

The Allegheny News



**Allegheny Society of American Foresters
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The mission of the SAF is to advance the science, technology, education and practice of professional forestry in America, and to use the knowledge and skills of the profession to benefit society.

The Allegheny News
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Chair's Corner

Cecile Stelter



Fall has settled into the Allegheny Region --- the leaves are beginning to change and there is a chill in the air. Autumn is a perfect time to reflect on recent successes and accomplishments.

The most notable event was of course, the successful execution of the 2022 SAF National Convention in Baltimore, Maryland. Our convention, resumed the in-person format for SAF conventions which seemed to be well-received with over 1300 attendees and more than 200 presentations over the four-day event.

But before registrants were attending plenary and technical presentations and the exhibit hall was bustling with people, posters and displays ... many ANSAF convention volunteers committed a lot of their time and effort into the preparations for this event.

On behalf of all the ANSAF membership, I want to sincerely thank all the volunteers for everything that you did to help make this event a success! I want to particularly acknowledge Kimberly Bohn who was the General Chair of the Convention and the local coordinators: Kenneth Jolly, Sponsorship Coordinator; Anne Hairston-Strang, Technical Field Trip Tour Coordinator; Susan Lacy, On-Site Volunteer Coordinator; Rachel Reyna, Foresters' and Science Fun Raffle and Action Coordinator; and Abby Jamison and Steve Resh, Student Activities Coordinator/Quiz Bowl Coordinators. Through your efforts, we were able to showcase our region and provide an outstanding experience for all those who attended.

While at the convention, we were also able to recognize and celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the Allegheny Society of American Foresters. If your chapter and/or division hasn't done something to recognize or commemorate our centennial, there is still time. Consider taking time to revisit your local chapter or division history, connect with your membership and celebrate our 100 years of forestry.

So, as nature continues to show its fall colors across the landscapes, I hope each of you will be able to spend some time enjoying our workplace --- the mosaic forests of the Allegheny Society region. **Happy 100th Anniversary --- Allegheny Society of American Foresters!** Looking forward to the next 100 years of practicing and promoting forestry and natural resource management!

Science Update

Contributed by Melissa Thomas Van-Gundy

USDA Forest Service, Northern Research Station

The findings and conclusions in this publication are those of the authors and should not be construed to represent any official USDA or U.S. Government determination or policy.



Keeping Up to Date

I started this essay simply to let you know about the current effort to update the *Silvics of Trees of North America* handbook, but as usually happens, I got a bit sidetracked. The original silvics handbook, officially Agriculture Handbook No. 271, compiled by H.A. Fowells, was published by the USDA Forest Service in 1965. This important resource was last updated in the 1980s, with the final compilation published in 1990 as Agriculture Handbook No. 645 with R.M. Burns and B.H. Honkala as coordinators.

Like many of you, I have used Fowells and the Burns and Honkala editions *a lot*, starting in college and continuing to the present. I photo-copied many pages from the 1965 version for my reference library after beginning my forestry education in 1988. One of my roommates in Syracuse brought a copier to our apartment when her father's business upgraded their equipment. Free copies! I copied the species accounts of all the trees in the West Virginia forests even before I started working for the Monongahela National Forest. I talked about Fowells' silvics handbook so much that my future husband found a copy for me for my birthday.

While writing this essay, I pulled my copy of the 1965 version from my office shelf. Among all the cool black and white photos and the neatly drawn range maps was an undated piece of notebook paper. I had apparently been reading Lucy Braun's *Deciduous Forests of Eastern North America* and checking the silvics handbook for more species-specific information. My notes focused on Braun's descriptions of mixed mesophytic and chestnut-oak forests and reflected my uncertainty about some aspects of climax forests. Again, there is no date on these notes, but I think I had just been introduced to the idea that for many forests, some disturbance event will occur at regular intervals, making climax forests a hypothetical stage. I noted the lack of discussion of human influence and disturbance in the book, even though the forests were described as second growth.

