



Fall / Winter 2022-2023 Newsletter



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Greetings from the Executive Director

Perhaps it is said every year, but autumn in northwestern PA has been gorgeous. Layers of vibrant colors and golden sunlight did not disappoint day after day. To my delight, the FSF team had many excuses to enjoy it on exploratory site visits in pursuit of rich and exciting forest conservation opportunities. These have been impactful, each walk methodically laying the foundation for resilient landscapes and community connections.



What do these walks entail?

Wonder. A stone foundation offers a glimpse into the past communities that lived here, a hobblebush shrub the deer have not yet found, turkey sign, a fresh buck rub. Each are subtle reminders that these natural lands - the history they carry and the future they ensure - are vital to the region.

Impact. Our current projects have the promise of conserving land through greenways, community partnerships, and connecting critical habitats. They embody FSF's mission and span multiple counties.

Gratitude. I am reminded again and again that all of this is happening because of you— the Lynn Firth Giving Society, a strong turnout during Erie & Crawford Gives, “surprise” awards, such as the recent \$5,000 gift from Erie Insurance inspired by its own employees’ donations to FSF. It all adds up to conserved lands and resilient forests.

Bloopers. On a recent reconnaissance of a forest in Crawford County, “two paths diverged in a wood”, to paraphrase the poet Robert Frost. Guy Dunkle, Bennett Gould, and Bob Slagter chose wisely and made their way up a hillside out of a creek bed. Troy Firth and I thought we had too, until we found ourselves crawling under an old barbed-wire pasture fence...

Synergy. It was the same blooper-filled walk that led to the Forest Legacy Planning Match Challenge. I realized while following Troy's path through the trees that he, someone who has been so intentional in planning his own woods' future, and so selfless in supporting FSF to build something greater than himself, might also be willing to challenge and motivate others to do the same (*see page 4*).

The elements described above are so telling: You are making a difference. As we are invited to take walks in new forests that may one day be entrusted to our care, it is clear to me that your support is having a ripple effect.



Annie, Troy, and Bennett visit a Crawford Co. forest, part of a \$1.2 million DCNR grant application currently in review (Photo by Guy Dunkle)

Now is a fantastic time to make a gift to FSF. An end-of-year gift, a donated membership to a loved one or neighbor, or gifting an IRA-required minimum distribution are three ways to cause ripples today that will make waves for generations to come.

Better yet, let us know that you are considering lending financial support towards a specific forest conservation project. The need is there and we would be happy to tell you about it. Perhaps we could discuss it while taking a stroll in the woods?

In the months ahead, may you find wonder, impact, gratitude, synergy, and yes, bloopers, on your own wanderings. Thanks for being part of the team.

Annie Maloney

On the Cover: Volunteers big and small came out to Moxie Woods, Greenville, PA, on October 1st to work hard for the first annual Jim Finley Stewardship Day. For more photos and a recap, see page 4.



Above left: A crowd gathers to admire Tamarack Wildlife Center's ambassador birds and learn about their habitat needs for intact forests. **Above right:** With a sunset and gentle lake breeze across the Iroquois Club lawn, we couldn't have asked for a nicer setting to enjoy the company of friends! **Below left:** Dr. Steven Latta shared early observations from his National Aviary team's study of the connection between FSF's forest management and songbird diversity. Steve won a Monica Schwegman photograph, aptly named "The Birder," in the chance raffle. **Below right:** Members of the new Lynn Firth Giving Society; left to right: Jill & Dane Charlton, Jane & Jim Reilly, Cyndee & Elliott Socci, Monica Schwegman, Zeke Templin, Troy Firth, Craig Schwegman. See complete list below.



The Lynn Firth Giving Society was unveiled at the Friends of the Foundation Dinner in September. Its name honors the generous spirit and impactful support of FSF co-founder and Troy's late wife, Lynn.

This Society recognizes donors who have made a single cash gift of \$1,000 or more to FSF. It is distinct from supporters who have donated land.

Below are the inaugural members to the Lynn Firth Giving Society. Your support is exceptional and critical to the success of this organization. Thank you.



