

WWIA News

Summer 2020



President's Report

By John Hilewick, WWIA President

I make this report to you all while maintaining my good health (so far) and following all established protocols in regard to the Covid-19 virus. I do certainly hope that all of you are in good health and will continue to be so blessed.

WWIA's board of directors met on Thursday, July 30, at 4:00 pm outdoors in the pavilion at the Westmoreland Conservation District. We followed all social distancing and mask-wearing guidelines. We had a quorum, with six of our nine voting directors and four associate directors present. We reviewed and approved the treasurer's report and the minutes from our BOD meeting of January 16, 2020.

Our checking account balance was \$4,087.61 as of June 22, 2020. We have at last count 58 paid memberships for 2020 and beyond, with several \$10 dues checks still to be deposited. Our total roster stands

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President's Report (cont'd)

at 224 going back to 2012.

The board discussed and made decisions on several items of new business.

1) Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, with adherence to the ever-changing protocols of our state department of health and concern for the citizens of our communities and our group, we have suspended all programming for the remainder of 2020.

2) Since we will have no meetings for the rest of 2020, the biennial

elections of officers and voting directors will be postponed until at least fall 2021. All officers and directors present at the BOD meeting agreed to continue to serve until elections can be held safely.

3) We will invite all the presenters who were scheduled to speak this year to reschedule their programs once things open up fully.

It is with sincere regret that I must report that Don N. Stitt, one of the founding members of WWIA, passed away on July 10, 2020, at the age of 93.

Quarantine Adventures

Deep in the woods **Raul Chiesa** built a shed to store and organize his forestry tools. **Janet Sredy** was his assistant. They also mowed forest trails and did quite a bit of bird watching.

Terry Gates has been busy reviewing lists of consulting foresters and planning for a potential timber harvest.

Instead of going to the beach with his family as planned, **Bill Courtney** had a wonderful time with his grandchildren in his woods and at nearby Laurel Highlands outdoor attractions.

Rus Davies has been cleaning up dead ash trees when they fall on areas that he mows. With over 100 dead trees, this will be a never-ending task for the foreseeable future.

Celine Colbert has been working to trim back her trails and tackle Japanese stiltgrass on her property.

Judith Gallagher started the quarantine season with great success in weeding out multiflora roses, but now she's burned out on weeding and has switched to chainsawing pole trees. The results last longer.

Happenings as the Pandemic Continues

By John Hilewick, WWIA President

Thus far in 2020, my family and I have been fortunate to stay well and in good health. I worked in February, early March, and on into April in my home orchard to prune and apply dormant spray to my apple, pear, peach, and cherry trees in anticipation of another season of fruit production.

All went well as I worked to complete things prior to bud swell and the start of blossoming. I even got a treatment of spray on the blossoming apple and pear trees to combat fireblight.

Alas, Mother Nature was not cooperative. An early frost nipped the peaches, the first trees to blossom. Then multiple nights of hard freeze about three weeks later froze off the sour cherry, pear, and apple tree blossoms.

Now, as I examine the various 17 trees, all told I spy one or two dozen little fruits developing on some apple trees and on one pear tree. A few really late-opening blossom buds seem to have survived the hard freeze. Only the Almighty knows if any of those specimens will make it to maturity! OH!

And yes, my blueberries did manage to set a bit of fruit because I covered the bushes with old sheets, but alas, the dry spell we are now enduring has made all those berries dry up or fall off!

About three weeks ago I was able to pick and share with my granddaughter a couple of pints of wild black raspberries off some canes along my lower driveway.

But by the looks of things, the wild blackberries are likely to do much less well. This dry, rainless, and very hot spell is taking a toll on their development and ripening as they come on in a couple of no-mow bankside patches.

The only silver lining is that I am saving money on gasoline because the grass hasn't needed mowing for at least four weeks now on the two-plus acres I tend.

In early May I received a phone call from a long-time friend I have talked with several times in my capacity as a Pennsylvania Forest Steward volunteer.

He was seeking advice on where to acquire tree seedlings to reforest some land that had received a silvicultural prescription (a timber sale that included the preparation of a stewardship management plan and enrollment of the property in the American Tree Farm System).

He needed to re-establish some seedlings that had not thrived as part of his NRCS initiative. I directed him to Musser Forests Inc. in Indiana, PA. He was very pleased with the specimens they sold him and with their friendly, helpful assistance.

A nice annual event has started to unfold again on my little piece of Eden as I look out my kitchen window. The American goldfinches and indigo buntings have returned to their northern breeding grounds. What beautiful songbirds these two specimens are, both in plumage and in song!

