous owner raised chickens.
- There was indoor plumbing in a way. The commode flushed under the house. There was no septic system.
- There was a roof leak that pooled on the kitchen linoleum. The more water, the more the floor beams bowed and the deeper the water got. My dad's first act was to bore a hole in the kitchen floor to let the water run out and relieve the floor beams.

Visiting on weekends, we all slept in the hay loft for the first year until appropriate house repairs could be made. I say all, but my sister Joan who, as a sophomore in high school, was far too sophisticated to sleep in the barn. She slept in the car.

I had a garden of my own where I grew tomatoes, cucumbers, lettuce, radishes, corn, and potatoes. Some of the potatoes were the size of a quarter, but a lot weren't that large.

I had a horse that I paid for by mowing lawns in town. Buster was a strawberry roan quarter horse gelding that, in a former life, was trained as a cutting horse to herd cattle. He instantly responded to commands. If you said "whoa," you better hang on or you might be straddling his ears. I had many adventures with Buster. I could ride anywhere and, on a good day, even felt I was in charge.

I remember one day, I was leading Buster to the barn by his halter. Buster was unruly, bobbing his head and jumping around. This was not normal, and I didn't understand until I turned around and was confronted with a skunk that was taking aim with his tail raised high. I took off running and, as I looked over my shoulder, I saw Buster had done the same. Buster had his nose straight up in the air one minute and rubbing it on the ground the next. I congratulated myself. Clearly, the skunk got Buster square in the face, and I was untouched. Or so I thought. When I stopped running, the smell caught up with me. As long as I ran, I was up wind of myself. The skunk got me square in the back.

My friend, Jim, lived in the next house, and I often stayed with him and his family. I would help get the cows in. I would help put up hay. I would help birthing lambs. It was a new world for this kid from the burbs.

I remember going hunting. I often hunted alone. My usual quarry was squirrels and deer. I always felt better if there were a couple of squirrels in the freezer. I looked forward to venison also but it was not to be. In those days, spotting a deer was an event to tell your neighbors about. They were not as plentiful as They are today.

My dad put in a farm pond and stocked it with fish. I spent many hours blue gill and bass fishing. My brother, Willie, and I decided to try to walk across the pond--not on top of the water but under it. We would each get a large rock to hold us down and walk under water. The goal was to reach the other side but inevitably, we would have to drop the rock and come up for air.

Family picnics at the pond were a staple. BBQ chicken over an open fire and potato salad headed up the menu.

My late wife, Judy Burnham, and I took over ownership and management of all parcels in 1999.^[1]^[SEP]The farm now consists of four contiguous parcels comprising 550 acres, including 400 acres of diverse woods and 150 acres of pasture and hayfields fields. Not knowing what to do with the property, I decided to make it a Tree Farm since most of the land was forested. The idea was not completely foreign to me. I started college at Michigan State University as a forestry student. Although I ultimately graduated as a mechanical engineer, my love of trees, although naive, was well established. The objective was to maintain a healthy diverse property for the use of both humans and wildlife. Now I'm in charge – What's next? I was still living in Chicago.

Help- I enrolled in the College of Lake County, IL Forestry Program. The first class highlighted careers in forestry. I never returned to class. I had just retired and wasn't looking for a job. I just needed information. I found help from four sources.

1. I once heard that if you read three books on a subject, you are an expert. I read three books on forestry. I was still a novice, but at least I had some information.
2. Jim Berkmeier, a Tree Farmer near Madison, Wisconsin, offered tours of his farm – new ideas.
3. Bill Wentzel, our Service Forester was very helpful. He steered me to the Stewardship Program and later The Tree Farm Program. Perhaps most importantly, Bill and I started the

Southwest PA Woodland Owners (SWPWO), an organization to provide information to woodland owners. I made regular “business trips” from Chicago for meetings. Bill has since retired, and Russ Gibbs is now the Service Forester for our area. SWPWO continues to provide information to me and other woodland owners.

4. Arlyn Perkey, the USFS Crop Tree Guru was legendary. I needed to meet this man, so I called him from Chicago. Arlyn was very helpful and sent me books on crop tree management. Later, we became friends, and Arlyn always offered ideas and on the ground help. Arlyn has served as technical advisor to SWPWO since its inception.

