



Spring/Summer Newsletter 2019

Greetings all! After a wet, cool spring, the mid-summer heat is upon us, and the spring green-up, simultaneous with the Foundation's usual flurry of events, has made way for a (very) slightly slower pace. It is a good time to take a step back to take stock of things.

First, I will be quick to say that the FSF is doing well, with so much to celebrate. Inside this newsletter you will see images of Troy Firth humbly receiving recognition for his good work in forestry and conservation. Pictured above is Stony Hollow Run, a tributary to Caldwell Creek, located within the newly protected Stony Hollow Forest, successfully acquired in May. True to the FSF's mission, there are continued conservation conversations that will surely lead to the protection in perpetuity of woodlands for the benefit of communities and ecosystems alike. And, Guy Dunkle and I continue to give presentations at regional and statewide conferences about forest management for ecosystem resilience and, more recently, creative ways to finance land conservation.

With each successful project, the FSF moves along towards self-sustainability, while also working towards increasing its capacity for outreach, management partnerships, and landowner outreach.

But, we are not there yet.

The FSF has a need for funds that support land conservation expenses and investments in the forest such as invasive species control and forestry infrastructure, particularly in woodlands that require restoration beyond regular maintenance.

At 15 years young, the FSF is in exciting phase—on the cusp of meaningful, mission-driven growth. With your support, we can expand our positive impact on the forest landscape across the region, forge new partnerships, and participate in important conversations that will affect our forests for a long time to come.

There are multiple ways for you to be a part of this work. As a Member, you can support the FSF's operations and validate its mission. You can also make a contribution on Erie Gives Day, an annual campaign that provides matching funds to your donation. Erie Gives is just a few weeks away on August 13th (*see Page 6 for details*). And as always, your engagement at events or as a volunteer is invaluable. You bring the energy, resources and fresh ideas that keep the FSF going strong.

Thank you for continuing to be a part of this organization.

With appreciation,

Annie Maloney

Pictured above: Stony Hollow Run flows into Caldwell Creek and is located in the recently conserved Stony Hollow Forest

In this issue:

- 2-3 *Good Forestry in NW PA*
- 4 *Landowners Tell Their Stories—Clarence Cleer*
- 5 *Spring Photos, Update from the Bail Family*
- 6 *Upcoming Events*



Good Forestry in Western Pennsylvania

*Reprinted with permission from Northern Woodlands magazine
www.northernwoodlands.org*

Contributed by Dave Mance, III

The idea of “good” forestry can be hard for a layman like me to pin down, in part because it occupies a place on a sliding scale that gets adapted to different scenarios. If you’re a timber company managing 50,000 acres of spruce/fir in Maine, good practices might mean leaving a percentage of canopy around watercourses, using a herb-friendly herbicide as you steer the regeneration in your clearcuts, using a forwarder to minimize soil compaction in wet areas. Of course a landowner managing 50 acres might define “good” as single-tree selection, no cutting at all around water, and using horses instead of any kind of machinery.

There are practical reasons for this sort of subjectivity – one size does not fit all; the perfect should not be the enemy of the good; money talks; insert your own cliché here. But one of the dangers of the sliding scale is that it makes it awfully easy to slide into mediocrity and a muddled idea of what “good” and “best” really mean. This problem is compounded by the inherently ambiguous nature of the pursuit; the story we write with our chainsaws plays out on a time scale of hundreds of years, so “good” is always relative – it’s qualified by what comes next, much of which we can’t even predict.

I was thinking of all this recently while on a trip in western Pennsylvania, where I visited with a group called the Foundation for Sustainable Forests. The group is a 501(c)(3) land trust and advocacy organization that buys and manages large chunks of woodland in an interesting way. Their idea of exemplary forestry has been cultivated over the years by Troy Firth, a soft-spoken, sage-like figure who’s been overseeing the management of his 7,000 acres using techniques that rely heavily on experience, intuition, and observation. In their words (channeling Troy’s

words): “Emphasize art, not just science: Our scientific understanding is limited to a single generation of trees. Therefore, personal experience and intuition must play a role.”