I was also apparently pondering the use of even-aged silviculture and how the Forest Service, at least in my limited experience, relied so heavily on even-aged management and area control. These notes are an interesting glimpse into my past, and a reminder that my handwriting used to be more legible. That note on even-aged harvest ties in with a criticism of forestry and silviculture I've heard from a few sources. Critics charge that reliance on even-aged management and the concept of stands doesn't allow for flexible or creative management. Those ideas remind me of my earlier essay in this newsletter on the micro-stand approach. These approaches lie along the spatial scale continuum we all work in – from the area-based approach to balance age classes on ownerships like national forest or large-scale private ownerships, to the individual tree

approach often used by consulting foresters working with a landowner whose forest is much smaller. All are valid, all are needed for creating resilience in our forests, and all go back to the principles of landowner goals and matching tree species to site conditions.

Which brings me back to the efforts to update the *Silvics of North America*. This new version will contain species descriptions across the continent, including Mexico and Canada. There will be more emphasis on responses to disturbances including climate change, fire, and non-native invasive species. The science and technology associated with genetics has grown exponentially since the 1990s and the new silvics handbook will include more information on species genetics. Recognizing that every species interacts and responds differently depending on location, ecoregions will be used to place species in context and describe trends through time and space. Obviously, this is a huge undertaking involving many people. There is committee formed to lead the effort, a core committee below that, and teams are being formed for writing, editing, technical transfer, and maintenance of the information. The group has a goal that the first chapters will be drafted by August 2023 and available for review. If you want to be involved, contact Tom Schuler, USDA Forest Service, National Program Lead for Silviculture Research at - Thomas.M.Schuler@usda.gov.

The notes I found in my 1965 version of the silvics handbook point to my search for information on oaks and fire. I did not learn about prescribed fire as a silvicultural tool in my formal education. When I started with the Monongahela, the established foresters and silviculturists were just beginning to think about how the midwestern oak regeneration problem might be occurring in our forests. Since then, I have found a source for species-specific fire ecology and fire regimes similar to the silvics handbook, the online Fire Effects Information System (<https://www.feis-crs.org/feis/>).

This Forest Service product is a collection of reviews of the scientific literature about fire effects and fire regimes. Reviews and syntheses include trees, shrubs, non-woody vegetation, and animals. In this database you will find thoroughly documented summaries that will help you justify your use of fire in a particular forest community or help in determining if fire is an appropriate management tool. Reviews are available for more than 1,200 species across the United States. The references used to create the reviews are also available on the site in the Fire Effects Library, so no hassles with searching the web for that one paper.

These two reference products I've mentioned – the silvics handbook and the Fire Effects Information System – reflect the great diversity of species and life histories we deal with even within one region. Whether you choose to divide that diversity into patches within a matrix or lump it into stands, we still manage by trying to create the right conditions for the desired species.

**Allegheny SAF Summer
Executive Committee Meeting
August 17, 2022
(via Zoom)**

In attendance: Bud Reaves, Cecile Stelter, Steve Resh, Susan Lacy, Mike Huneke, Dave Trimpey, Jeff Kochenderfer, Kimberly Bohn, Sam Gardner, and Sarah Wurzbacher, Bryan Rose, Sara Fern Fitzsimmons (Minutes). Commenced 7pm

1. Approval of the Minutes, February 16, 2022

Steve Resh moved to approve the minutes from the last meeting. Mike Huneke seconded. There was unanimous approval of the minutes.

2. Winter Meeting 2023

Dave Trimpey has been working to discuss the upcoming winter meeting with the New Jersey Division. He has recently been playing phone tag with Steve Kellerser, but nothing specific is known yet about the meeting.

Cecile has been in contact with Steve K. via email. Sounds like the NJ group does have something put together about the winter meeting, but Steve did not share any details with Cecile. Steve K. did note that he would be discussing those details within the next week or two with Dave T.

What is the backup if NJ backs down? There isn't currently one, but we can scramble for a plan B if everything falls apart with NJ. Sarah W. suggests contacting the Winter 2024 Chapter as a backup.

The next 10 years are scheduled on the website here:

<https://www.alleghenysaf.org/s/ANSAF-Program-Schedule-Mar-2021.pdf>

Dave T. confirms that the Pinchot Chapter is prepped for upcoming summer meeting with an infusion of new members.

3. Treasurer's Report

Steve Resh reports that the ANSAF bank account stands at \$14,912.67 with all bills-to-date. A bunch of bills will soon be coming in for the convention.

The forestry stock market account, which began the year with \$81,900, is now at \$78,543.52 despite the market correction in the middle of the year which brought the balance under \$70K. This is on an initial investment of \$50,000.

