

# WWIA NEWS

## Summer 2023

### *President's Message*

*By John Hilewick, WWIA President*

We want to welcome you back to WWIA News! It's been just about a year since we last published an edition of the newsletter. Our volunteer editor-in-chief was Celine Colbert, the urban forester for Forbes State Forest District 4. Last summer she left for a position with another conservation-related entity.

Celine did all the production work on the newsletter, and since no one else involved with it was familiar with that publishing software, we were up the creek without a paddle.

As hard as we tried, we could not find a volunteer or even hire someone who was able and willing to take on the job. Then in February I attended Westmoreland Conservation District's retirement celebration luncheon for district manager/CEO Greg Phillips and assistant director/forester Tony Quadro.

I was talking with WCD director and WWIA member Bob Pore about our difficulties with newsletter publishing. Bob suggested I approach Mark Jackson, the visual communications specialist for WCD, to see if he was interested and could get approval from Rob Cronauer, the new district manager/CEO, to do the job.

So I emailed Mark, but he was really busy preparing the district's annual report. He asked if he could defer a decision until after that major publication was finished. I said sure, take whatever time you need.

In early April Mark checked with Rob, who approved of Mark helping us out with the newsletter as long as WWIA paid for a portion of his time. We were offered a 50% discount on his hourly rate, a bargain indeed for Mark's expertise. He

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## Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association

# *2023 Calendar of Events*

**August 5, 2023. 9:00 a.m.-TBD.** A Saturday field day. WWIA member Bob Phillips invites WWIA members and friends to his Fairfield Township property of woodland and two lakes for a day of fun and education. Greg Schaezle, a water resources expert from the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, will give a talk about the aquatic organisms in the stream. Alex Busato will talk about the lakes and possibly about birds. Alex is a Bucknell University graduate with a B.S. in aquatic biology/limnology and a minor in geology/earth sciences and the president of the Westmoreland Bird & Nature Club. A forester will discuss Bob's plan for his forested land.

**August 18-26.** Pennsylvania Forest Stewards outreach program during the nine days of the Westmoreland County Fair. WWIA members who are also PaFS volunteers will staff a display table for part of each day.

**September 21. 7:00 p.m.,** social period begins at 6:15 p.m. A Thursday evening at the J. Roy Huston Conservation Center (Westmoreland Conservation District Barn), 218 Donohoe Rd., Greensburg, PA 15601. To register, call WCD at 724-837-5271, option # 2. Experts from the Finley Center for Private Forests at Penn State will share results of the 2021 "Forest Landowners Survey: Giving voice to the people who own Pennsylvania's forests."

**October 1. Sunday. Annual Walk in Penn's Woods.** Location and time TBD.

**October 19. 6:00 p.m. for dinner. Social period & registration begins at 5:30.** A Thursday evening at the WCD Barn. Potluck dinner. The annual business meeting, including elections for officers and voting directors, will run from about 7:00-7:15. Then Sara Fern Fitzsimmons, chief conservation officer at The American Chestnut Foundation, will discuss "Restoring the American Chestnut for Robust Forests in the Eastern US: Considerations and Challenges for the Next 200 Years."

### **Tentative Program for 2024**

A talk by Melissa Kreye, Ph.D. of Penn State about "Social & Economic Values Associated with Private Forests, including Wildlife, Carbon Sequestration & Water Resources."

### **Events beyond WWIA**

**September 7-10.** PA Forest Stewards Class of 2023 Training. Ligonier Camp and Conference Center. Current PA Forest Stewards are invited to attend on Saturday. Some will speak at a panel 1:00-2:15 p.m. Sessions on invasive species ID and vegetation management will follow. Current forest stewards are also invited to stay for dinner at 6:00 and the campfire at 7:00. RSVP Jeff Osborne, jao5194@psu.edu OR call 814-867-5982.

## *In Memoriam: Tom Fitzgerald*

We are deeply saddened to share the loss of longtime service forester Thomas Joseph Fitzgerald, who died on May 2 at age 83.

Tom began working for the Bureau of Forestry in 1964 in the Susquehannock State Forest. In 1970 he relocated to Laughlintown (Forest District 4). He was a service forester there for 35 years before retiring in 2005.

District forester Edward Callahan said, "Landowners loved Tom because he had a limitless knowledge of nature and would take his time with them and provide great detail to them. He was also respected by his peers."

Tom was a member of WWIA for many years. After retirement, he began splitting his time between his home in New Florence and a family home he was renovating in West Clarksville, NY. He continued to write satirical essays about the fictional, fumbling Reamerstraff family.

