



# Fall/Winter Newsletter 2019-20

## WHO ARE WE?

Contributed by Craig Schwegman, *Board of Directors*

The Foundation for Sustainable Forests (FSF) is a land trust. OK, you may ask, what does that mean? A land trust is a charitable organization that protects and stewards land to achieve one or more conservation purposes. The FSF protects forested land as sustainable working forests. For example, a working forest can provide maple syrup and timber products.

You may wonder- why is the work of the FSF so important? Did you know the average age of the 740,000 forest landowners in Pennsylvania is 57? It goes without saying that an unprecedented transfer of forest ownership will take place in the next decade.

It is an unpopular subject, to be sure. But, what happens to the land as owners pass away? Often, the land is divided into smaller parcels and shared with the heirs, a process known as parcelization. It is estimated that 80% of landowners will leave their land to heirs, however only 40% have had a conversation about it. Of those, how many have a plan in place?

And this is where the Foundation for Sustainable Forests comes in. We raise awareness of the importance of conserving these forested ecosystems. We have a unique entrepreneurial approach to the preservation of forested

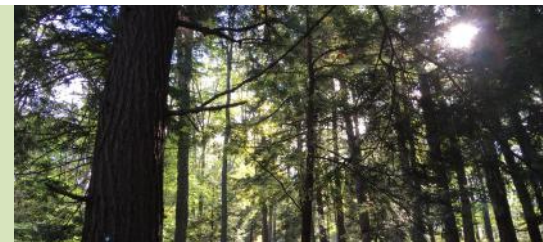
land. As a land trust, we typically acquire land outright and actively manage the forest for ecosystem health and the greatest native biodiversity possible. Our stewardship of that land can financially support the work of the FSF, while simultaneously providing forestry jobs to local communities.

In addition to legacy planning, the Foundation has educational programs to engage forest landowners, land managers and other professionals to introduce improved forest management principles and practices. One example is the annual “Loving the Land through Working Forests Conference”, where we highlight sustainable forestry and other stewardship practices.

We are certain this work is important and we think you will agree. That is why we ask you to spread the word about the FSF. Tell your friends, family and neighbors about what we do and how we do it. Give the gift of membership during this holiday season. Invite them to the upcoming “Friends of the Foundation Dinner” and the “Loving the Land through Working Forests Conference” on May 15-16, 2020. These are unique programs with much to offer. And, if it is within your means, please include us in your charitable giving. And remember, “Many hands make light work!”

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# *Loving the Land—Landowners Tell Their Stories*

## **The Story of Thompsons' Wood**

*In this latest installment of our "Loving the Land" series, we simultaneously highlight two remarkable donors and the land that they recently helped the FSF to conserve. Please join us in thanking Jim & Connie Thompson for their generous support of our Mission.*

Connie and Jim Thompson, of Williamsburg, Virginia have had a lifetime interest in nature and conservation. Both were originally from the State of Michigan, where they were born, and graduated from high school and college.

Jim was a park ranger there during his undergraduate and graduate school summers. Connie grew up enjoying camping in the Great Lakes State with her family.

Later in life, both became Master Gardeners, and continued to learn about plants and conservation.

A few years ago, Jim reread Wendell Berry's essay, "A Forest Conservation" in his 2015 book of essays, "Our Only World". Jim and Connie were inspired by his story about the Foundation for Sustainable Forests, featuring Troy Firth and Guy Dunkle.

The Thompsons were also inspired by the work of Chris Tomkins, former CEO of Patagonia, and her late husband, Doug, former CEO of The North Face. Together they purchased and donated millions of acres of pristine forestland in Chile and Argentina for use as national parks. The Tomkins felt that "one should pay rent for living on this wonderful planet." The Thompsons agreed wholeheartedly.

Jim and Connie originally decided to buy a few acres in PA, build a cabin on it, and eventually donate it to

the FSF. They had been meeting annually with a group of friends in the Cooksburg, PA, and loved the area.

When they started looking at properties in northern PA online, they became smitten with the beautiful patches of forest. They then began considering buying more acreage.

