



Spring/Summer Newsletter 2020

NOTES ON STEWARDSHIP

Contributed by Guy Dunkle
Land Manager & Director

Like other organizations, the FSF has had a significant change in its schedule and operations for this year. Although the pandemic has impacted our ability to fundraise and hold events, our work in the woods has changed only moderately. In fact, the quiet has allowed us to focus attention on some field projects that we had been putting off.

First, we're undertaking access improvements at our Thompsons' Wood property near Townville, PA. We received generous donations from members as well as a grant from the USDA Rural Development office to purchase the access, and now we're investing in gravel and new culvert pipes so that the road remains viable and the integrity of a Sugar Creek headwater stays intact. We've also spent a number of hours building physical barriers and posting signs to keep ATV traffic out of Stony Hollow Forest. The PA Game Commission has partnered with us in this effort, patrolling the property for illegal ATV trespass.

This summer we have hired Ecological Field Services to control invasive plant species on several properties. At our 106-acre Floraroz Forest in Platea, PA, a crew of five worked with backpack sprayers and an ATV-

mounted pump to treat almost 25 acres for non-native plants. Much of the area contained multiflora rose, including some seemingly impenetrable dense patches. The crew took a methodical approach, covering a grid pattern across the area to be treated. They also addressed small infestations of garlic mustard and common privet around an old farmyard at the north end of the property. Additionally, the workers identified native swamp rose plants, which they carefully avoided.

Over the winter we completed a harvest of dead and dying ash trees at the First Forest in Chautauqua, NY. This spring we undertook some remediation work there, grading skid trails, re-establishing erosion and sedimentation controls and smoothing the graveled truck road. With the freshly constructed access and trail system, we're looking forward to hosting a public woods walk next spring, if safe to do so.

Of course, these important projects take time and money – and in the face of cancelled fundraisers and delayed events our need for support has only grown. If you are able, please consider making a gift to the FSF during the Erie Gives Day or Crawford Gives Day campaigns. Spring cleaning may not be glamorous, but we can't undertake projects such as these without your support.

Take care and I look forward to crossing paths with you in our "spruced up" forests next year!

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Quarantine Activities

Contributed by Bob Slagter, Board of Directors

*“Got to stop wishin’
Got to go fishin’
Down to rock bottom again”
-Jimmy Buffet, ca. 1975*

I looked on in raptured happiness as the 14-inch trout came slowly into my hand. It was a hold-over brown trout (one that was stocked from the hatchery some years before) that had survived and grown in the creek. To me that is the best sign of water quality, survival of small stocked or stream-born fish. It is what makes them my favorite fish. I was enjoying an idyllic day ... the stream all to myself, the sun warm and bright overhead, fresh fish all over Caldwell Creek ... it was truly heavenly. If I had to shelter in place, I don't know where better to shelter.

I stayed at the Creekhous for the first 5 or 6 weeks of quarantine and got to see spring everyday up close and very personal. The birds were exceptional, and there was even a piebald deer to watch and as an extra added attraction for two of the weeks, we put up deer fencing around 15 acres of the property. What a cool project. Even though none of us had

put one up before, our leader did a great job guiding our work. It looks great and hopefully works in allowing regeneration to happen on these acres.

The project was part of the Cerulean Warbler program at the USDA-NRCS, who provided the funding for the work. The project was a kind of “reset” on a portion of the property that was overrun with invasive plants and had no native tree regeneration. After heavily cutting undesirable trees and industrial-spraying the acreage, we will watch for natural, native regeneration or if we don't get that, perhaps we will seed parts of it with species like tulip poplar and white oak and others native to the area. One thing for sure is, this will



Bob Slagter in his element- fly-fishing Caldwell Creek

Help the FSF to raise \$17,000 for 1700 acres August 10-11

As Guy Dunkle mentioned on page 1, the pandemic has changed the FSF's focus, calendar, and fundraising needs and abilities for 2020. Of course, we can only imagine how it has changed *your* lives as well. And yet, you have come through with steadfast and much-needed support in our first fundraiser of the year—the Covid-19 appeal that took the place of the annual Membership drive. Thank you for maintaining your commitment to the FSF amidst uncertainty, unexpected changes to your finances, and changes to your everyday lives as well.

As the FSF works to close budget gaps and address the stewardship needs of its 1700 acres of protected woodlands, we are asking for your continued support during our annual Erie Gives Day campaign on August 11th. Also on the calendar this year is the 2nd annual Crawford Gives campaign, taking place on both August 10 & 11.