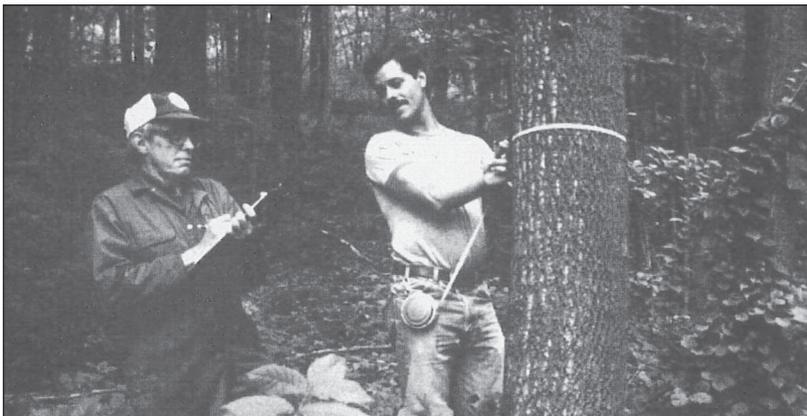
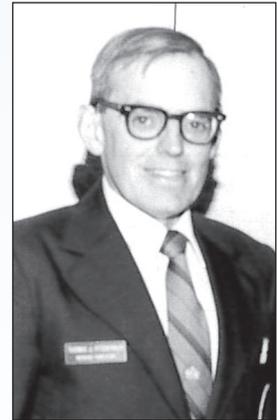
Four years after he retired, he was asked to chair Area 4 (ten counties in the southwest corner of the state) of the Pennsylvania Tree Farm Committee, so he spent several years back in touch with our region.

Tom was among the founding members of the Susquehannock Trail System and Club of Coudersport, PA. He edited the STC's newsletter for a decade and remained an active member all his life.

Tom was born on July 31, 1939, in Olean, NY. He is survived by Jayne, his wife of 55 years, as well as children Jeremy, Kari, Bronwyn, Joseph, Stephanie, Cassius, Nathan, and grandson Evan. He was preceded in death by two daughters, Heather Jayne and Rebecca Corinne.

He graduated from the College of Forestry at Syracuse University in 1963. Tom was active in Scouting all his life, first as a Boy Scout himself and later as an adult leader and merit-badge counselor.

Our condolences to Jayne and their children. Tom's death is a great loss to our community. He leaves a legacy of curiosity about the natural world and the knowledge he was always willing to share with WWIA members and friends.



PA Service Forester Tom Fitzgerald with Westmoreland Conservation District Forester Tony Quadro at the Loyalhanna Gorge Forestry Demonstration Area in 1992.

## *Tom Fitzgerald: Woodsman and Writer*

By Judith Gallagher

Tom Fitzgerald is the main reason I've been actively involved in WWIA for 30-plus years. He wrote the management plan for the woodland that my mother had inherited, and when my parents divided the acreage for my two sisters and me, Tom offered to walk the land with me.

By the end of the day I had learned the essentials of managing my woods. Then he gave me a WWIA brochure and urged me to attend a meeting, where I found friendly, knowledgeable people who were dealing with the same issues I was. (At the time gypsy moths were the looming problem.)

Tom found out that I was a professional

writer and asked if I would read his satirical fiction. After a lifetime of writing objective, science-based reports, he was willing to take an entirely new approach, to learn how to create characters, dialogue, and story arcs and inject them with emotion. As always, he was eager to learn.

In 2018 WWIA presented Tom with a Lifetime Achievement Award. His response: "I feel honored and humbled that my ordinary activities as the Westmoreland County service forester meant so much to you that you remembered me favorably 13 years after my retirement."

Ordinary? Tom couldn't be ordinary if he tried. He always went the extra mile.

## *Fond Memories of a Consummate Professional*

By Rus Davies

During one of our first winters at Hi Horizons, Bob and Shelly Ache visited for cross-country skiing. Bob was the district forester for Forbes Forest District, and I asked him for advice on managing our woods. Bob gave me a quick rundown on forest management and suggested that we have a service forester write a management plan.

Tom Fitzgerald wrote our plan in 1985. He asked if we would like to be enrolled as a pioneer tree farm and we agreed.

Five years later Tom conducted an inspection and was pleased that we had implemented some of his suggestions. He said, "Most people just put the plan in a drawer and forget about it!" At that time, he recommended we be elevated to Tree Farm status.

Anyone who has a management plan written by Tom knows how comprehensive and detailed they are. Fast forward 35-plus years. We invited the Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association to Hi Horizons for a tour of our woodlands. It was a popular program, with good attendance and several new faces.