Blaine & Terry Aikin
Derek Berlin
Wendell & Tanya Berry
Gina Bruno
Henry & Elaine Burkholder
Dane & Jill Charlton
Richard & Carol Deiss
Ted & Deb First
Troy & Lynn Firth
Helen Dawn Firth Albers Post

The Foote Family
Doug & Julie Jennings
Margaret Lay-Dopyera
Glorianne Leck
Chris Lundberg
James & Jane Reilly
William & Jane Roche
Craig & Monica Schwegman
Robert & Jane Slagter
Elliott & Cyndee Socci

Emil & Kathy Spadafore
Samuel & Barbara Spencer
Richard Szymkowski
Doug & Cyndee Tallamy
Ezekiel Templin
Beth Thompson
Jim & Connie Thompson
Harry & Mary Ann White
Jane E. Woods



Scenes from the 1st Annual Jim Finley Stewardship Day

***Above left:** Mary Erdman helps to clean refuse from the woods. **Above center:** Moxie Woods donor Jean Engle cuts back multiflora rose with her “sawzilla” while Pat Maloney removes shingles from a cabin slated for demolition. **Above right:** An old Willys farm truck is a reminder that Moxie Woods was once field and pasture before reverting to forest.*



***Left:** Volunteers remove trash from an old house foundation. **Right:** The Maloney boys were quick to help with the day’s projects!*

Thank you to all who lent a hand in stewarding Moxie Woods! We hope you will join us next year for another productive day working in the woods!



Forest Legacy Planning Match Challenge!

Thanks to the generosity of Troy Firth, this limited-time challenge gives you peace of mind two ways: make a planned gift to FSF of cash or assets for the future, and you will unlock a match gift that supports FSF today!

When you make a planned gift to FSF, you are building a legacy of forest conservation and resilient landscapes that is bigger than all of us. Notify FSF of your good intentions and unlock a matching cash donation from Troy today – starting at \$500!

Here’s how it works:



Loving the Land ~ A Hooded Warbler's Story

This newsletter features a departure from human interest stories in the Loving the Land series to share a tale about a special Hooded Warbler. The researchers refer to him by his band number 2840-82123, but we named him "Aldo."
Written by Bennett Gould

Aldo's story begins in July 2019 at the Hemlock Hill Field Station near Cambridge Springs, PA. Allegheny College professor Dr. Ron Mumme and student Will Harrod were conducting research on Hooded Warblers at the property and tracking the nesting activity of Aldo's parents. Aldo was only a four-day-old nestling when Mumme and Harrod gave him a leg identification band. The pair of researchers then spent several weeks tracking Aldo's development while he was raised exclusively by his mother; Aldo's father had deserted the nest. Harrod and Mumme even featured Aldo in an article for *Ibis*, the journal of the British Ornithologists' Union, about "single mom" Hooded Warblers raising their broods.

Fast forward to the present, 2022. A team of researchers, led by the National Aviary's Dr. Steven Latta, are conducting a multi-year study of the connection between FSF's ecological forestry and songbird diversity and habitat availability. Their fieldwork takes place at six FSF properties during the early morning flourish of avian activity. The crew uses mist nets placed in gaps within the forest to sample bird abundance and diversity. These specialized nets allow for the careful capture of birds so the team's expert handlers can take bodily measurements and assign identification bands before release back to the woods.

While working at FSF's Moxie Woods near Greenville, PA on a June morning, the research team made an exciting discovery. An already-banded Hooded Warbler made its way into the mist net, but its bands didn't match the study's log. The warbler was Aldo, wearing his ID from Hemlock Hill!

Over the past twelve years, Mumme has banded more than 1,500 Hooded Warblers at Hemlock Hill, but Aldo is the first to be recaptured elsewhere. While rare to recapture migratory songbirds, it is exceedingly special to catch an adult that was banded as a nestling. It gives a glimpse into how offspring leave the parents' nest to find their own home. After fledging at Hemlock Hill in 2019, Aldo made a flight to the tropics, then returned to northwest PA and chose Moxie Woods as a nesting territory of his own, just 30 miles from his birthplace. This frequent flyer has since made two more round trips and is probably on his way south again right now.

Beyond the long odds of researchers finding Aldo years later, this chance connection also validates our work. You see, Aldo is a product of forest protection. Moxie Woods has not always provided the woodland habitat on which Hooded Warblers rely; It was once an active farm with field and pasture. In the early 1980's, the property became a retreat for the Moxie Cooperative Community, a

group based on shared values of organics, environmental sustainability, and human rights. In 2016, Moxie founders Jean Engle and Glorianne Leck donated the 128 acre property to FSF for a nominal cost to carry on the Co-op's legacy of land stewardship and wildlife habitat preservation. Moxie Woods has had a long journey, with years of conscientious management, to become a habitat-rich forest.