Both events are structured similarly. Your gift receives a prorated match from either the Erie Community Foundation or the Crawford Heritage Community Foundation- you choose! Your gift will support the FSF's continued forest conservation efforts, and much-needed invasive species management and native plant health on several properties— an ongoing, and sadly increasing, need across the region. Native plant species make for healthier, more resilient, and more functional ecosystems that benefit us all.

As an added benefit, your gift will also have a compounding effect on the giving culture of northwest Pennsylvania, particularly at a time of so much community need. You have the chance to contribute to multiple organizations that matter to you, and lead the way for others to do the same. Visit foundationforsustainableforests.org/events



produce a very different result than we could have gotten any other way.

One organization to thank for this project is the Foundation for Sustainable Forests . I think back to when I first heard about the Foundation (you do a lot of thinking when you're sheltered in place) I couldn't have dreamed about the richness of rewards that I would receive from this incredible organization. I won't list them all, but to highlight a few of the benefits that have come my way: I have written a legacy plan for my property and donated 50 acres of forest to the Foundation as an easement.

The lesson here is that virtually everything you need for your land is right here at this unique and unprecedented organization. So, let's use the resources at our fingertips to make our forest land a better place, let's do everything we can think of to make our little corner of the world better. In the end, it may be all we can do. Thanks to you all for this wonderful organization. Please stay safe.

Bob Slagter is the Chair of the FSF's Board Fundraising Committee, a PA Forest Steward and its Steering Committee Chair, and the 2018 PA Tree Farmer of the Year alongside his wife, Jane.



Deer fence construction at Bob's Dotyville property

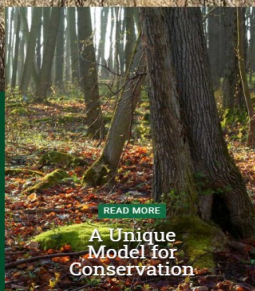
A Note on Deer Fences

The decision to put up a deer enclosure is not a small one, just as building an effective fence is no small feat. Deer enclosures are used in areas where heavy browsing by deer is interfering with plant abundance and diversity, and preventing diverse, healthy tree regeneration.

Bob's decision to spray the understory on 15 acres of his woodland and then build a deer fence was, in a way, a "reset" button in an area that has a declining overstory with little or no regeneration in the understory. In the coming years, the FSF will monitor the native plant growth inside, in comparison to the surrounding forest, in the hopes of finding restored native regeneration.

Our website has a new look!

Home About Explore Get Involved Outreach For Landowners Updates Contact Donate



At a time when many of us continue to keep our social "bubbles" smaller than usual and are connecting virtually instead, the FSF has given its website a fresh look and updated content.

Visit foundationforsustainableforests.org to explore the FSF's protected properties, learn more about Forest Conservation Planning, Resources for Landowners, and Planned Giving, search our archive of publications and news, and learn more about how you can help to conserve and restore our region's forests.

The site continues to be a work in progress, so your feedback is welcome! Contact Annie Maloney with comments: amaloney@forestsandpeople.org.

Loving the Land—Landowners Tell Their Stories

Ted & Deb First of Chautauqua, NY, donated the First Forest to the FSF in fall of 2019. They shared their story with former FSF intern Ellis Giacomelli in an interview at the Chautauqua Institution last year.

In the dead of winter in 2013, Ted and Deb First, of Chautauqua, New York, stepped onto a pocket of land for sale in the neighboring town of Ellery.

“Everything was icy, frozen, full of snow,” Deb recalled. “And it was drop dead gorgeous.”

The frozen landscape was almost mesmerizing and spoke in calm whispers to the Firsts that day. And from the minute they saw it — the sleeping hardwoods, the snow-packed terrain, the bedding deer — they “wanted to keep it safe.”

“It was really the first impulse we had,” Deb said.

The Firsts knew that in order to best steward the land they so love, they needed a partner, and after nearly five years as the owners of that 113-acre property in Ellery, the Firsts have teamed up with the Foundation for Sustainable Forests. With details finalized in October of 2019, the property has been donated to the Foundation to be protected and used as a working forest in perpetuity, something Ted said began as a conversation with the Foundation in 2017.

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

The Firsts’ forest is predominantly comprised of sugar maple and a mix of other hardwoods, including ash

(which have been heavily impacted on the property by the emerald ash-boring beetle sweeping the continent westward), as well as groups of older-growth eastern hemlock. The Foundation hopes to complete a salvage of ash as one of its first management activities on the property.