The student account has very little activity which has >\$800 in it. Should probably consolidate that with the general fund.

ANSAF has received a \$5000 check for the convention. Also has \$575 that were donated for the luncheon in the account. Cecile S. has checks for \$250 from the Rothrock Chapter and the MD Tree Farm system donated \$750. That meets the \$1500 necessary for the social at the SAF Convention. The Pinchot Chapter will be considering this week a donation for both the social and a general donation to the Allegheny from the Winter meeting.

Steve R. suggests soliciting the NJ, MD, and PA Divisions for additional donations.

There's a buffer above and beyond the \$500 budget for Kimberly to use. Mike H. asks if there is the opportunity to bring in a cake. Kimberly will check.

Mike H. move to approve the report as presented. Bud R. seconds. Unanimous approval.

4. Executive Director's Report

Susan has had adventures dealing with the federal government. She now has to file tax returns electronically which has posed a challenge. Susan has been trying to get an exemption since we are still relatively small but looks like she will have to purchase software to do the taxes.

Susan renewed the PO Box for ANSAF and all is well there though the cost has increased to \$90.

Mike H. authorizes Susan Lacy to purchase the tax preparation software required, not to exceed \$250. Steve R seconds. Passes unanimously.

Cecile encourages Susan to keep us out of jail.

Sarah W. asks if the process of incorporation into SAF will change the tax return process. Susan is unsure of the details, but Lori says SAF is working on gathering and providing the information to the state societies. Cecile has also not received updates.

Susan is also the national convention coordinator and is soliciting for volunteers. Have put out a call for all ANSAF members

Presidential Field Forester Award: is for Josh Flad

Fellows: Dave McGill from WV. And Mike Huneke

With not summer meeting, we will be celebrating these winners at the winter.

5. Membership Committee Report

Bud Reeves provided the membership committee report. As of this afternoon, ANSAF has 586 members with 12 new and rejoined members. Not a lot has changed. Cecile asks if the total membership is up or down from February. Bud thinks it might be up.

Bud asks, "Are there scholarships or methods to reduce membership fees for those with need?"

Cecile thinks that National may work with folks, but is not sure.

Quite a few of the new members are students. Can ANSAF sponsor new members? The PA Division had a conversation about that idea which wasn't resolved. The drop happens when the students then enter the "real world". How do you structure sponsoring the dues for someone?

That's the process where PA got stuck. It's a good idea, but the devil is in the details.

Ask Darnell Pinson for more information. Sarah W. will get that contact info for Bud.

6. Program Committee Report

Nothing more to report from Dave T. apart from the information regarding upcoming meetings provided above.

7. Leadership Academy Update

Susan does not have a lot of information about the upcoming academy, but New England will be hosting the academy again, probably in the spring 2023. Only four participants out of 25 slots were represented by ANSAF members. Portland, ME was a long drive and probably kept some folks away. Hopefully we can get more ANSAF folks involved next time.

Foresters Fund grants can be used now to help cover those costs. The hosting society is in charge of applying to get that funding.

8. Awards Committee Report

Deadline for awards is December 5. Jonathan K says he has someone in mind to whom he will be passing the torch. Needs to happen ASAP.

9. Hall of Fame (HoF) Committee Report

Mike H has not recently discussed the idea with Champ, but Mike thinks that the idea is sustainable. Champ wants to have 4 people on the committee, one person per division, so that it can be continued. Need to circle back with Champ on this. Have consistency carry through by having the immediate past chair helping with the committee so that work can continue to flow. Mike agrees to continue to serve on that committee. Champ has been fully involved with Mike on the video and he can discuss the HoF next time he sees him.

10. Other Committee Reports

Melissa Thomas-Van Gundy is the science coordinator. Do we need to re-add the Science Committee into the ANSAF newsletter? Cecile will follow-up with Susan and Melissa on that.

11. 100th Anniversary update

The social at National Convention is a-go and fully funded. Cecile would like to have an item that we give out at that event and have extras. An engraved bottle opener? A pallet coaster? Hardwood bookmark with the 100th? At the 2006 National Convention in Pittsburgh, Mike Kaye built a guitar and put it on the silent auction.

Cecile led the effort to get the 75th Anniversary document has finally been digitized, which was the biggest lift for that project. Will now be able to update and add to that much more easily. All we had be fore was hard-copy.

