

# WWIA News

## Summer 2022



### *President's Message*

*By John Hilewick, WWIA President*

Since the last newsletter, we have enthusiastically started full in-person meetings again. On Thursday, February 17, we held a board of directors meeting at the WCD Barn.

The voting directors present unanimously appointed member Rodney Gerhart to assume the unexpired term of director Jeff Parobek. Rodney was in attendance and had shown a serious interest in taking on the task. We thank Jeff for all his years of service as a WWIA director.

Tony Quadro, our treasurer, provided a report of WWIA's financial circumstances. The checking account balance was at that time \$4,189.30. I reported that the 2021 IRS filing of our 990EZ 501(c)(3) will again be handled by Brad Koontz of RR&K Accounting. He will invoice us through Tony at WCD.

Other business or informational items addressed: Nominations for the 2022 class of PA Forest Stewards were due on March 15. Loree Speedy and Rodney Gerhart had both shown interest in this opportunity, and their nomination forms were forwarded to the James C. Finley Center for Private Forests at Penn State. The training will be held Sept. 29-Oct. 2 at Krisland Camp in Centre County.

The 2022 Walk in Penn's Woods will be held on Sunday, October 2.

Michael Doucette, service forester with DCNR-BOF, presented a program on April 21 about early colonial American

*Continued on Pg. 6*

#### Inside this issue

President's Message.....	1
Dr. William Courtney.....	2
Penguin Court.....	2
Forbes Field Tour .....	3
My Kitchen Window .....	4
Cleanways Recap.....	5
Species Spotlight .....	7

## *In Memoriam: Dr. William B. Courtney*

We are sad to announce that William B. Courtney, longtime WWIA board member, died on April 1 at age 90.

Dr. Courtney was a member and an associate director of WWIA for many years. He even opened his home and his woods to us for a field trip one summer. He was essential to WWIA's success in educating woodland owners and improving our environment in a spirit of community.

He was a graduate of Somerset High School, Allegheny College, and Temple Medical School. At Westmoreland Regional Hospital he was chair of the department of obstetrics and gynecology and president of the Westmoreland Hospital medical staff.

He served as a deacon and an elder of the First Presbyterian Church of Greensburg. He was also a member of the Pennsylvania Forestry Association. In retirement he focused much of his time on his tree farm.

Bill is survived by three children: Beth Courtney Carlson and her husband, Andy, of Summit, New Jersey; Bill Courtney and his wife, Leigh, of St. James, North Carolina; and Tyler Courtney and his wife, Katy, of Greensburg; as well as by eight grandchildren. He is also survived by a sister and a brother. He was preceded in death by his wife, Elizabeth Solliday Courtney; a brother, Graham Courtney, and a sister, Dorothy Howell.

Several of Bill's friends made donations to WWIA in his memory: Robert Eicher of Delmont donated \$25. John Hilewick of New Stanton donated \$25. Mr. and Mrs. E. Michael Backus of Greensburg donated \$50. John C. Hill of Pittsburgh donated \$50. And Samuel C. Cramer of Florence, South Carolina, donated \$1,000.

We thank all of these generous donors for their kindness toward WWIA, which was so important to Bill.

## *Join Us at Penguin Court July 28*

We've succeeded in rescheduling our field trip to Penguin Court, the former family home of the late *Tribune-Review* publisher, Richard Mellon Scaife. Melissa Reckner, program manager of Penguin Court & Thomas Road Farm, has invited WWIA to visit components of the stunning preserve of 1,089 acres of forests, meadows, and open space with various other amenities. Penguin Court is now part of The Brandywine Conservancy.

We'll meet at Penguin Court, 104 California Ave., Laughlintown, PA 15655, on Thursday evening, July 28, at 6:00 p.m. The tour will last about two hours.

The event is free and open to the public, but please register in advance. Call the Westmoreland Conservation District Office (724-837-5271, option #1) by 4:00 p.m. on Monday, July 25. Leave the name(s) and the number of people attending.

## *Forbes State Forest Field Trip July 23*

The long-awaited Forbes State Forest field trip and skills day is back at last!

After two years of Covid restrictions, WWIA is sponsoring its tenth almost-annual Forbes field trip on Saturday, July 23, 2022, from 9:00 a.m. to about 3:00 p.m. The event is free and open to the public.

Please register in advance to help us plan the logistics. Call the Westmoreland Conservation District Office (724-837-5271, option #1) by 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, July 19. Leave the name(s) and the number of people attending.

We'll meet at 9:00 a.m. at the Bureau of Forestry district office in Laughlontown along US Route 30 east. Michael Doucette, a service forester for Forbes State Forest, will welcome the group and introduce the topic of forest mensuration, or measurement. This includes the diameter, height, and volume of single trees as well as stands or whole woods.

