

WWIA News

Fall 2017



President's Annual Report

By John Hilewick, WWIA President

On October 19, a Thursday evening, 36 members and friends met for WWIA's annual business meeting and potluck dinner, followed by a program on *A History of Pennsylvania Forests* by our own Bob McBride, a retired DCNR Bureau of Forestry Service Forester and associate director of WWIA. It was an enjoyable evening with good food, conversation, a productive business meeting, and a very interesting talk and video.

The bylaws stipulate an annual president's report to the membership. All attendees received a hard copy, and the report follows here.

In 2017, the association held three inside programs and three outdoor field trips. Another indoor event had to be canceled when a conflict arose for the presenter. In addition, two special events specific to conservation and woodlands were promoted and attended by some members of the association. The 2017 Biennial Private Forest Landowners' Conference in Altoona was sponsored by the Center for Private Forests at Penn State and Partners. The Forbes District's "Managing Your Woodlands Forum" took place at the Penn State Fayette Eberly campus.

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President's Report (cont'd)

At our own six association events, attendance totaled about 215 members, guests, and visitors. Two programs were tied for the largest attendance at 52: Dr. Laura Russo's program on pollinators and Adam Haritan's autumn reprise of his "Learn Your Land" woods walk.

Our membership numbers have gained some modest ground this year, with an increase from 72 in 2016 to 87 members in good standing for 2017. We have 197 individuals and family members on our roster reaching back to 2013. The board of directors is poised to weed the rolls of folks who have not paid their dues since 2013.

Over this past year the member-elected officers and directors and the board-appointed volunteer directors and associate directors have continued to function collaboratively in harmony. The newsletter staff has published three editions of our newsletter, including this one.

At our annual meeting, I asked for a volunteer to fill the vacant position of recording secretary for the one year remaining (2018) on that two-year term. Terry Gates, a member in good standing, graciously volunteered and was unanimously approved by a voice vote. His duties will commence with the first 2018 BOD organizational meeting in January.

Some other items are worthy of mention:

- 1)** We filed our first Form 990-EZ with the IRS in early May 2107, as required of us as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit under section 509 (a)(2) of the IRS code. We assume all is well, since we have not received any correspondence from the IRS.
- 2)** WWIA's Board of Directors, as a nominating organization approved by the Westmoreland Conservation District, voted unanimously to formally submit the names of Charles Duritsa of Jeannette and William Doney of Smithton for continued four-year terms as public and farmer directors, respectively, of the WCD board of directors.
- 3)** WWIA's BOD purchased a display panel for promotion, education, outreach, and member recruitment. It also approved the creation of an album of 8 ½" x 11" color photos taken by various members at events since 2013. The three-ring binder will be at all meetings/ events, and we hope to add photos of future events.
- 4)** Two new components have been added to the website. The photo gallery has been upgraded with some pictures, and more will be added. We have also incorporated a blog that will feature interesting and timely information. We hope to open the blog to more contributors as we feel our way along this cyber path. We are considering an archive of all previous newsletters, as well as a permanent space for the WWIA Constitution and bylaws. Also to be upgraded are links to other like-minded conservation organizations, woodland groups, etc.

In conclusion, if I as your president may, I ask that all members seriously consider coming on board as more active participants within the association. Your assistance in developing programs and acquiring speakers, as well as contributing newsletter articles on subjects about forestry, woodlands, and conservation issues that you feel passionate about, would be greatly appreciated. The more hands and minds that are involved in the recipe of this organization, the better the "soup" will become!

Hemlocks Under Attack

By Jessica Salter, DCNR Service Forester

After a few quiet years, hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) populations in southwest Pennsylvania appear to be climbing once again. The non-native insect from Asia feeds on the eastern hemlock, Pennsylvania's state tree and an important ecological contributor. The insect is a serious threat to our native hemlock population and has already caused major defoliation and mortality to Pennsylvania hemlocks.

As we progress further into fall, continue to monitor the eastern hemlock trees under your care for the white fuzz that is the hemlock woolly adelgid. The aphid-like insects resume development in October after taking a break during the summer. It is during this time that the insects' namesake wool sacks became most visible, continuing through the winter and into early summer. Locate the insect by looking at the underside of hemlock branches.

If you have found the hemlock woolly adelgid on your trees, you are probably thinking, "Now what?" Luckily, there are treatment options available for landowners who are managing a small number of trees.

Options include insecticidal soaps, horticultural oils, and systemic treatments. Whether you decide to treat your hemlocks or not, it is important to keep them as stress free as possible. Just like humans, trees that are stressed out are more susceptible to illness.

Resources are available from numerous online sources, including the DCNR Bureau of Forestry's Hemlock Woolly Adelgid page (URL below). Questions can also be directed to your DCNR Bureau of Forestry Service Foresters.