12. National Convention Update – Kimberly Bohn

There are only 5 weeks until the convention and everything is falling in place. Main need now is reaching out and getting volunteers to help out. Reach out and contact your network to get folks to both attend and help. The sooner that can happen, the easier it will be for the coordinators. Without the schedule it will be hard for folks to know if they can help during a certain time when they didn't otherwise want to see a speaker or be at a different.

Quiz Bowl is different and shorter. Won't go until 10pm this year. There will only be 4 matches after an initial 30 minutes of trivia.

One last plug to do more activities for young professionals and students. There will be a students-only social but do want some folks to help make connections among those folks. Need 12 volunteers there and we don't currently have anyone. Students or young professionals that can interact with other students. PA Bureau of Forestry should be able to volunteer some new foresters who are coming to the meeting and encourage them to get involved.

Also doing some marketing and publicity. Most SAF members should know about the convention, but if there are other forestry groups you can promote the meeting to, Kimberly can get those marketing materials to you. Agnes Kedmenecz moved to Canada so no longer have a marketing person to help with that.

Almost ready with opening ceremonies. Only have 15 minutes.

- ***ANSAF 100th Anniversary Social on Wednesday evening at 6:30 (this won't appear in the Schedule at a Glance, so we need to get word out - email before and maybe day of convention)***

How many people to expect at the social? Susan asks if SAF will provide an estimate of folks from the region have signed up for the meeting. Is going to be 100? No one has any idea. Need to check first w/ SAF to see if they have any good educated guest. Cecile would like to invite some National SAF folks to visit. Don't want a formal agenda, but want to be ready to welcome SAF leadership and get pictures with them during the event.

Received first \$5K and will receive a second \$5K in October or November. SAF will deduct the cost of the social catering from the second \$5K. It will just come out of that \$5K. Cecile had sent out a message in June/July about funding the cost of the field trip for tour leaders. That will be \$90 for up to 14 tour leaders and co-leaders, so that could cost up to \$1200. Ann and Kimberly thought they should not have to pay for their own tour.

The video costs about \$1000/per minute, and so the video will cost about \$5k. it's not just for opening ceremonies, but also for use at other events and at recruiting, etc. nice that we could use convention money to do something bigger. Intent is to put on the website and get out to divisions and chapters if they are doing any presentations or fairs or high school visits to encourage interest. Will be in a format that we can add to it.

Kimberly meets weekly with SAF and they think everything is coming together and they are pleased with registration numbers to date.

Can still bring items for the auction.

ANSAF members promise not to contact or talk about SAF around Kimberly for at least 14 days after the convention

13. Discussion of Open Member-at-Large Seats

There are two vacancies: Sarah Wurzbacher and Steve Goodman's seats. Cecile asks Jeff K. if there were any members from WV who would like to get involved from WV. Jeff says he will solicit during the upcoming Sept meeting for the division. Would also like to get someone from NJ. At the National convention maybe we can solicit folks in NJ. If you know of anyone who might be interested, please contact Cecile. Very important to fill the vacancies.

14. Committee Structure and Leadership – vacancies

The key is to reach out to individuals and see who might want to help serve some of the open committee and leadership positions. Steve Resh – were the books audited in 2021. Tim Slavin was willing to do that as long as you are the treasurer. Steve doesn't know how to contact him. NJ has gone silent. Steve contact Tim if he can get some contact information. The books need to be audited by 2023.

Cecile asks, "Are there descriptions on each of the committees that people can use?" Mike H says that yes, there are descriptions in the by-laws.