The finches and the buntings visit the tall weeds on the bank below the backyard and search for insects and seeds among the various stems of wild garlic, ironweed, berry canes, thistle pods, and various other forbs. These two species nest and raise their broods in this mid- to late-summer period, and the sightings are always a treat!

Well, that is a capsule of my pandemic happenings so far. Best wishes for health and safety to you all!

What to Consider When Considering a Timber Sale

By Terry Gates, WWIA Secretary

WWIA officer Terry Gates is considering a timber harvest on his 32-acre property in Clearfield County. The trees are red oak, maple, and other species and are predominantly pole-size and larger. The property has not been managed until now, and no harvest has happened on the land since the 1970s.

Here are questions that he's discussing with consulting foresters. Though your land may have other concerns, we hope this list offers you a starting point for issues to think about as you manage your woods.

1. What is the stand's current condition and health, considering value, age, and size?
2. Are the hemlocks healthy or sick? Is there currently a market for hemlock? How many should be harvested, and where and when can some remain?
3. What is the species makeup now, and what will it be after the cut? How will the enhanced quality aid the stand after the harvest? The current condition and species inventory must be considered and the after-harvest species ratio estimated. The goal is to retain the same inventory elements. For example, to assure that oaks will regenerate after the cut, some of the large, genetically superior oaks should be left as seed trees.
4. What is the plan for oaks based on the bell curve of existing numbers with respect to size and numbers of each category (small, medium, large)?
5. Overstory: What are the options to restore the woodlot's health?



6. Type of harvest: Should this be a regeneration cut that creates a 50% open overstory? Or should it be an improvement (shelterwood) cut, where timber can be poised to enter the next level of growth? What type of cut makes the most sense? Why?
7. How bad are interfering species? What options are available to mitigate invasives before the harvest?

Landowner to Landowner

Peter Fournia, a landowner in Penfield, New York, shared this effort to protect his ash trees with WWIA board member Rus Davies and allowed us to share it here.

I have watched the emerald ash borer (EAB) encroach into my neighborhood for four years. So I have been treating 30 of my ash trees with a ground drench. I have been systematically removing the remaining 35 trees. I am proud to report that the ground drench is very effective! The difference between treated and untreated trees is like day and night. A friend of mine who is treating his ash trees with the same approach says they look “lush.”

I'm using a ground drench I purchased from Home Depot and Amazon called Compare-N-Save Systemic Tree and Shrub Insect Drench. The price has come down slightly in the past four years to \$12 per tree this year. My trees' circumference averages 40 inches. The active ingredient is Imidacloprid and I apply it as directed on the label. I also use a one-inch auger to drill holes around the tree trunk. I use a little more water than recommended in order to drive the pesticide rapidly to the rootball. I apply it in the spring about one week before the leaves emerge. I plan to continue with this program annually until all ash trees in the neighborhood are either dead or treated. After that, I will probably reduce applications to two-year intervals.

Ash Facts

The Latin name for ash tree is *Fraxinus*. It can live to be 250 years old and grow to 115 feet tall.

In Norse mythology, Yggdrasil, the World Tree, is an ash tree so enormous that its roots reach all the way to hell and its branches all the way to heaven.

Share Your Thoughts

The Pennsylvania DCNR Bureau of Forestry is in the process of writing a new Strategic Plan that will set the bureau's mission and overarching goals. It guides how the Bureau provides leadership in forest management and conservation on both public and private lands in urban and rural areas. The survey linked below is intended to obtain input pertaining to the new Bureau of Forestry Strategic Plan. Please feel free to forward the link to this survey to others. Opinions about these critical strategic questions will prove valuable in the planning process. The survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. The survey link will remain active until August 31, 2020. This is the website for the survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BOFplan>