The Hemlock Hill Field Station, where Aldo was raised by his mother, also carries a legacy of habitat protection. The property has been used for ornithological research since the early 1980's and is a National Audubon Society Important Bird Area. In 2021, Hemlock Hill owner and ornithologist Gene Morton donated a conservation easement on the property to the French Creek Valley Conservancy.

We are inspired by the connection Aldo has made between these two protected properties. His story affirms the importance of habitat conservation. Safe travels, Aldo. Hopefully we catch up with you again next year!

Special thanks to Dr. Latta and Dr. Mumme for sharing Aldo's story. We hope you have enjoyed this special edition; we will resume with landowner stories in our next newsletter. If you would like to share your story, we would love to listen! Please contact Bennett Gould: bgould@forestsandpeople.org or (814) 694-5830.



Leg ID bands, such as those worn by the Hooded Warbler above, are used for avian research. If you find a band or banded bird, please report it at www.reportband.gov. Doing so helps researchers understand migration patterns and might lead to another rare connection!

Photo by Dr. Ron Mumme



Join us for the 2023

Our Woods & Waters Film Series



Featuring a selection of conservation-minded and engaging films

Virtual Events: Fridays, January 20 & February 24, 6:30 pm

In-Person Event: Friday, March 31, Location & Time TBD

More details to follow at foundationforsustainableforests.org/events/
or facebook.com/sustainableforests



Watershed Conservation Research Center surveys creek at Thompsons' Wood

Allegheny College's Watershed Conservation Research Center (WCRC) recently surveyed fish in the East Branch of Sugar Creek at FSF's Thompsons' Wood property near Townville, PA. The survey was initiated by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, which has partnered with WCRC to survey tributaries in the Sugar Creek drainage of the French Creek watershed this year.

Mark Kirk, WCRC Research Scientist, was pleased to find Pearl Dace and American Brook Lamprey in the East Branch of Sugar Creek as they are indicators of good water quality. In all, the survey team found ten fish species between two survey sites at Thompsons' Wood. "The streams are more soft-bottomed than other streams in the region... so we were missing a couple of species that we might otherwise expect," said Kirk. "The richness of the fish communities is fairly good and representative of the region."

Healthy, intact forests play many critical roles in supporting stream health, including filtration of water, stabilizing soils to prevent erosion, and providing shade to keep water cool for temperature-dependent species. We are appreciative of the WCRC for collecting and sharing this data about the species in the East Branch of Sugar Creek!



Left to right: Mark Kirk, student Jacob Folaron, and Assistant Research Scientist Briana Sebastian survey East Branch Sugar Creek at FSF's Thompsons' Wood. Photo by WCRC.



It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year!

Dear Friends of the Foundation,

If you love the Foundation for Sustainable Forests as much as I do, you can't stop talking about it with family, friends, and neighbors. You have mentioned to them about the potluck dinners, the Lynn Firth Wildflower Walk, or the Loving the Land Through Working Forests conference. We are blessed to have such a great group of leaders in Troy Firth, Annie Maloney, Guy Dunkle, and now Bennett Gould.

Now is the time, with the holidays around the corner. Don't know what to give a loved one? Think about doing something different. Think about doing something impactful. No more ugly Christmas sweaters, no more ugly ties, and no more boring socks. Give the gift that keeps on giving - a Foundation for Sustainable Forests membership!



**Contributed by
Craig Schewgman**

Board of Directors
Foundation for Sustainable Forests

It's so easy. Give Annie or Bennett a call or send an email and they can set you up. I do it all the time. I do it for birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, and sometimes for no reason at all. I find it's just a nice way to share with folks something that is important to me.

Gift the membership that will conserve forested land for future generations to appreciate. Give the gift of the Foundation for Sustainable Forests! You and the recipients will be glad you did!

Gifting an FSF membership is easy!

*Visit foundationforsustainableforests.org/get-involved/
to fill out a membership order form, or contact us by phone or email.*



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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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*Conservation & Outreach
Coordinator*

John Noel Bartlett
Development Director, Emeritus

UPCOMING EVENTS

January 20 - Woods & Waters Film Series

Virtual - 6:30 pm

February 24 - Woods & Waters Film Series

Virtual - 6:30 pm

March 17 - Vernal Pool Exploration

Dunkle Farm, Centerville, PA - 7:00 pm

March 31 - Woods & Waters Film Series - Feature Film

Location and Time TBD

May 7 - Lynn Firth Wildflower Walk

September 15 - Friends of the Foundation Dinner

September 16 - Loving the Land Through Working Forests Conference

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