15. Chapter/Division Reports – including any changes to officers

- Jeff K for WV – not a lot to report. A summer meeting will be on September 6-7 at Blackwater State Park. Trying to get back in the groove of having in-person meetings. Is Dave McGill planning on attending the National Convention? Jeff doesn't think he will be, but will check.
- Dave T says that PA Division and Plateau Chapter are meeting very soon. Dave expects both those groups to follow-through on the request for funding.
- Sara F gave a brief overview of Rothrock Chapter including end of August tour with the PA Game Commission around Stone Valley.
 - o Paul Lupo, the current chapter chair, is also leading an initiative to create a Mid-Atlantic silviculture library much like this one: <https://silvlib.cfans.umn.edu/>
- Bud says MD/DE has been focusing on the National Convention.
- Sarah W – have young professionals reach out about Awards. Think about how many excellent field foresters are out there and how few are nominated. We should be more intentional about fostering a pipeline of folks who are great and need to be recognized. Wants to work w/ the new Awards Committee Chair about that. Susan asks about having a separate field forester award at the Allegheny level. Can there be a Presidential Field Forester at ANSAF. If they are submitted by 9/5, they can be turned around and submitted by 3/15 w/o a ton of additional work. Wouldn't our forester of the year be the same thing and submit that person? Susan says the forester of the year isn't always a field forester. The two awards are on different performance cycles (15 years of work vs. a single exceptional year). The barrier to nomination on the Presidential Field Forester is very low because it the application is a simple letter.
- Is there a session at the Leadership Academy about awards? [Yes]

16. Boy Scout Jamboree Update – Mike Huneke

Traditionally held every 4 years but it got out-of-sync with COVID. The Jamboree is a 10-day encampment w/ 10K attendees and likely another 5K day-visitors. Age 14 – 21, which is a primary age group for recruiting for the profession. Traditional SAF-WV division has taken the lead and partnered with WV State forestry agency to share a tent and combined display. Submitted a list of individual organizations to invite.

Terry Baker suggested that SAF would be interested in partnering with the State Society to help staff the booth and ANSAF can help with any of the funding. We can probably also get APP-SAF and others to help with the program. Would be great if a local person can take the lead on coordinating the event. Staff the tent for 10 days from 9am – 4pm. Mike H. asks if Jeff K. can ask the WV Chapter if they can take the lead on this event. Mike would then ask ANSAF to fund the exhibitor fee if WV can take on the event. Barb and Bob took the point on the program in 2019. Barb is still around and might help out.

July 19 – 28, 2023 at Summit Bechtel Preserve outside Fayetteville, WV. Haven't yet published the fee schedule for exhibitors. Mike H. estimates the cost will be around \$3K.

17. Old Business - None

18. New Business - None

Cecile wrapped up the meeting with a thank you and additional plea to get the word out about the convention. We'll see you in Baltimore in a few weeks or in NJ in February.

Motion to close the Exec meeting. Mike 1st. Kimberley seconds. Unanimous.

Meeting adjourned at 8:55pm.

Joshua Flad, CF - Named Presidential Field Forester For SAF District VII

With more than 16 years of contributing to the forestry profession and as the owner of Green Leaf Consulting Services for the past decade, Josh Flad has proven a reliable and profoundly knowledgeable resource for the diverse client pool ranging from non-profit conservation groups, state agencies, academia, and various private forest landowner segments.

These groups are drawn to Josh's expert field skills and in-depth knowledge and use of GIS technology, coupled with his reputation as a trustworthy practitioner who consistently delivers on providing solutions and navigating highly complex projects. Recent examples include ongoing work and partnerships with The Nature Conservancy, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, Blooming Grove Hunting Club, Bethlehem City Municipal Water Authority, Pennsylvania Game Commission, American Bird Conservancy, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Bureau of State Parks, and a multitude on non-industrial private landowners. Projects typically focus on field inventory, analysis and mapping that results in comprehensive management planning that provides access to forest certification and ecosystem markets with emphasis on forest carbon.

Josh is professional certified through SAF and the International Society of Arboriculture, and is a technical service provider with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and qualified as a wetland delineator through EcosourcePA. He attributes much of his success to a solid education, early career mentoring, and competencies in dendrology, botany, forest mensuration, GIS and silviculture.

Josh is a member of Pinchot Chapter.

Congratulations Josh!

Logging's Ongoing Public Relations Battle

Bob Williams is a longtime forester and president of Pine Creek Forestry L.L.C., (pynecreekforestry.com) in Laurel Springs, New Jersey.

Most forest landowners understand the critical role logging plays in the long-term ownership and conservation of their forest resources, both from an ecological and economic perspective. The Britannica definition of logging is "the process of harvesting trees, sawing them into appropriate lengths and transporting them to a sawmill." Of course, there is some variation. Yet both media and extremist environmentalists have successfully redefined logging in the public's minds as the wanton destruction of forests. Over the last forty years, logging, which is a component of some

forestry practices, has been used to demonize our management and use of forest natural resources.