The Thompsons subsequently took a trip north to meet with Troy, Guy, and Annie to learn more about FSF, and to look at forest property on the market. They were taken on a forest walk, and were amazed. During the walk, Annie picked up a little red eft (a juvenile salamander) and let Jim hold him. Jim named him Wendell II. In Jim's mind, Wendell II had just clinched the deal!

The second day of the visit, The Thompsons were shown some of the Foundation's forests, and then lunched with Jane Wood and Pat Maloney, who provided them a tour of Presque Isle. Later that night, they met with Troy, and Guy and Annie and their families for dinner. The Thompsons were taken with the sense of family that existed in the organization.

In discussions with their local CPA's, they came to the conclusion that the idea of a cabin was pretty impractical, and thus decided to make a directed cash donation to The Foundation to buy a fifty-five acre parcel adjacent to land they already owned, but which was somewhat land locked. The Foundation had that property on their wish list for several years. Guy had subsequent discussions with the property owner, and a fair price was agreed upon. The closing was on September 12, 2019 at two o'clock. The Thompsons participated via Skype, and per Guy's suggestion, celebrated the event together with a champagne toast in both Pennsylvania and Virginia.

The Thompsons donated through the Erie Gives Program, who generously added a substantial 5.51% bonus to their donation.

After considering several names for the tract, Jim and Connie agreed that Annie Maloney had the best suggestion: Thompsons' Wood...based on the Winnie the Pooh's 100 Acre Wood.

*Continued on Page 3*



*From Left: Troy Firth, Jim Thompson, and Connie during a tour of the FSF's FLORAROZE forest earlier this year.*

## The Story of Thompsons' Wood, *continued*

In retrospect, the Thompsons said that it all seemed pretty simple. Protecting trees that provide us with life-sustaining oxygen and filtering carbon dioxide out of the air is clearly the right thing to do; hence, their generous donation to The Foundation for Sustainable Forests. According to Jim and Connie, "We remain mindful that we, along with a few other billion people, continue to rent space on this beautiful blue and green planet. Anything, however small, anyone can do to protect trees, is a step in the right direction." Chris and Doug Tomkins had stressed the importance of action. A quote from Edward Abbey by Chris resonated with the Thompsons: "Sentiment without action is the ruination of the soul."

Oh, one more thing: Over forty nine years ago, Connie and Jim were married out-of-doors in the University of Michigan Arboretum. As the twig was bent....

*Jim & Connie Thompson live in Williamsburg, Virginia. Their inspiring story truly speaks for itself!*



*Jim holding the now famous 'Wendell' the red eft, a resident of Thompsons' Wood*

## Spotlight on the 2020 Conference Weekend

### Friends of the Foundation Dinner

Friday, May 15, 2020

Iroquois Boating & Fishing Club, Conneaut Lake, PA



### Loving the Land Through Working Forests Conference

Saturday, May 16, 2020

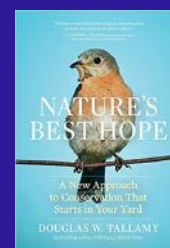
Thompsons' Wood, Centerville, Crawford County, PA

**Keynote Presenter at both events, Doug Tallamy, will speak on "Nature's Best Hope"**

"Recent headlines about global insect declines, the impending extinction of one million species worldwide, and three billion fewer birds in North America are a bleak reality check about how ineffective our current landscape designs have been at sustaining the plants and animals that sustain *us*. Such losses are not an option if we wish to continue our current standard of living on Planet Earth. The good news is that none of this is inevitable. Tallamy will discuss simple steps that each of us can- and must- take to reverse declining biodiversity and will explain why we, ourselves, are nature's best hope."

*Doug Tallamy is a professor of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware. He is author of the acclaimed 2007 book "Bringing Nature Home". His newest book, available in February, is titled "Nature's Best Hope".*

**Special thanks to Ernst Conservation Seeds for sponsoring Doug's visit!**





## Introducing the First Forest

So many “*firsts*”!

A 113-acre woodland has been donated to the Foundation for Sustainable Forests by Ted & Deborah First, is named “*First Forest*”, and is our *first* completed project in New York State.