"If you can't measure it, you can't manage it," he says about the importance of this forestry skill.

In the Bob Ache Memorial Forest behind the BOF office building, Michael will demonstrate and we'll get hands-on practice doing some measurements that foresters commonly do.



He'll also review the treatment options for protecting hemlock from elongate hemlock scale and hemlock woolly adelgid.

At two cuts on the Laurel Mountain Tract of the Forbes, we'll discuss what was done as well as why it was done and what the end result will be. We'll finish up with a hike on the Beams Rock Trail.

We'll be outdoors for the entire tour, walking over rough terrain, so we recommend that you prepare for the weather, wear long pants and sturdy footwear, and either pretreat your pant legs with permethrin or spray with picardin or DEET for ticks. And don't forget the sunblock. Please bring your own bag lunch and water for the day.

Feel free to bring binoculars or field guides for viewing wildlife. You'll have plenty of opportunities to ask questions. If the forecast looks stormy, you can call John Hilewick at 724-925-1667 to make sure the trip is still on.

# The View Out My Kitchen Window

By John Hilewick

As you know, it was a bit of an early spring. And with the spring comes the blooming of many trees. I'll limit my musings here to four of the earliest bloomers among the hardwoods I see on my neighbors' hillsides across the road.

The red maples (*Acer rubrum*) were the earliest to show their attractive light-red male and female flowers. Red maple can be a fairly large to quite large tree, topping out between 60 and 100 feet if the growing conditions are ideal.

The next were serviceberry/Juneberry (*Amelanchier arborea*). Their nice show of white flowers arrives well before June. It is not really an understory tree but does generally hold a moderate position in the canopy.

One that I really like is the black sweet cherry, or Mazzard cherry/bird cherry (*Prunus avium*), with its showy white to pinkish bloom. This species is native to Europe, Eurasia, Western Asia and many other areas, but not to the American continents.

It has become naturalized in North America and Australia because it is self-fertile and comes true from seed. The fruit



Serviceberry (*Amelanchier* spp.) in bloom.

is eaten by numerous birds and mammals, which digest the fruit flesh and disperse the seeds in their droppings. Thus, the naturalization and broad distribution of the Mazzard cherry in North American forestlands.

It grows from 40 to more than 100 feet tall and can develop a trunk three feet or more in diameter on really optimum sites. It has a lighter reddish-brown (cherry) heartwood and somewhat softer hardwood than its cousin, the native wild black cherry (*Prunus serotina*).

A more familiar and quite popular tree that blooms in early spring is the flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*). This widespread understory species is probably the most easily identified of the spring bloomers. It holds a dominant understory position and thrives in that category, and I think we are all happy that it does!

Due to an injury to my right Achilles tendon, I was unable to get into the woods to take photos of these species in bloom. However, I looked them up online and am including close-ups of two of these trees at their peak.



Flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*) in bloom.

# Westmoreland Cleanways Executive Speaks to WWIA

By Judith Gallagher

Natalie Reese, the program director for Westmoreland Cleanways and Recycling, spoke at WWIA's May meeting. She told us that the group was founded in 1990 in response to illegal dumping that marred the beauty of the Laurel Highlands.

It started hosting collection events for hard-to-dispose-of items in 1993. The recycling center opened in 2014 and moved to its current spacious eight-acre site in Pleasant Unity in 2020.

The new site has a large warehouse, space for student tours, and even an apiary that's bearproofed by a solar-powered electric fence.

"We also got a foam densifier machine that can compress the entire contents of a tractor trailer into a pallet," she said.

Natalie gave us an overview of Cleanways' services and events, including the recycling center, weekly household hazardous waste collections, litter clean-up program, and workshops on composting and other tasks to reduce waste.

Several audience members asked why their municipalities don't offer enough in the way of recycling. Natalie talked about how recycling is a business. Even though it benefits the environment, local recycling haulers and processors collect and process only material that they can market. There is a high demand for plastic bottles (#1-2 plastic) but very little demand for other plastics resins (#3-7 plastics).

She explained, "Although Westmoreland Cleanways functions as the recycling coordinator for Westmoreland County, it has no enforcement powers." She suggested urging your municipal government to put recycling requirements in an ordinance so they're enforceable.

Pennsylvania passed Act 101, the Municipal Waste Planning, Recycling, and Waste Reduction Act, in 1988. The law requires county-level planning for solid waste, recycling service for the most populous towns and cities, and alternatives to landfill disposal of leaf waste. It also provides a funding stream to support compliance.