Any reference to logging in the mainstream media usually has a negative connotation. It's as if there's some other, more environmentally-friendly way to harvest trees. Just as people don't like to think of how their animal food is harvested, they apparently don't want to recognize how trees become lumber. With the recent passage of the national infrastructure bill many needed billions of dollars will be dedicated to funding needed forest restoration of our national forests. Already there are efforts in Congress to stop the utilization of this funding to save our national forests from "logging" in the name of fuel reduction, forest restoration, and wildfire prevention. Full disclosure: I am a forester and over my long career have made decisions to log millions of trees on tens of thousands of acres of forest land across North America. I am proud of the work loggers did on these projects and today, beautiful forests cover all of those lands.

Today, there are significant forest practice standards that ensure logging is done correctly. Yet logging is the primary tool used by extremists to limit, obstruct or prohibit tree harvesting anywhere for any reason. They use the word logging like a battle ax to demean, criticize, or ridicule any forest management activity that involves tree cutting. Their hypocrisy is staggering. They refuse to speak of the essential use of wood fiber by every single human being on this planet every single day. We humans are a forest-dependent species, no different than a wood thrush songbird or a grey squirrel. We need forests to survive and sustain our high quality of life for us and generations to come.

The political/social climate of forestry today does not support the management of our forest resources on any level whether public or private. The latest battle cry to save forests from "logging" is the climate crisis. Most extremists now view the climate issue as the silver bullet they have long tried to manufacture, to prohibit or obstruct the cutting of any tree for any reason. Most people agree that the world's forests are critical to sustaining our climate. Trees play a critical role in extracting and storing carbon stocks. Yet when they scream to protect the trees, their hypocrisy grows even louder.

If one understands that wood fiber resources are essential to sustaining our everyday quality of life, how can the extremists be credible if they refuse to address or even mention how and where that wood fiber can or should come from? It is a level of hypocrisy not seen before and simply irresponsible. They all depend on wood every day of their lives yet oppose the sustainable use of wood. Forest landowners need to pay attention to any proposed climate policy that will impact forest use. People in the forestry world need to participate as these policies evolve. We need to help the public understand that they need to support a balanced approach that provides for the critically needed goods and services that our forests provide. Locking forests down is a policy that is both irresponsible and will result in severe negative social and environmental impacts.

The utilization of wood fiber has always and will continue to play a critical role in sustaining both a healthy climate and a healthy economy. This is just a fact that their hypocrisy will one day have to confront.

An Introduction to the James C. Finley Center for Private Forests at Penn State

Contributed by Susan Stout

Jim Finley's innovative research and work with private forest landowners was already drawing national attention when Jim, Allyson Muth, and colleagues from across Penn State founded the Center for Private Forests in 2011 to ensure the continuation of this critically important work. In 2022, Penn State honored Jim's legacy by naming the center for Jim.

As SAF members who share concern for sustaining all our forests, we are keenly aware of the importance of private forests — they comprise 70 percent of the forests in PA, 79 percent in DE, 72 percent in MD, 48 percent in NJ, and 86 percent in WV. The Finley Center's work is focused on PA, but its research and pilot programs have great applicability in other states, too.

The Work of the Finley Center

Since its founding, the Finley Center has made a number of significant contributions to the field of forest stewardship, drawing on decades of transdisciplinary work by Jim and his colleagues. These include conducting novel research to address landowner and professional values, attitudes, and behaviors; leading the storied Pennsylvania Forest Stewards volunteer program, a forest stewardship-focused peer volunteer network; cultivating stewardship across boundary lines; creating training and landowner resources for legacy planning; and developing training programs for financial and conservation professionals to better assist forest landowners.

The Center also has built an engaged community dedicated to improving forest health, resilience, and vitality.

In 2020-2021, the Center Council created a five-year strategic plan to enhance its strengths, better define its work, and lay the course for the next five years. Jim was deeply involved in this effort. The six key aims of the Center are to:

Create Scholarship: Develop and share basic and applied research and experience to expand understanding of private forest landowners, their land, and the professionals who advise them.

Inspire Stewardship: Inspire and cultivate a growing community of private forest landowners adopting stewardship values and practices on their land.

Strengthen Connections: Foster a shared vision and understanding of stewardship among private forest landowners, professionals, and academic faculty necessary for effective collaboration on private forest stewardship.