I spent a great day out in the woods with Troy, Guy Dunkle, Pat Maloney, and Owen Ludwig, all of



A cherry-hard maple stand near Grand Valley, PA

whom help manage Troy’s land. (Pat’s also involved in the maple side of Troy’s business – with 30,000+ taps, they run the second-largest operation in Pennsylvania and run it well; they averaged .48 gallons of syrup per tap this year.) We toured some stands they were especially proud of, including abandoned pastureland that they’ve helped turn into productive, diverse woods, and one of those mature Allegheny cherry stands you hear about in folk tales, the 4- and 5-log trees gun barrel-straight.

I kept trying to quantify things as we walked, and Troy kept trying to deflect. “So you’ll thin these poles in 10 years?” “Don’t know.” (Actually, I think he may have responded with a simple shoulder shrug.) At the core of his philosophy is the idea that

(continued on page 3)

Renew or Become a Member Today

Join a vibrant community of conservationists, woodland owners, land managers, ecologists, naturalists, and concerned neighbors, and together we will strengthen our voice in forest conservation. Please tell your friends and family about us too!

\$25 Individual • \$50 Family • \$100 Sustaining • \$250+ Forest Partner

Please send your preferred contact information and a check payable to the Foundation for Sustainable Forests: 22418 Firth Rd, Spartansburg, PA 16434
Or visit foundationforsustainableforests.org and join online via Paypal.



a forest is constantly changing, and so arbitrary deadlines aren't helpful. He has no use for charts. I was reminded of the U2 lyric "vision over visibility" – the idea that you need to serve the big picture instead of what's right in front of your eyes. I was also taken by the way Troy's management values an individual forester's intuition and intelligence over group-think and rubrics. Instead of a top-down prescription, the idea here is a bottom-up approach, where the stand dictates its own prescription, an observant forester takes note and then works to make it happen. Foresters are encouraged to think outside the box; to try, and if they fail, go back in and correct the mistake; to learn and apply what they've learned going forward. (The low-intensity, high-frequency work they do allows for this kind of trial and error; when you treat big areas aggressively, you essentially put all your eggs in one basket.)

In their words: "[We] let conditions recommend the management rather than dictating conditions through management." In the smoking cherry stand I toured, the understory was largely maple, which was fine with them. They'll keep a relatively closed canopy, cherry-pick the cherry logs when the value is maximized, and steward a maple forest next. This malleability stands in contrast to the practice of growing the cherry to term, conducting an aggressive shelterwood or seed tree harvest designed to maximize value, and then regenerating the next crop of cherry in big openings, the idea being that this was a cherry stand, and we'll do what it takes to keep it a cherry stand.

The silviculture they practice is relentlessly worst-first, and they aggressively treat invasives and undesirables. Guy pointed out to me that their forestry sounds a lot like the forestry the late Irwin Post practiced, though whereas Irwin referred to his brand as "intensive," based on the fact that he was micromanaging every stem in the woods, they spin their way as

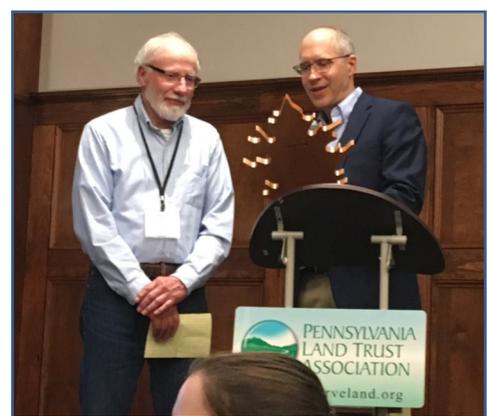
"low intensity," since instead of walloping a stand with a big harvest every 30 years, they're constantly taking small volumes of low-grade wood out, along with any fully mature sawlogs that are ready to go.

