



Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2018-19

“...a mighty trunk may grow”

It has been a big year for me and my family. Our son Rowan was born in June, and has been (mostly) making us grin ever since. In the months leading up to and following his arrival, we have received much wisdom and advice from friends and family, including many of you. For example, I was told to get as much sleep as I could, whenever I could. (I should have listened more carefully!) I was cautioned that my life will never be the same. This has also proven true and is just fine with me. But one resonant refrain that appeared in greeting cards and gifts was this:

*“From a small seed,
a mighty trunk may grow.”*

At five months old and already wearing size “12-months” clothes, Rowan is well on his way to being mighty indeed! Similarly, at 14 years old with so many new projects and partnerships in the works, so is the Foundation for Sustainable Forests (FSF).

I have pondered this phrase quite a bit these last few months, as it relates to the FSF. Initially established as a smaller family trust in 2004, the FSF has certainly grown substantially since the Firth Family’s initial “seed” was planted. In fact, from my vantage point, I see a “trunk” forming strong and true.

But, if we explore this metaphor, what is fueling the “trunk’s” growth? The answer to this question is the key to understanding how to continue to foster the FSF’s growth sustainably and intentionally. When I ponder this question, the answer is, invariably, you.

Sure, there are many different resources required for any tree to grow. Water, light, nutrients are all essential elements to growth, and can be compared to the fiscal and material resources required to operate the FSF.

But, any two trees given the same resources will not respond exactly the same way. There are determinants of growth that scientists struggle to measure. In our case, I firmly believe that *you* are the unquantifiable element supporting the FSF’s development into a vibrant organization, as vigorous as the forests it manages.

If you are wondering how you are accomplishing this, it goes far beyond your financial support. It is how you reach out to your friends, neighbors and each other to discuss the need for forest stewardship and conservation. It is in your willingness to have difficult conversations with your family about your land’s future. It is most certainly in your courage if you are considering conservation of your own woodland when others may balk at the idea.

And so, in this season of gratitude, I want to take this opportunity to thank you for growing the FSF to where it is today. As 2019 approaches, I am excited for the projects that lie ahead. In the meantime, enjoy this holiday time with friends and family, and we look forward to connecting with you in the new year!

Annie Socci, Executive Director

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Teaming up to Manage and Protect Erie's Urban Forests

The Foundation for Sustainable Forests is excited to partner with the City of Erie on its Sustainable Forest Management Initiative.

Launched at a press conference alongside Erie Mayor Joseph Schember and City Arborist Sarah Galloway on November 1, the project aims to develop a long-term sustainable management plan for the city's 150+ acres of urban forests. As Sarah Galloway described in the press conference, "Our forests face many threats, such as invasive species and climate change. These impacts are affecting forests even when they are left untouched."

The goal of this partnership is to develop a plan that protects and promotes native plant diversity through invasive species management, improves habitat diversity and quality for birds and other wildlife, and educates the public on the role of sustainable forestry in maintaining healthy forests. It is the City's hope that this plan will ensure the long-term health and vigor of its urban forests, while continuing to provide the surrounding community with benefits such as clean air and water, and overall wellness gained from time spent in the woods.

This initiative will showcase approaches to fostering diverse, resilient forests, and broaden the FSF's impact on beyond the lands it manages and protects. Ms. Galloway is hopeful that this will provide a template for neighboring municipalities who would similarly like to see their wooded parks managed sustainably over time.

As a nonprofit organization, the Foundation for Sustainable Forests is uniquely positioned to work with the city. Although primarily a land trust, a significant part of the FSF's mission is dedicated to promoting sustainable forest practices. In addition to advising the city in the development of their plan and doing work on the ground, the FSF will also be able to assist in seeking grant funds for invasive species control and outreach efforts.

As the project begins, we will be meeting with neighborhood groups surrounding these wooded parks, and seeking input from Erie area groups such as the Erie Bird Observatory and I Am a Planet Kid, and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Bureau of Forestry.

Mayor Schember included in his announcement the potential plan to cut and remove dead or diseased trees from the parks, such as ash trees affected by the emerald ash boring beetle. Any trees that are removed will be determined by the needs of the forest, and net proceeds generated from any tree removal will be reinvested back into the parks, for example to help control the spread of invasive species such as multiflora rose and ornamental vines that spread from neighboring yards.

The FSF looks forward to working with the City of Erie on this visionary initiative!

For more coverage and photos, visit <http://www.goerie.com/news/20181101/erie-launches-program-to-preserve-urban-forests>



Left: Guy Dunkle and an impressive white oak tree, **Center:** (Back row from left) Guy Dunkle; Erie Mayor Joe Schember; Director of Public Works Dave Mulvihill. Front Row from left: Annie Socci; Sustainability Coordinator Sarah Galloway; Jane Woods, **Right:** A shagbark hickory looms large



Thank you for another inspiring Erie Gives Day!

The Foundation received \$14,717 in Erie Gives Day donations, *and* received matching grants in the amounts of \$495 from the Erie Community Foundation and \$2,350 from the Corry Community Foundation! Both grants are awarded in proportion to donor gifts, and so your gift of any amount that day was magnified.



\$1000+

Jim & Jane Reilly

Anonymous

\$500-\$999

Troy Firth

Chris H. Lundberg

Bob & Jane Slagter

\$250-\$499

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With additional Anonymous donors

Bob & Jane Slagter are Outstanding PA Tree Farmers of the Year!

Contributed by Maureen Burnham, Pennsylvania Forestry Association

Jane and Bob Slagter own 52 acres of forested land along Caldwell Creek in Southwest Township, Warren County. The Slagters are the Pennsylvania Outstanding Tree Farmers of the Year for 2018.