Chautauqua residents Ted & Deborah First felt that in order to best steward the land they so love, they needed a partner, and after nearly five years as owners, the Firsts decided to team up with the Foundation for Sustainable Forests so that the property would be forever protected as a healthy, working forest.

***“Conservation without a plan or engagement,” Ted said, “is really moving backwards.”***

Under the stewardship of the FSF, the property will remain active in the local community, staying on the tax rolls and providing jobs through sustainable forest management.

Says FSF Executive Director Annie Maloney, “The Foundation for Sustainable Forests is thrilled and honored to be entrusted with the conservation and stewardship of First Forest. We look forward to hosting woods walks and other events there to raise awareness about the importance of thoughtful, careful management as a tool to enhance forest diversity, health and overall resilience.”

With a headwater stream meandering through the forest toward Cassadaga Creek, Ted First describes the land as a “rich, wonderful” area. He envisions First Forest as “thriving” in 100 years, with a century of thoughtful management and the FSF’s “worst-first” approach to tree selection and stand improvements.

Now retired and enjoying all seasons in Chautauqua with children and grandchildren, the Firsts will retain about 7 acres of the 113-acre parcel, through which

they will have access to a meadow and cabin for continued use. Their donation is not the first they’ve made to a land trust or conservation organization. They previously donated 30 acres of wooded Chautauqua County property to the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy.

As a testament to the Firsts’ desire to spread the word about sustainable forestry in western New York, the FSF plans to host an educational woods walk for area foresters and forest landowners in the spring. In March, Annie Maloney and Guy Dunkle will give a presentation on forest management for overall health and resilience at the Audubon Community Nature Center in Jamestown.

Please join us in thanking Ted & Deb First for their vision and generosity, and perhaps take a walk in the woods with us this spring!



*Deb & Ted First on the property, in a hemlock grove next to a headwater stream of Cassadaga Creek.*

# *Celebrating the Ewing Family Woods*

October 6th was Walk in Penn's Woods Day, and the FSF took this opportunity to also dedicate the recently donated Ewing Family Woods in Corry, PA. The donor, Jane Ewing Woods, pictured top right with her nephew and niece, Chad and Jessica Ewing, had a host of friends and family who attended to celebrate the property and take a walk in the woods (and for some, an afternoon of tree-climbing adventures). With 61 people in attendance, it was a true celebration of the connection between people and the land. Thank you Jane for making it possible!



*We'll see you at the....*

## **Northwest PA Forest Landowners Conference**

**Saturday, February 29, 2020**

**Edinboro University, Frank G. Pogue Student Center**

**Spotted Lanternfly**

**Benefits of Young Forests**

**Landowner Panel Discussion**

**Insect and Disease Updates**

**Forest Forensics**

**Deer Impacts on Culture & Ecology**



**Northwest Pennsylvania  
Woodland Owners Association**



For more info or to register,  
contact the PA Bureau of Forestry  
(814) 723-0262 or [fd14@pa.gov](mailto:fd14@pa.gov)



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[foundationforsustainableforests.org](http://foundationforsustainableforests.org)

*The Foundation for Sustainable Forests is a 501(c)3 nonprofit land trust and outreach organization dedicated to conserving forested land and protecting sustainable working forests. Through direct ownership and active forest management we promote the protection and stewardship of healthy, resilient forests.*

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### **January 24 Our Woods & Waters Film Series**

*Edinboro VFW, 10613 PA-98, Edinboro, PA*

### **February 28 - Our Woods & Waters Films Series**

*Venango VFW, 20628 Gospel Hill Rd, Venango, PA*

### **April 26 - Lynn Firth Memorial Spring Wildflower Walk**

*Location to Be Announced*

### **May 15 - Friends of the Foundation Dinner**

*Iroquois Boating & Fishing Club, Conneaut Lake, PA*

### **May 16 - Loving the Land Through Working Forests**

*Thompsons' Wood, Centerville, PA*

For more information, visit [forestsandpeople.org/events](http://forestsandpeople.org/events)  
or call (814) 694-5830