However you want to describe it, the frequency of the work is the novel part. A lot of forestry, at least around where I live, is practiced in 10-year (if not 20 or 30 year) intervals. They'd argue it should be practiced yearly, or close to that. (I'm being careful as I write this, remembering that anytime I tried to attach a metric to something, Troy frowned.) Another novel piece is their heavy reliance on horses to do the harvesting. The region they sit in is Amish country, so there's a willing and able work force. It was very cool to walk through large blocks of managed forest without seeing logging roads, no hint of mechanical disturbance on the earth, even while the stumps and tops denoted work.

I'm not sure how exportable this brand of forestry is. Their region is unique for its Amish presence and availability of horse labor; its high-value hardwoods also help the horse loggers get into the black, something they couldn't do in a lot of cut-over New England woodlots. There's also the challenge of replicating practices that are intentionally vague. One of the things charts and guidelines do offer is the ability to export ideas efficiently. The FSF philosophy relies heavily on process, which is a harder thing to convey.

This is not to say, though, that there aren't parts of this that could serve as a model elsewhere. Getting back to that original question of what good forestry is, the work this group is doing out in western Pennsylvania sets a high bar that's worth noting.

Dave Mance, III is editor-in-chief of New England-based Northern Woodlands magazine. He was the featured presenter at Loving the Land Through Working Forests Conference in May.



This Spring the FSF's President & Founder, Troy Firth, was honored with a Western PA Environmental Award by the PA Environmental Council and Dominion Energy, and a Lifetime Conservation Achievement Award by the PA Land Trust Association. Left: Whitney Firth (Troy's daughter), Guy Dunkle, Troy Firth, Annie Maloney, Bob Slagter, and PEC President Davitt Woodwell. Right: Troy receiving his award at PALTA's Conference, presented by Executive Director Andy Loza

Loving the Land— Landowners Tell Their Stories

Clarence & Deb Cleer live in Spring Creek, PA, close to many FSF-protected woodlands. Years ago, Clarence approached the FSF about the possibility of selling his woodland as a bargain sale, meaning less than fair market value. In 2011, the FSF purchased the property using an owner-financed model, in which the FSF could conserve the property in perpetuity through small monthly payments over a long period of time. We see significant potential in this model of financing land conservation financing, and are happy to highlight the Cleers' story here.

Contributed by Ellis Giacomelli

Clarence Cleer is a thinker.

“I call his brain the primordial ooze,” said Clarence’s wife Deb. “Even when he’s on his way to sleep, it comes.”

Clarence has been exposed to the woods all his life, though he doesn’t describe himself as an outdoorsman. He enjoys hiking and spending time alone in the woods, and he has a clear vision for his land and a conservation-oriented way of thinking that extends into his many creative ventures. A thinker, no doubt, a tinkerer and inventor, Clarence has used his career experiences in the heating industry to reimagine products and systems. Most of his ideas have been centered around heating technology, but others include a more efficient urinal model and a breathable surgical cast. “I guess the bottom line for all of them, with the exception of that cast, was the conservation of energy,” he said. “That’s the umbrella.”

Clarence’s land, situated on a small south-facing hill in Spring Creek, PA, has witnessed Clarence’s thoughtful management and conservation ethic. Since Clarence and Deb moved to their Spring Creek home in the early 2000s, Clarence has employed some timber stand improvement principles to benefit his woods. He has connected with local foresters and the Foundation for Sustainable Forests for further management guidance, and he sold 50 acres of his forested land to the Foundation as a bargain sale in 2011. “I’m at peace with it,” he said. “It’s not an issue anymore of what I’m going to do with it.”

As we sat in their kitchen, birds sang to us through the windows, and Clarence and Deb recalled the many priceless memories their land has inspired. “For me, the ability to create memories for my grandchildren — stuff they’ll never forget — that’s irreplaceable,” Deb said.