Bob Slagter is a member of the FSF's Board of Directors, and donated a conservation easement on the property to the Foundation in 2014. To quote Dave Trimpey, Area Chair #1, "Bob is the epitome of forest steward. He has spent countless hours over many years improving his own land and promoting forest stewardship to others."

The Slagters' efforts over 20 years to manage their land sustainably with consideration of Wood, Water, Wildlife, and Recreation are exemplary. As we all know, managing your woods is a multifaceted activity benefitting landowners and communities.

Conducting numerous tours on Pennsylvania Tree Farm #3533 has helped spread the word about woodland value and opportunities. These outreach activities always promote Tree Farming.

Bob's leadership and support exhibited for the Forest Stewardship Program with participation and writing newsletter articles have been very valuable in promoting Forest Stewardship in Pennsylvania. Many of us got our first taste of planned forest management through the Forest Stewardship Program.

The PATFOY Award was announced along with presentation of a slide show at the Pennsylvania Forestry Association Annual Meeting on October 6, 2018. The award will be presented to Jane and Bob at the December 13, 2018, Pennsylvania Tree Farm Committee Meeting at the Central PA Visitors Center, State College, PA.

Congratulations to Jane and Bob for a well deserved recognition!



Slagter (right), receiving the Warren Co. Conservation District Tree Farmer of the Year award, also in 2018.

2nd Annual Walk in Penn's Woods



The FSF once again participated in this statewide event on Sunday, October 7th, this time co-hosting with Presque Isle Audubon at their Laura Olsen Memorial Sanctuary in Rockdale Township, Crawford County. It was a lovely afternoon, enriched by the collective curiosity and knowledge of all who attended!



Loving the Land— Landowners Tell Their Stories

Contributed by Carmen & Kathy Testi
Written by Ellis Giacomelli

On a quiet afternoon, Carmen Testi planted young trees. He worked for hours, trying to build new life on his new land, pausing only to reorganize the plans in his head or to smile at his then-girlfriend, Kathy, who was crocheting in his pick-up truck.

A small hickory had an unfortunate injury, a split down its center, and Kathy offered to mend it.

“We used the yarn to wrap around it, to heal it, because he didn’t have rags or tools with him,” Kathy Testi said. “He said ‘That’s when I knew you were the one.’”

Carmen was 24 years old when he first purchased a parcel of North East, Pennsylvania property: 17 acres in 1981, seven acres in 1986, nine in 1996 and 17 more in 2006. Carmen and Kathy now live on the 50 acres, but their journey with the land has been long and laborious.

John Testi of Harborcreek, Carmen’s father, introduced his children to forestry through his own part-time logging work, selling to Hammermill Paper in Erie, Pennsylvania. Carmen loved the outdoors as a child and young adult and knew he wanted to own land as an adult.

When he found the North East property, it was littered with farm equipment, industrial waste, car parts, tires, a trailer, an old house and an old barn. He had work to do.

Carmen spent a year doing initial clean-up work, and a large field in the back of the property had begun to regenerate into a woodlot, so he wanted to plant young trees there. Carmen gathered acorns from Lawrence Park, hickory nuts in Waterford and black walnuts from his father, and he grew 600 trees.

He then transplanted them into the open field and began a confrontation with local deer. Because Carmen could not afford fencing to prevent deer from damaging the juvenile woodlot, he sprayed the young trees with a deer repellent, Hinder, and used several odorous materials to detract deer from the property.

“Deer have a wonderful ability to get used to things,” Carmen said. “So once they get used to a smell, you have to introduce a different smell.”

Trees were adorned with ornament-like rags soaked in oil or diesel fuel, Irish Spring soaps or perfumes.

“That’s how I got rid of all my bottles of old stinky perfume,” Kathy said.

Carmen persisted in these detraction efforts and was successful in bringing the field to life, and the former field eventually required thinning.

Carmen was a truck mechanic for 42 years, and according to Kathy, can fix almost anything. He has demonstrated an incredible dedication to managing deer and invasive species and has worked for nearly 40 years to ensure a new legacy for the once deteriorating land.

Carmen and Kathy use what they learn from conservation magazine articles, other landowners and Foundation events to increase their understanding of timber stand improvement and sustainable principles.

“I was really glad we got the opportunity to be introduced to the Foundation for Sustainable Forests because we don’t have any children, and I don’t know if we had any children if they would appreciate it anyway,” Carmen said.

Carmen and Kathy have lived on the property since 1993 — in a barn-style structure they built — and hope to leave the 50 acres with the Foundation. Their interest in Foundation values continues to grow as they spend time with other landowners and develop new local relationships.

“The story is about when we get together with all of those landowners, and we share stories and what we’ve tried — our failures and our accomplishments and our common goal,” Carmen said. “That’s the most important thing.”

Do you have a story to share? We would love to hear it! To contribute your story or be interviewed, e-mail Annie Socci at amsocci@forestsandpeople.org





Foundation for
Sustainable Forests
22418 Firth Rd.
Spartansburg, PA 16434

(814) 694-5830
info@forestsandpeople.org
foundationforsustainableforests.org

*Please consider including the Foundation for Sustainable Forests
in your year-end charitable giving!*

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 active forest management we promote the protection and stewardship of healthy, resilient forests.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Our Woods & Waters Film Series

A Joint Offering of
the Foundation for Sustainable Forests & the French Creek Valley Conservancy

Friday, Jan. 11, 6:30pm
Helene Barco-Duratz Cultural Center
415 Chestnut Street Meadville, PA

Friday, Feb. 22, 6:30pm
Erie National Wildlife Refuge
11296 Wood Duck Ln, Guys Mills, PA

Selected short films, including:



8th Annual Conference

Loving the Land Through Working Forests

Saturday, May 11, 2019

The Woodland Lodge, Grand Valley, PA