For more information, visit <http://www.dcnr.pa.gov/Conservation/ForestsAndTrees/InsectsAndDiseases/HemlockWoollyAdelgid/>

High Horizons: One Fellow's View

By John Hilewick

The last Saturday morning of September was the beginning of a really enjoyable outing hosted by WWIA board member Rus Davies and his wife, Miriam, at their property in Fairfield Township, Westmoreland County. They hosted nine WWIA members and ten other guests who had called WCD to sign up for the tree-farm field trip.

The morning started with our hosts graciously opening their home, which is situated on the High Horizons tree farm at the base of Chestnut Ridge in the Ligonier Valley. All attendees were made to feel very welcome and were offered fresh-brewed coffee or tea. WWIA supplied fresh pastries and such. After some time to become acquainted and sample the goodies, we were invited into the living room for a short presentation on the history of the land.

High Horizons encompasses about 50 acres, half of it wooded. Rus explained that the property had been the summer home of Mary Kolb, who was the executive director of the Frick Educational Foundation in Pittsburgh. Later she built a ranch house and moved there. The famed ecologist and biologist Rachel Carson, author of *Silent Spring* and other classic books about the environment, visited Miss Kolb there several times.

Miss Kolb posted the property as a wildlife sanctuary and gave it the name High Horizons. She willed it to the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, which sold it

with a conservation easement that runs in perpetuity. Rus and Miriam purchased it. He shared many of the nuances to the story and passed around documents that were generated during the negotiations and sale.

Some years later Rus availed himself of the professional help of Tom Fitzgerald, then a service forester with the Forbes District Bureau of Forestry. He wrote the first management plan in the early 1980s. The Davieses received a Pioneer Tree Farm classification. At the five-year inspection, it was upgraded to a Certified Tree Farm.

Rus passed around the timber-stand assessments for a total of five plots that Tom Fitzgerald prepared as part of the management plan. He also shared the original management plan. The whole process and his explanations of it were very informative and enlightening to all attendees.

After this indoor segment, we began our guided tour of the plots that make up the High Horizons Tree Farm. Coincidentally, Tom Fitzgerald participated in this field trip, some 30 years after his first visit!

As we moved from plot to plot, Rus mentioned various original findings and compared them to the character of the woods today. Generally, the basal area has shown some substantial increases in volume, a pleasantly positive outcome. Rus said it appears that some areas could benefit from harvesting soon. Tom concurred.

High Horizons *(Cont'd)*

We saw some really nice specimens of black cherry, red oak, white oak, yellow poplar, and red maple. Rus discussed the mortality of a substantial number of ash trees due to attacks by the emerald ash borer. He mentioned that back in the '80s, they had suffered loss of oaks due to gypsy moths. At that time he contracted for a salvage cut to recover some value from that loss. Sadly, the volume and size of the dead and dying ash do not likely warrant another such prescription.

As we moved to one of what Rus called the “better plots” and surveyed the standing timber, which was large and of high basal area, Tom Fitzgerald captivated the entourage with a mini-seminar on how to calculate basal area. As a consummate and always prepared professional, Tom pulled out his little glass prism and pro-

ceeded to conduct a class on measuring basal area. Everyone, especially those new to the ways of forestry skills, had an enlightening time. He showed us what a valuable tool the prism is and explained that before its development, establishing basal area was a substantially more labor-intensive and cumbersome endeavor.

I would be shortchanging the whole event if I did not mention the pleasures of just being out in the forest on a very beautiful fall morning/ early afternoon ramble with a bunch of really nice folks. All the things we saw, talked about, and were able to let soak into our spirits renewed our love for nature and forest stewardship and our commitment to forestry, water quality, recreation, wildlife, aesthetics, and Penn's Woods! As Forrest Gump would say: That's all I have to say about that!

Westmoreland Woodlands

*Please check westmorelandwoodlands.org,
for the most up-to-date information about program times and places.*

A reminder to members: Celebrate WWIA's 28th anniversary by renewing your membership.

Please make your check out to WWIA and send your dues to Tony Quadro, Westmoreland Conservation District, 218 Donohoe Rd., Greensburg, PA 15601.

Act now and you'll pay only \$10 for 2018. Member benefits include free entry to nearly all WWIA programs, plus our informative quarterly newsletter

Do You Know about Pennsylvania's SERVICE FORESTERS?

By Robert McBride, former Service Forester

In Pennsylvania, the Rural & Community Forestry Section of the Bureau of Forestry is responsible for giving professional forestry guidance and technical assistance to the owners of private woodlands. The long-term health of our state's natural resources is largely in the hands of numerous private landowners, local communities, state agencies, and nonprofit conservation organizations.