Management Plans -The original Stewardship management plan, on Bill Wentzel’s recommendation, was developed in Nov. 1997 by Richard R. Pellek, Ph.D. Dr. Pellek describes: “Extensive fragmentation of forests exists. Rural roads and fields effectively isolate forest parcels into discrete units. In addition, slope gradient and aspect have influenced stand development and past land use management decisions to the point of creating a broad mosaic of land parcels that typically contain pasture, forest, fringe, and strips of vegetation of intermediate size and development. Many parcels of old, intermediate-age and relatively recent successional forest stands are found throughout the Burnham property, depending, in part, on their proximity to level land and/or cropland and pastures.”

The original plan divided the farm into 8 management units. While these units were too large and diverse for the development of detailed plans, it did provide the framework for organizing activities. Now, my wife Maureen and I are presently managing 22 sub plots, including 6 plantings and 4 crop tree areas. Updated plans include sub-plot details. Additionally, most of the hay fields were abandoned by local farmers and subsequently dedicated to habitat with detailed wetland recovery and mowing plans to maintain the open spaces.

The farm received its original certification in June 2001 with re-inspections in September 2007, June 2014, and April 2019.

New Memories-The farm has been and continues to be used for any number of family gatherings and Tree Farm related field days. One tradition is an annual Rib Cook-Off in its 15th year. Family and friends descend on the farm for a two or three day party. 10 to 15 chefs compete for the honors with 40 or 50 in attendance. The Tree Farm National Convention Field Day was the largest event on the farm with 250 to 300 attendees, 70 presenters and helpers, tour buses down our gravel road, and an all-day rain. It was a day to remember that ended pulling people out of the mud. A good and memorable time was had by all. The farm has been and continues to be a bright spot for many, both wild and civilized, to enjoy.

SWPWO Ongoing Programming

Share Your Woodlot Story

Woodlot owners often have a story about their land—when it was bought, how it came into their family, what they love about it, how they spend their time on it, and their vision for the future. We are inviting SWPWO members to share their stories that can be featured either in the newsletter or the website. Perhaps you’re thinking: “I’d like to tell the story of my woodlot, but I hate to write.” That’s okay. Here are two alternatives to writing. One, contact Maria (mecp1942@gmail.com) to arrange an interview. She’ll take notes and draft a description for you to review and approve. Two, choose a picture that captures something you love about your woodlot and write two or three sentences about the picture. (Please note, pictures should be sent as a jpg file.) This is an open-ended series, so there is no deadline. But we do hope to hear from you with a story we can share. Send your story to Maria Piantanida at mecp1942@gmail.com .

Business: SWPWO Elections

A short business meeting will take place before our talk on Wednesday evening to conduct elections for officers. Nominations are as follows:

President: Mark Fajerski

Vice President: John Gregor

Secretary: Maureen Burnham

Directors (2): Melissa Gregor, Wayne Kraer

Dues for 2020 will be collected. The price has not changed- \$10 for individual and \$15 for household. Send your dues to the address in the box below if you will not be at the meeting.

This Ends the Year of SWPWO Programing

The programing for SWPWO ends with this November meeting. The Executive Committee is busy working on the 2020 calendar. You may not hear from us until late winter when the calendar will be sent to you. Our first meeting next year is scheduled for April 15, 2020.

Enjoy the holidays.

<p><u>Membership Information</u></p> <p>Membership dues will be collected at meetings or can be sent to:</p> <p>SWPWO</p> <p>261 2nd St, Oakmont 15139</p> <p>If sending in dues, please include name, address, phone number and an e-mail address. Membership to the Southwestern Pennsylvania Woodland Owners Association is \$10 per year for an individual and \$15 per year for a household. Keep your membership up to date to continue to receive the newsletter and yearly calendar.</p>	<p><u>SWPWO Officers (year elected)</u></p> <p>President – Mark Fajerski (2018)</p> <p>Vice President – John Gregor (2018)</p> <p>Secretary – Ryan Egidi (2018)</p> <p>Treasurer – Maria Piantanida (at large position)</p> <p>Director – Melissa Gregor (2018)</p> <p>Director – Harold Thistle (2019)</p> <p>Director – Wayne Kraer (2018)</p> <p>Advisor-Bill Wentzel</p> <p>Advisor- Arlyn Perkey</p> <p>Past Pres: J. Burnham, B.Daley, H. Thistle, G. Thistle</p>
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Editors: Gay Thistle and Bobbi Cressey-Ideas for this newsletter are always welcome Please send them to gaythistle@gmail.com