Attendance was so good that I asked Tom if he would be willing to lead half of the group, which he did. As things progressed both groups wound up in Stand 2, our best stand, at the same time. For reference, I had given Tom a copy of the management plan he'd written all those years ago.

Ever the professional, he asked if anyone knew how to use a wedge to determine the basal area of a tree. Since he had the data from 1985, he proceeded to take a measurement, teaching as he went. Then he let volunteers take readings. He instructed and encouraged them as they learned a new skill. This was a big hit with the new visitors as well as the regulars.

On August 4, 2015, Tom visited to reinspect of the tree farm. He had a new forester, Celine Colbert, along for orientation. Tony Quadro of the Westmoreland Conservation District also tagged along.

Hi Horizons is Certified PA Tree Farm Number 2410. Located in Fairfield Township, it is owned by Rus and Miriam Davies.

estimated each issue would take him four to six hours, so the cost to WWIA of producing each issue will be \$100 to \$150. To hold costs down we'll go from four issues a year to three, and WWIA volunteers will continue to do the writing and editing.

The alternative of course would be to forgo any future newsletters, not a good alternative from my perspective as a member and as your president!

Any contributions by members toward defraying the newsletter publishing expenses will be much appreciated. Please send your checks in care of Treasurer Tony Quadro, made out to WWIA and with "newsletter" on the memo line, to Westmoreland Conservation District, 218 Donohoe Rd., Greensburg, PA 15601. That way you can say you have a bit of skin in the game!

If you're interested in writing an article about any aspect of forestry (or flora or fauna in general) or an essay or book review for the newsletter, we'd love to hear from you.

### ***Board of Directors Meeting Results***

The board of directors met on June 22 at 4:00 at the Barn. The board approved renewing our contract with GoDaddy for our website, Westmorelandwoodlands.org for a two-year term for \$326. As mentioned above, the newsletter will also cost around \$100-150 per issue.

The association also pays travel costs and speaker stipends, as required, for programs, although we are very lucky to be able to draw on volunteer experts from WCD and DCNR for many of our programs. We also provide for the annual potluck dinner.

So as you can see, we welcome new members, renewing members, and donors to keep our volunteer board bringing you talks, field trips, and news you can use.

WWIA membership is holding steady at around 58 paid individual or family memberships. We have still not recovered from the declines wrought by the pandemic. The board is working on a plan to encourage those members who have fallen by the wayside, to renew their participation and to try and recruit new members.

Dues continue to be only \$10.00 for an individual or family membership. That amount has remained constant since WWIA was founded 35 years ago! **If you forgot to pay your dues in January, it's never too late.**



### **2023 Officers**

#### **President**

John Hilewick

#### **Vice President**

Fred Lau

#### **Secretary**

Terry Gates

#### **Treasurer**

Tony Quadro

#### **Publicity, Newsletter Editor**

Judith Gallagher

#### **Newsletter Layout and Design**

Mark Jackson

#### **Technical Advisors Michael Doucette**

Russell Gibbs

Levi Canon

#### **Voting Directors**

Rus Davies

Rodney Gerhart

Neva Shields

Tim Troup

#### **Associate Directors**

Bill Baber

Raul Chiesa

Robert McBride

Janet Sredy

# Ramps Field Trip

By Mary Jane Busch



Photo of ramps growing by Eric Burkhart

On Saturday, May 6, thirteen participants enjoyed a weather-perfect afternoon learning about ramps in situ at Forbes State Forest. Penn State professors Dr. Eric Burkhart and Dr. Sara Nilson led the three-hour excursion to a hilly streamside patch of ramps that were proliferating in a gully alongside poisonous false hellebore.

Dr. Burkhart pointed out the habitat needed for these native alliums: cool, moist but not soggy conditions often found on floodplains. Growing in the same area were sugar maple, blue cohosh, tulip poplar, and mayapple, all good indicator plants for site selection if you want to propagate ramps. They also prefer soils high in calcium.

Dr. Burkhart explained that the spring ephemeral, perennial herb reproduces asexually by clones and sexually by seeds. The site harbored mats or clumps of ramp, which had

initially been interconnected. One-leaf, two-leaf, three-leaf, and even four-leaf stages of ramps were found. The last stage is uncommon. The plants grow about a foot tall and take five years to mature.

All stages and parts of the plant are edible, including the leaves, bulbs, and flowers. However, Dr. Burkhart said that to sustainably harvest the ramp, one-leaf specimens should be left to continue their growth. If you dig bulbs, leave at least one ramp per square foot. If you gather leaves, remember that this action removes the “solar panels” from the plant, so less food will be made for the bulb.