Expand the Stewardship Community: Broaden the range of stewardship professionals and organizations advising private forest landowners on the stewardship of their land.

Inform Policy: Convey knowledge and insights to aid development and implementation of policies and practices that impact private forest landowners.

Build Infrastructure: Build the Center organization, partnering, and financial capacity to impact forest health and vitality.

These aims all reflect the Center’s enduring commitment to its mission: *Working at the intersection of people and forests, the James C. Finley Center for Private Forests advances research-based insights to inspire and cultivate stewardship of private forests.*

Current Major Finley Center Initiatives to Fulfill its Key Aims

Caring Well for Pennsylvania’s Privately Owned Forests: Past and current research has uncovered shifts in the services landowners seek from the professional forestry community. A 2018 survey revealed Pennsylvania’s consulting foresters were spending less than half their time on what has long been seen as their financial mainstay— timber sales. The average age of consulting foresters responding to this 2018 survey was 60. These data, combined with the decades of decline in undergraduate enrollment in forestry programs—, indicate that forestry professionals may be in short supply at a time when landowners and forests are facing increasing challenges to sustainable management of their woods. Despite the importance of professional forestry expertise, 2021 Center research found that landowners have broad skepticism toward forestry professionals. The Center has a major effort underway to work on these challenges, bringing together members from across the forestry community who hold a stake or play a role in the management and care of private forests.

Starting in 2022, the partnership will be working together to develop professional network-based training programs, community-building meetings and exercises, internship programs, and more. Such collaborative efforts can be far-reaching, from diversifying business models, expanding and elevating the importance of forestry and natural resources professions, attracting more, and more diverse, people to the professions, and, importantly, engaging a larger segment of private forest landowners in actively and sustainably managing their land.

2021 Forest Landowners Survey: Understanding Pennsylvania’s private forest landowners—and their relationship with their land—is essential to providing the right education, resources, and assistance for advancing forest health and vitality. The 2021 Forest Landowners Survey, sent to 6,600 landowners across the state, will provide important data to the Center and our partners as we work to equip landowners with better tools and professional connections for caring well for their woods. This is the fourth such study conducted by the Center and its predecessors, creating a uniquely rich longitudinal database.¹

¹ This work is funded by the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and received support from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture and Hatch Appropriations under Project No. PEN04698 and Accession No. 1019111.

Forestry Legacy Planning and Conservation-based Estate Planning: Pennsylvania’s private forest landowners, who own seven of every 10 acres of the state’s forests, are on average in their late 50s. This means that significant acreages of forestland will change ownership over the next several years. Previous graduate student research under the Center uncovered gaps in the legacy planning process. Many forest landowners don’t know how to plan for their land’s future, and many estate planning professionals are unprepared to help them. The Center is working to create networks of experts who play significant roles in the conservation-based estate planning process. In 2021, the Center led training workshops for natural resources professionals, land trusts, conservancy professionals, and landowners to equip them with the knowledge, resources, and legal and financial tools available for successful estate planning outcomes when forestland is involved. Establishing regional networks of experts and developing a Pennsylvania-specific conservation-based estate planning publication are among the next steps.²

What Happens on Private Forests Affects Us All

The health and vitality of private forests matter to all of us. Private forests contribute to networks of wildlife habitat, to the scenic beauty all around us, to the viability of our industry. The legacy of today’s landowners will shape the size and condition of the forests of tomorrow. The interaction of private forest landowners with our profession can enhance or detract from public understanding of our work. By providing research-based understanding of the relationships private landowners have with their forests, by fostering a large and growing community of landowners and professionals committed to stewardship of forests, and by supporting forestry and other professionals as they work with landowners on their stewardship goals for their land, the Finley Center aims to foster the collaborative stewardship practices needed for healthy and resilient forests.

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Allegheny Society of American Foresters

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Coming Events

October, 2022

13 Roach Bauer Forestry Forum
Wilcox Community Building
Wilcox, PA

February, 2023

15-17 Allegheny SAF Winter Meeting
Doubletree Hilton
Somerset, NJ

July, 2023

9-19 Scout Jamboree
Beckley, WV

Future SAF National Conventions

2023: Sacramento, CA
October 23-28

2024: Loveland, Colorado

2025: New England

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