Species Spotlight: White Oak

Quercus alba

By Celine Colbert, Service Forester

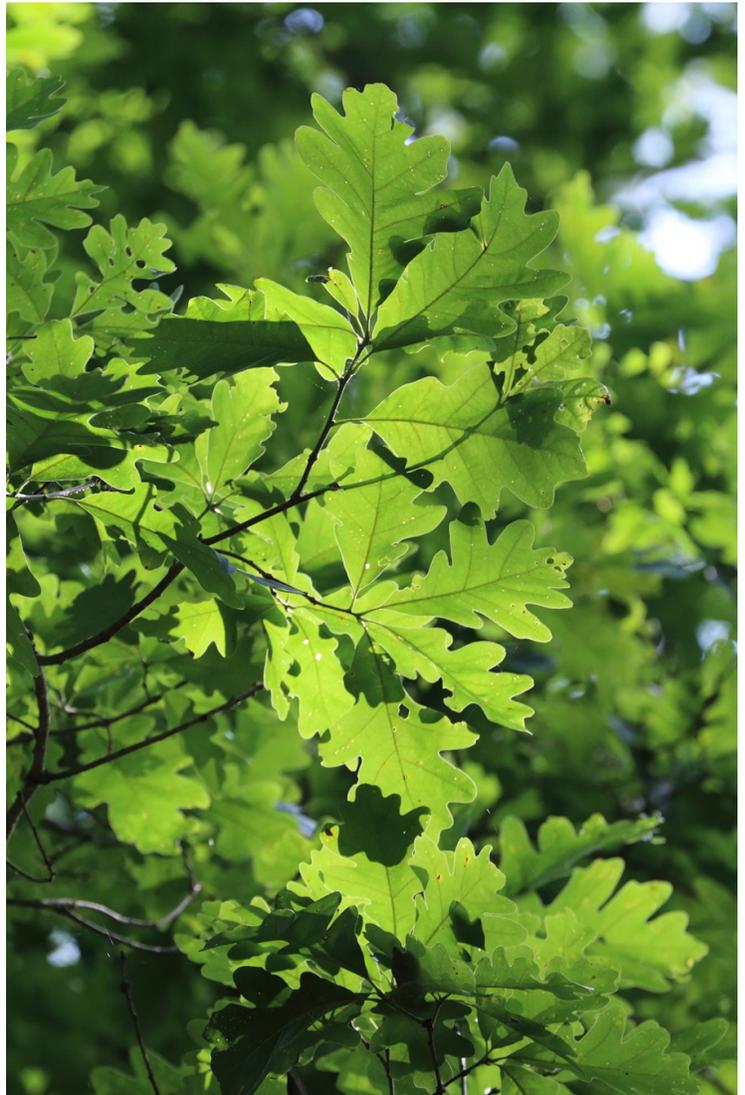
Wine and whiskey drinkers ought to give three cheers for the white oak tree. It would be hard to age any liquid in leaky barrels, but white oak wood has special structures called tyloses that fill its vessels and make the wood water- (or wine-) tight. Tyloses also make white oak resistant to rot and decay, so the species was ideal for shipbuilding in colonial times.

White oak acorns are an important food source in the forest. Native Americans of multiple tribes relied on acorns leached of their bitter tannins as a primary food source, while more than 180 different kinds of birds and mammals feast on the acorns. The leaves are munched on by 518 native moth and butterfly species.

The trees can make snug homes as well. Their platy bark provides roosting sites for bats, and their ability to stand long after they've died makes them great for cavity-nesting birds.

The white oak tree itself is one of the most majestic in the forest. Though it grows slowly, it can live for up to 600 years and become quite big. The largest Pennsylvania white oak recorded has a whopping 84" diameter.

Though many of our white oaks have grown up since the logging boom at the beginning of the last century, occasionally I'll spot a large wolf-grown tree, likely planted near an old homestead where it could grow wide, uninhibited by other trees. I always wonder just how old it is and what all it may have seen.



Showcase a Resource: Pennsylvania Timber Market Report

By Celine Colbert, Service Forester

If you've ever considered a timber sale on your land, you've probably wondered how timber prices are doing. Much like the housing market or the stock market, timber prices frequently move up and down based on supply, consumer tastes, foreign markets, and a multitude of other factors.

Luckily, there's a public tool available to everyone that reports recent prices and can give landowners an idea of their standing timber's value.

Every quarter Penn State Extension releases a timber market report, available on its website. This report breaks down prices by species and breaks the state into four regions. This is important since the quality of cherry grown in the northwest is much different from that grown in the southwest. Factoring in these differences makes the data collected more representative of what landowners may expect to receive for their wood.

The report shows the average price per thousand board feet (MBF). These numbers indicate what was paid for standing trees, also known as the stumpage value.

To gain an idea of how many board feet are in a tree, typically the smallest-diameter tree that is sawn is 12 inches. If a 12-inch tree had one 16-foot log worth of wood, it would contain 60 board feet using the international 1/4-inch rule (which the timber market report uses). If this 12-inch tree was a white oak in southwest PA, where the average price per MBF for this species in the first quarter of 2020 was \$373, the value of this tree can be calculated as \$22.38.

Using this market report can help landowners estimate their timber's value and know if current market prices are high or low for their most common species, which can help them decide when to schedule a harvest. The most recent report can be found at <https://extension.psu.edu/pennsylvania-timber-market-report-first-quarter-2020>.

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Name: _____ Phone: _____

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

Make check payable to

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218 Donohoe Road, Greensburg, PA 15601

Attention: Tony Quadro

www.westmorelandwoodlands.org

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