Clarence said the woods were all he needed to entertain the young ones. “All I had to do was take them out in the woods, simple as that, didn’t have to take a damn thing with me and they’d be gone,” he said. “I had to keep an eye on them so they didn’t wander off and get lost, but they’d just play all day, digging an old stump apart or climbing a tree.”

They laughed about times young grandchildren would run naked outside, and other times when Clarence used dynamite to remove stumps, but they also expressed some fear of clearcuts, gas wells, and camp developments that could threaten future memories. “I thought that selling to the Foundation would give me all that I wanted out of the woods — access to it if I wanted to go, taking care of it, and number three, keeping it safe from development,” he said. Clarence said he hopes other properties in the area will eventually be incorporated into the Foundation.

Protecting their land from development and allowing it to become a sustainable forest has allowed their neighboring home to remain a refuge. “Sometimes people say to me, ‘you have an awfully long driveway to plow,’ and I say ‘good,’” Clarence said.

Clarence has a way of speaking, a soft yet clear voice, that evokes the kind of pensiveness so present in his inventive and creative personality. In their peaceful corner of the world, Clarence and Deb continue to laugh, continue to remember all their land has provided and will provide, and Clarence continues to think.

Would you like to share your landowner story? E-mail info@foundationforsustainableforests.org

Thank you to the Rotary Club of Meadville!

The Foundation for Sustainable Forests received a grant from the Rotary Club of Meadville to purchase a new LED Projector for educational programs, and public events such as the “Woods & Waters Film Series”. Thank you for your generosity, and for supporting charitable organizations in the community!



Scenes from *Loving the Land Through Working Forests Weekend*



The weekend of May 10th was a sunny (yes sunny!) one, and the Woodland Lodge provided a wonderful setting for our Dinner and Conference. The Foundation would like to once again thank presenters Patricia Leopold, Dave Mance, III, Allyson Muth, Josh Parrish, and its very own Troy Firth and Pat Maloney for sharing their expertise.

Save the date for the next year's Conference ! May 16, 2020



We wish to extend our thanks to our sponsors, who made these events possible!



Craig & Monica Schwegman



NATIONAL WOODLAND OWNERS ASSOCIATION



Emil & Kathy Spadafore

Bob & Jane Slagter

Northwest Pennsylvania Woodland Association

A Note on the Bail Family, Donors of the Bail Family Forest

The FSF is sad to announce the passing of two members of the Bail Family, who were instrumental in the donation and conservation in perpetuity of the Bail Family Forest. Frederick T. Bail, a Professor Emeritus in Education at the University of Hawai'i, passed in January. His brother Richard N. Bail, Jr, a Doctor of Internal Medicine and founder of Communities Without Borders, a non-profit organization that serves underprivileged communities in sub-Saharan Africa, passed away in May. Some of us were fortunate enough to meet Richard N. Bail, Jr. at the 2017 dedication of the Bail Family Forest. Our thoughts are with the Bail Family.



Richard N. Bail, Jr , second from left, surrounded by his niece, sister Carrie Bail, and brother-in-law at the Bail Family Forest dedication in 2017.



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

(814) 694-5830

info@forestsandpeople.org

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.

Board of Directors

Troy Firth
President

Thomas C. Hoffman II, Esq.
Secretary

Emil Spadafore, Esq.
Treasurer

Richard Bowden, PhD

Guy Dunkle

James Finley, PhD

Patrick Maloney

Craig Schwegman

Robert Slagter

Dr. Jane E. Woods

Staff

Annie Maloney, PhD
Executive Director

John Noel Bartlett
Development Director, Emeritus

UPCOMING EVENTS



Tuesday, August 13th

is

Erie Gives Day

Visit www.eriegives.org or call (814) 454-0853 on 8/13, or
New This Year: Give by check until 8/12

Sunday, October 6th

A Walk in Penn's Woods

1pm-4pm • Ewing Family Woods in Corry, PA

And, our favorite event to celebrate **YOU!**

Saturday, November 3rd

Annual Fall Potluck

4pm • The Woodland Lodge, 2662 Eureka Rd. Grand Valley, PA

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