Ramps can be harvested from mid-April to early May. The plant bolts in late June or early July and produces a flower that develops into dark purple fruit in late summer. The seeds are dispersed by gravity, but to cultivate or increase ramp patches, you can gather seeds and spread them under duff in other areas with the proper environment.

After sharing several ramp recipe ideas, including pickled flowers, attendees nibbled on leaves. All agreed the taste was a mild oniony or garlicky flavor. Dr. Burkhart cautioned that the bulb is far more pungent than the leaves.

This field trip with experts from Penn State was very enlightening for every ramp forager and forest farmer.

## *Purple Line = No Trespassing*

During WWIA’s ramps field trip on May 6, a participant asked my husband why some of the trees had purple stripes on them. After he explained the new “no trespassing” postings, she thanked him for perhaps saving her from an arrest.

It seems that the publicity for this new law has not been effective, and it would be easy for a person to think that the purple blazes were

surveying markers, boundary markers, or just trail markers. Some have even speculated that the purple rectangles were for treating spotted lanternfly or other invasive insects.

Since ignorance of the law is no defense, read on to become informed about this recently enacted legislation in Pennsylvania.

In 1989, Arkansas was the first state to allow purple paint to legally indicate no trespassing.

Other states that have adopted various purple paint ordinances include Arkansas, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Maine, Missouri, Montana, North Carolina, Texas, and Wisconsin. Although these laws are referred to as purple paint laws, Idaho, Montana, and Arizona stipulate the legal warning color as orange.

Just as traffic laws vary from state to state, so do ordinances against trespassing. Not all purple paint markings are the same size, and their shape is not typically specified. North Carolina is an outlier. There, outdoor enthusiasts can cross purple-marked boundaries as long as they do not engage in hunting, fishing, or trapping.

In 2020 a change in Title 18, the PA Crimes Code, gave Pennsylvania landowners the option of using purple paint rather than signage to post their properties as private and to warn that trespassing on the land is not permitted. The law is effective in all but Philadelphia and Allegheny counties, where local or state regulations precluded its implementation.

Why was the color purple chosen? Perhaps the most important reason is that people who are colorblind can see it. Second, purple stands out in a natural setting, as few flora or fauna sport that color. Third, the forestry industry does not use purple for any of its markings.

Purple paint markings are preferable to traditional “No Trespassing” signs for several reasons. Paint can be more permanent and cost-effective and less labor intensive to install, and the purple warning lines are more weather-resistant and difficult to remove or deface.

PA law states that purple paint must be used in a specific way to be considered a lawful warning. The paint marking must be

- a vertical line at least 8 inches long and 1 inch wide.

- at least 3 feet but no more than 5 feet off the ground.
- within 100 feet of each other.
- visible to someone approaching the property from any direction.
- a commercially available “no hunting” purple paint.

These stipulations are not significantly different from those for “No Trespassing” signs. If they are met, the purple stripe is considered a legal warning and anyone who enters the marked area without permission can be charged with trespassing.

In Pennsylvania, for a defiant trespasser the offense is either a first-degree misdemeanor or a third-degree misdemeanor. First-degree misdemeanor charges are punishable by up to five years of jail time and fines up to \$10,000. Third-degree misdemeanors are punishable by up to one year of jail time and fines up to \$2,000.

A recent legislative act authorized the PA Game Commission to investigate trespassing complaints and enforce trespassing violations as a primary offense, even if game-law violations are not alleged. The new law does allow unarmed persons to go onto private property for the sole purpose of retrieving a hunting dog.

Bob D’Angelo of the PA Game Commission said that the new purple paint law has been well-received by landowners. He added that sportsmen are well-informed of the purple stripe’s meaning via the *Pennsylvania Hunting & Trapping Digest*, a publication given to all who buy a hunting or trapping license.

But fewer fishermen, hikers, foragers, and other nonhunters using outdoor recreational spaces are aware of this new law.

If you pursue outdoor recreational activities, it’s wise to familiarize yourself with not only Pennsylvania’s laws but also the regulations of states you visit. Remember, ignorance of the law is no defense!

# Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association

## Membership Application and Renewal – Dues \$10 per year

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

New Member ( ) or Renewal ( ) Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

If you own property, how many acres do you own? \_\_\_\_\_ Approximately how many of them are wooded? \_\_\_\_\_

### **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](http://www.westmorelandwoodlands.org)

Westmoreland Woodlands  
Improvement Association

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