With its resources and expertise, the Rural and Community Forestry section, often through its cadre of Service Foresters, provides guidance to help people (and communities and organizations) make informed decisions. Together, they assist hundreds of thousands of individual landowners to understand the conservation value of their property and help those with forests to develop

skills that will produce sustainable improvements on their land. The RCF section and Service Foresters also help communities protect special lands and reduce the loss of open space.

How to Find a Service Forester

A Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry Service Forester is assigned to each county to advise residents about forest management. Each Service Forester works in one or more counties. They promote sustainable use of private forest lands in Pennsylvania through technical assistance, education, planning, and cost-share assistance. You can find the Service Forester assigned to your county by calling your local Bureau of Forestry office, checking the DCNR website DCNR.pa.gov, or clicking this link: [Service Foresters](#).

To reach a service forester in Allegheny, Westmoreland, or Somerset County, just call:
724-238-1200

Ways Service Foresters Can Help

- Forest management technical assistance, such as tree-planting advice
- Forest stewardship plan development and cost-share assistance
- Forestry and water Best Management Practices guidance
- Natural resources information and education programs
- Urban and community forestry management information
- Regional planning advice

Pennsylvania's *SERVICE*

FORESTERS (Cont'd)

A Day in the Life of a Service Forester

On a typical day, a Service Forester heads out to visit with a private woodland owner in his or her assigned counties. It is a free service. As we walk over the property with the owner, we'll discuss subjects ranging from tree identification to forest health, logging opportunities to planting or pruning or any number of issues specific to the acres examined.

For instance, deer browsing, exotic and invasive plants, previous harvesting, and soil moisture levels may all have a significant impact on what projects are possible today. Timber-stand species mix, stocking levels, and age help determine what kind of natural regeneration we may expect. After the hike, we talk over the timber conditions encountered and the outlook for future development.

Back at the office, the Service Forester creates a follow-up letter reiterating those issues and concerns. It may include literature that can help the property owner better understand what was found and discussed at the site.

On occasion, the Service Forester may be called to speak about Pennsylvania forest history to a scout troop, garden club, or school class or to take a group out to a demonstration forest to discuss tree identification and growth or forest development and harvesting. Each day is an adventure.

Each person, group, or landowner has a different perspective on what they'd like to see, hear, or learn about and where in Penn's woods to find the answer. And the Service Forester is happy to accommodate those varied interests.

***“REMEMBER:
A GOAL without
a PLAN
is just a
WISH!”***



DCNR Service Forester Gerald Hoy walks landowners through their forest management plan.

Enjoy WWIA's New Blog

“Make sure to retain at least two or three good snags per acre.”

Have you noticed the new tab on westmorelandwoodlands.org? A blog section has been added to the website to keep you informed on all things forestry. There will be at least one post a month, and we would love to hear your thoughts. Do you have a topic you've been curious about? Let us know and we'll be happy to dive into it. If you have something you'd like to write about, we'd love to hear from you too!

In the latest post, Tony Quadro discusses some of the spookier things in the woods:

Snags, Bats, and Other Scary Things

by Tony Quadro, Westmoreland Conservation District Forester

With Halloween coming up in a couple of weeks, I thought it might be appropriate to discuss some things that most people think of as creepy or scary, but that in reality are quite beneficial to the environment.

As we approach Halloween, we often see silhouettes of bats hanging from people's porches and yard trees to “scare” passersby. And of course we all know that vampires can turn into bats at night!

But actually, bats have a multitude of environmental benefits.

They consume vast quantities of insects, pollinate plants, and provide fertilizer from their droppings.

Recently I developed a forest management plan specifically for bat habitat. Endangered species like the Indiana bat need places for foraging and roosting in order to survive and successfully reproduce. Species like shagbark and other hickories, oaks, and maples are especially important to manage for.

Dead standing trees called “snags” are also depicted with spiders and bats hanging from them at Halloween time, with full moons in the background and pumpkins in the foreground.

Snags also are quite beneficial. They harbor insects that are food for many small mammal and bird species. They also provide habitat for nests, roosting, and food storage snags.

Snags are beneficial to bats as well. When thinning the forest, make sure to retain at least two or three good snags per acre, especially those with cavities and loose bark.

So as we all have fun at this scary time of year, remember that some of the things that people often consider creepy are valuable to the ecosystem. Do your part to conserve habitat for bats and other wildlife.



Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association

Membership Application and Renewal – Dues \$10 per year

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

New Member () or Renewal () Date: _____ Email Address: _____

Make check payable to

Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association

Mail to

Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association

c/o Westmoreland Conservation District

218 Donohoe Road, Greensburg, PA 15601

Attention: Tony Quadro

www.westmorelandwoodlands.org

Westmoreland Woodlands
Improvement Association

c/o Westmoreland Conservation District
218 Donohoe Road,
Greensburg, PA 15601

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