



Friends of White's Woods Monthly Newsletter



July busy time for FWW Board

The Friends of White's Wood board experienced a rapid-pace July as numerous events and projects kept them scrambling to keep on top of the various situations affecting the woods.

The board hired a consultant forester to analyze the draft Stewardship Plan for all township parks (including White's Woods) that the White Township supervisors finally released to the public on their website June 24. At the same time, the supervisors invited comments on the plan from township residents and other interested parties with a deadline of July 24 for submission.

FWW's consultant forester is Mike Wolf, a graduate of Penn State with a bachelor's degree in forest science and a minor in environmental resource management. He is also a master's student at Penn State in forest resources and has more than 20 years of experience in forest consultancy and education.

At the July 22nd Board of Supervisors' meeting, Wolf presented a complete analysis of the draft stewardship plan, noting that White's Woods is in good health as evidenced by the strong overstory, which indicates a very healthy soil. He said, "White's Woods forest is as beautiful as any I've seen in my career."

Wolf refuted Millstone's plan to rototill and mulch invasives and timber the overstory as a way to promote growth of young desirable trees, saying, "In fact, if you want to know exactly what will grow back after a timber harvest it is quite simple – just look at what is on the forest floor before the harvest and you can know for sure. If there are invasives, you will grow invasives. If there are competing plants, you will grow competing plants. If there is nothing, you will make the perfect environment for increased invasives. Even if you kill all the invasive and competing plants first, you should definitely not add any light until you have an abundance of desirable, protected seedlings in place. The reason is simple...the invasives will come back much faster than any desirable native plant that is a target for deer."

At that same meeting, FWW presented the supervisors with a 250+-page book that compiled survey and petition results; citizen letters to DCNR, White Township, and the editor of The Indiana Gazette; Wolf's evaluations; IUP biologist input; FWW plan evaluation; newspaper articles and the township's original Project 70 application for the funds to purchase White's Woods. You can view this book on FWW's website.

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Photography fundraiser for FWW

Capture the love you and your family have for the White's Woods Nature Center and help protect it by scheduling a photo session right in the woods! **Cheri Widzowski Photography** is offering a series of fundraising events in White's Woods on behalf of the Friends of White's Woods organization. Mini-sessions as well as full-length custom sessions are available through Nov. 1st on select dates. Pets are allowed but must be controlled by the owner.

Session fees start at \$75 (plus 6% PA sales tax) and half of the proceeds will go to Friends of White's Woods. For more information or to schedule a session, email Cheri at cheri@cheriphoto.com or see any of the following: <https://www.cheriphoto.com/get-in-touch>; <https://www.facebook.com/CheriWidzowskiPhotography>; or <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsofWhitesWoods>.



For more information, visit: friendsofwhiteswoods.org

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T-Shirts, Masks, Mugs, Oh. My!

Don't have FWW clothing? Want to make a statement with your COVID-19 mask? Need a morning reminder of the beauty of White's Woods while you quaff your daily brew?

We have the answer.

You can order t-shirts (sizes S to XXL) for \$15 each and masks for \$10 each by sending a check made payable to FWW, Inc., to FWW, Inc., P.O. Box 1271, Indiana, Pa. 15701. Be sure to include size of t-shirt.

Mugs at \$10 are available for sale at Commonplace Coffee, 1176 Grant Street (7 a.m. to 4 p.m., M-F and 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., S/S).

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

In 2008, we thought we had achieved "mission accomplished," but Friends of White's Woods had to spring into action in April when we learned of the Supervisors' new plans. After nearly 12 years of hiatus, we are back and we're stronger than ever!

In these four short months of reactivation, we have reached nearly 200 official members, and almost 100 other followers who receive our regular emails. We're happy to have back a handful of members joining us for the second, or even the third time, some living hundreds of miles away – still trying to protect WWNC.

Several of our members joined at the Red Fox (\$500), Giant Maple (\$250), or Screech Owl (\$100) level and many others at the Tulip Poplar (\$50), Red Oak (\$25) or Box Turtle (\$5) level. A donation of \$25 entitles you to a mask or a t-shirt, and a \$50 donation entitles you to both.

For the coming months, we're challenging each FWW member to recruit a new member. There's strength in numbers so let's get those numbers up! Membership forms can be found at friendsofwhiteswoods.org under the "How Can You Help? Get Involved" link.

July Busy Time *(continued from page 1)*

One of the more interesting responses to White Township's draft Stewardship Plan came from Indiana Borough Council whose letter listed 22 concerns with the plan including specific questions on stormwater runoff, erosion and sedimentation control and lack of specific hydrologic calculations.

The FWW binder was delivered to the county commissioners, Indiana Borough Council, the White Township Planning Commission, the White Township Comprehensive Plan Commission, as well as five Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Offices (three in Recreation and Conservation and two in the Bureau of Forestry).

A scheduling conference on the FWW lawsuit in the Indiana County Court of Common Pleas is scheduled for Aug. 17 via Zoom. In the meantime, you may have read about the White Township Board of Supervisors holding a special meeting on July 20 to redo in public those items pertaining particularly to White's Woods that were done over the last year+ in Executive Session. They called this a "cure" to that part of the FWW lawsuit. What does that mean? The Pennsylvania Sunshine Act (also known as the Open Records law) requires that all governmental discussion and business (i.e., votes) be conducted in public with seven specific exemptions (see <https://www.openrecords.pa.gov/SunshineAct.cfm>). FWW contends that none of the Executive Sessions where matters concerning White's Woods was discussed and voted upon met those exemptions. However, the remedy -- or cure -- that the courts allow require only that the governmental unit redo in public what it had conducted in secret. The Sunshine Act needs to be amended to ensure that the public is privy to all of the discussions that went into the decision. Simply retaking a vote in a public meeting without discussion deprives the public of its right to know.

In other matters, the FWW board voted to obtain membership in the PA Parks and Forest Foundation (PPFF) and the PA Freedom of Information Coalition (PA FOIC).

Do you know how greenspace affects you and your community?

Environment: Trees, grass and other green vegetation provide wildlife habitat, prevent soil erosion, absorb air pollutants, and lower surface temperatures. Lack of green spaces leads to higher air temperatures and more ground level ozone, with fewer trees and plants to clean the air and provide oxygen. Without soil to receive the rainfall and filter the water, sewers become overloaded, causing neighborhood flooding problems as well as polluted water problems which is harmful to aquatic ecosystems.

Health: Green space has a positive impact on mental health. People living in areas with green spaces are less likely to have anxiety disorders or depression, and they are more likely to be physically active, which leads to reductions in respiratory diseases such as asthma, COPD, and upper respiratory infections. Some studies suggest that green spaces reduce common health conditions including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and cancer.

<http://wichita.kumc.edu/Documents/wichita/wire/Green-Space.pdf>

For more information, visit: friendsofwhiteswoods.org

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