With a headwater stream meandering through the forest toward Cassadaga Creek, Ted described the land as a “rich, wonderful” area. The Firsts hope the protected Chautauqua County land will help foster a more welcoming and healthier world for future generations, and 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.

But their story really began decades ago in the mountains of Vermont. And after a move to central Pennsylvania where the Firsts established a private school in the woods, they further nurtured a commitment to conservation as they made their way to western New York — first to Rochester, where Deb taught as a science education professor at Nazareth College and Ted worked as a developer of energy efficient housing, and later to Chautauqua County, now their year-round home.

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From Left: Guy Dunkle, Troy Firth, Deborah First, and Ted First during a visit to First Forest in October 2019.

The Story of First Forest, *continued*

“We actually started our life out in the woods,” Ted said, as he recalled walking land in 1971 near State College with Jim Finley, Penn State professor emeritus and Foundation board member. Finley has once again walked the woods with the Firsts in Ellery, a place Ted envisions as “thriving” in 100 years, with a century of thoughtful management and worst-first forestry.

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. But perhaps most importantly, the Firsts’ desire to protect woodlots from development and irresponsible disruption has been born out of a deep respect, even reverence, for nature. And no single interest has pushed the Firsts to advocate for responsible forest use — not just for flora or fauna, not just for the beauty of the woods in summer’s warmth or winter’s

ice, not just for the warblers or their songs. Rather, they value cultivating diverse and healthy life for the whole: all miniscule parts to the whole of a forest ecosystem within much larger regions and biomes. Though a 100-acre donation may not create such a rich, widespread whole, Deb said, “it’s a start.”

“I think our vision is that it’s a pocket of health in what is, in some sense, a scarier world,” Deb said. “And the more little pockets of health that can be left intact, the better things are, the better things are.”

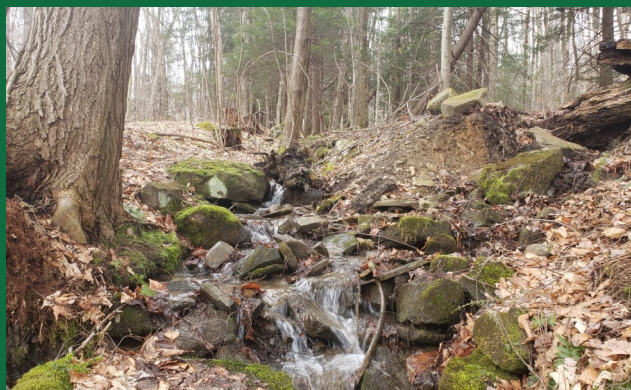
The FSF remains humbled by the Firsts’ vision and generosity, and is committed to forest-related outreach in Chautauqua County, NY. A public woods walk at First Forest that was originally scheduled for June 2020 has been tentatively rescheduled for Spring 2021. Visit foundationforsustainableforests.org/ events for up-to-date information about this and other upcoming events.

Introducing the Sugar Creek Access at Thompsons’ Wood

The FSF has successfully conserved a 15-acre Sugar Creek Access at Thompsons’ Wood, located in Troy Township, Crawford County. “This acquisition is strategic in preserving the FSF’s ability to carry out its sustainable management activities at Thompsons’ Wood in perpetuity.” says Executive Director Annie Maloney.

Included in the 15-acres are an access road, sensitive riparian areas around Sugar Creek, and forested land. The addition of the Sugar Creek Access brings Thompsons’ Wood to a total 194 acres of conserved working woodlands. It follows on the heels of a large gift from Jim & Connie Thompson in 2019 to acquire a 55-acre parcel adjacent to what was originally known as Troy Center Forest.

This new acquisition was made possible by funds from donors Jim & Connie Thompson, Blaine & Terry Aikin, Craig & Monica Schwegman, Dane & Jill Charlton, Guy & Wilma Dunkle, and a generous grant from the USDA Rural Business Development program.



A forested section of Thompsons’ Wood adjacent to the Sugar Creek Access



Sugar Creek Access at Thompsons’ Wood was made possible by an adjacent landowner, pictured above left, with Guy Dunkle and Annie Maloney (and Rowan Maloney)



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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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MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR
TWO GREAT WAYS TO
SUPPORT HEALTHY FORESTS!



AUGUST 11
8AM-8PM

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AUGUST 10-11
48 HOURS!

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GIFTS CAN ALSO BE MADE VIA CHECK THROUGH THE ERIE
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