Westmoreland County has 67 municipalities and more than 151,000 households (365,000 residents). In 2021

***"Even though it benefits the environment, local recycling haulers and processors collect and process only material that they can market."***



*Continued on Pg. 6*

## *Westmoreland Cleanways (cont'd)*

Westmoreland Cleanways had more than 14,000 visitors.

It shipped out for proper disposal over 1 million pounds of TVs, 243,000 pounds of e-waste, 130,000 pounds of cardboard, 192,000 pounds of books, 43,000 pounds of other paper, 75,000 pounds of glass, nearly 10,000 tires, 11,180 pounds of lead acid batteries, and 1,033 Freon appliances.

That year it held 47 Covid-safe education programs, reaching more than 1,500 youth and adults. It participated in a tire collection to reduce West Nile virus and a Unity Township cleanup day. It hosted three household hazardous waste (HHW) events, in which a total of 507 households dropped off 61,900 pounds of HHW.

The group also operates a drop-off center for items that are hard to dispose of. For more information, visit their [website](#) or [Facebook](#) page.

Natalie gives talks to schools all over the county, starting at the kindergarten level. She spoke passionately about both the educational and the recycling components of her work to an equally engaged audience. At the end of the evening, she very kindly offered to take two bags of paper recycling from my car to her workplace, a generous example of putting theories into practice.

## *President's Message (cont'd)*

and pre-Columbian forestry practices and use of forest resources.

On May 14, WWIA was an exhibitor at DCNR's "Making the Most of Your Piece of Nature: A Sustainable Backyard Workshop," held at Westmoreland County's Mammoth Park from 8:00 a.m. to noon.

Natalie Reese, educator and program director for Westmoreland Cleanways and Recycling, gave a talk at the Barn on May 19. She described the services her nonprofit provides and explained the current state of recycling in the county.

This year we will resume the Forbes State Forest Field Trip, Tour and Skills Day at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, July 23. We'll meet at the Bureau of Forestry headquarters in Laughlintown along US Route 30 East.

On Thursday, July 28, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., we will be the guests of Melissa Reckner, program manager of Penguin Court in Laughlintown. Penguin Court, the former family home of the late publisher Richard Mellon Scaife, is now a preserve of the Brandywine Conservancy.

We'll be sending out more information on both of these field trips soon. If you're not on WWIA's email list and you'd like to be, send a note to Tammy Woodward: [tammy@wcdpa.com](mailto:tammy@wcdpa.com).

At this time there is no programming scheduled for the months of August and September.

On Thursday, October 20, we will hold WWIA's annual meeting and potluck dinner at the WCD Barn. We hope to have a program on deer management, presented by Dr. David deCalesta, coauthor with his colleague Mike Eckley of a book on the subject.

# Species Spotlight: American Beech *Fagus grandifolia*

By Celine Colbert, Forester, Pennsylvania DCNR Bureau of Forestry

Few of our native trees are discussed as contentiously as the beech. Gifford Pinchot's estate, Grey Towers, sports beech (admittedly of the European variety) in a place of honor anchoring a reflecting pool, but today's foresters tend to find beech and its eagerness to regenerate quite tiresome.

The last to let go for the year, beech saplings hold onto their pale creamy leaves until the spring. This allows us to see the areas where a mother beech tree has regenerated vivaciously using root sprouts. Our local areas are so densely packed with beech brush that it's difficult for any other tree to mix in, causing a dilemma for foresters who strive for a diverse mix of tree species.

However, in Pinchot's defense, the beech truly is a majestic tree, growing 50-80 feet tall and two to three feet in diameter. Its smooth grey bark resembles an elephant leg in the forest. The grand tree produces small nuts enjoyed by birds as small as nuthatches and mammals as large as the black bear. The bronze-gold fall foliage dots hillsides and valleys alike.

Perhaps J.U. Crockett put it best: "If the word *noble* had to be applied to only one kind of tree, the honor would probably go to the beech."

Unfortunately, the age of plentiful beech may be coming to an end. Two diseases are poised to weaken this species. Beech-bark disease is a fungal canker disease that follows an attack by beech scale to enter the tree. Infected trees show red fungal spots, which then develop into cankers, on the bark.

The second and much newer issue, beech-leaf disease, was first identified in northern Ohio in 2012 and is currently as close as Cambria County. The initial sign of the disease is a dark banding on tree leaves. Research is still being done to learn more about the cause, spread, and possible treatments, but it has been shown to lead to tree mortality.

## 2022 Officers

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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**

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c/o Westmoreland Conservation District

218 Donohoe Road, Greensburg, PA 15601

Attention: Tony Quadro

[www.westmorelandwoodlands.org](http://www.westmorelandwoodlands.org)

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c/o Westmoreland Conservation District  
218 Donohoe Road,  
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