



2025 Spring Newsletter

*Protecting Forested Land and Supporting
Rural Communities Through Working Forests*



Notes from the Executive Director

Greetings, all! It is *another* rainy day here in northwestern Pennsylvania. During this soggy spring, I have been impressed by the “grit” of this community; in May, a hearty group attended the Lynn Firth Wildflower Walk at Villa Maria in Lawrence County. We began by observing flowers from under raincoats, ponchos, and umbrellas in a steady downpour, but gradually dried out and ended the afternoon in sunshine!

Similarly, a couple of weeks ago members of the Mallory family, from as far away as California, gathered in blustery winds and on-again, off-again rainfall to commemorate the conservation of the Mallory Family Woodland near Spartansburg (see page 5).

Continuing the trend of impact-in-any-weather, volunteers Amelia Crowley and Luke Gosnell braved a week of variable conditions to complete an assortment of stewardship projects at FSF sites. They pounded sign posts, planted trees, cut grapevines, and more. We are very grateful for all that they accomplished, and look forward to the possibility of working with them again later this year.

As we turn our sights towards summer, FSF’s

leadership team is preparing for a project that requires a different sort of grit. We are undergoing an intensive strategic planning process to identify key priorities and goals for the next few years. Just as we steward our conserved lands with a thoughtful eye, it is critical that we also apply the same careful attention to our operations. Through this process, our intention is to lay a strong foundation for FSF’s long-term stability and continued impact. We are grateful for a private donor who is supporting this effort.

While much of the strategic planning will take place behind the scenes, you can still find us out and about. We look forward to emerging to co-host a gathering of the Pennsylvania Forest Stewards in July, and we hope to see you at our annual “Loving the Land Through Working Forests” conference in the fall (see page 6).

Meanwhile, we have a slate of stewardship projects lined up for the season, and look forward to continuing our partnership with the local Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps’ crew in our Northwestern REC and Sparta Sportsmen’s Community Forests.

In addition to these much-needed boots on the ground, your financial support makes all the difference. Thank you, and please keep us in mind during Erie and Crawford Gives, which will *both* be held on August 12!

Sincerely, *Annie Maloney*

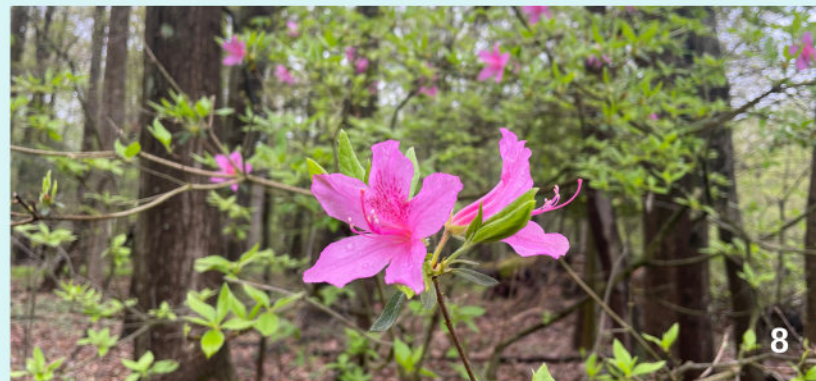
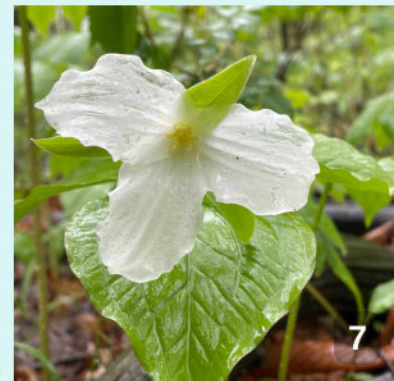
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Cover Image: This jack-in-the-pulpit flower was found along the Villa Maria Woodland

2 Trail in Pulaski Twp, Lawrence County, during the Lynn Firth Wildflower Walk on May 4th.

Scenes of Spring



The above images capture scenes from the Lynn Firth Wildflower Walk, held on May 4th in the forests surrounding Villa Maria Community Center in Pulaski Twp., Lawrence County, PA. Thank you to the Sisters of the Humility of Mary for hosting at their beautiful property!

1) During a pre-walk scouting trip, FSF staff flushed a wood duck from this forest pond. 2) Wood anemone was prolific along the forest floor. 3) “Bear corn” or American cancer-root is an unusual parasitic plant that resembles an ear of corn or pinecone. It does not photosynthesize, instead gathering nutrients from the roots of oak trees. 4) Cecile Stelter (front), Cornplanter Forest District Manager with DCNR, again returned as our expert wildflower guide. Thank you, Cecile! 5) Dressed for any weather, attendees braved a rainy start to the walk and were rewarded with clear skies by the event’s end. 6) Mayapple flower in bloom. 7) White trillium, which is slow growing and requires specific soil conditions, sparked a discussion about the importance of treading lightly. 8) One of Pennsylvania’s native azaleas.

Loving the Land - Landowners Tell Their Stories

Gentle Bear Run

Blaine and Terry Aikin live near Cooperstown, PA. Blaine is a Pennsylvania Forest Steward and serves on the volunteer Council of the James C. Finley Center for Private Forests. In 2024, the Aikins partnered with FSF to conserve Gentle Bear Run, the 100-acre forest featured below.

Sometimes things just fall into place. That's how Blaine and Terry Aikin put it when describing their property and relationship with FSF. Nearly twenty years ago, the couple was living and working in Pittsburgh, PA and looking for an escape to a quieter place. They found a property near Cooperstown, PA with a mix of forest and fields. The property wasn't perfect – it had a history of damaging, high grade-style harvests – but the Aikins believed it could someday be more than what it was.

Blaine and Terry purchased the property and used it as a weekend retreat and place for their family to camp. Eventually, they bought a camper, enabling

Blaine and Terry Aikin enjoy the view of Lake Creek from a dock at their Cooperstown home.



longer stays. A few years later, a neighboring property with a cozy house came up for sale. With both indoor plumbing and a beautiful stretch of frontage on Lake Creek, a tributary to Sugar Creek in the French Creek watershed, the temptation of two kinds of running water was too good to pass up.

In 2015, another piece fell into place when the Aikins were able to purchase an adjacent forest that would eventually become Gentle Bear Run. More on that later. As retirement approached, Blaine and Terry built a new house on the footprint of the old, with guest rooms for their children's families. After a few years of "having one foot in Pittsburgh and one up here," they moved full-time to Cooperstown.

Though they describe the property as relaxing, you don't have to look far to see the sweat equity the Aikins have invested. Their goal is to sustainably manage the forests, with an emphasis on creating wildlife habitat. They have planted hundreds of trees in the former agricultural fields, promoted early successional habitat for woodcock and grouse in the property's aspen stand and former goldenrod meadow, created brush piles, built a pond, and reduced invasive plant populations. Terry is most appreciative of the trails and footbridges they built, saying "I'm always happy when I'm out walking somewhere."

Several years ago, Blaine invited Ty Ryen, the Pennsylvania DCNR's Service Forester for Venango County, out to the property to provide guidance on stewardship projects. Seeing all that Blaine had done and his eagerness to care for the land, Ty recommended to Blaine that he join the Pennsylvania Forest Stewards (PAFS) volunteer program. Through this program, Blaine received 40 hours of training on a variety of sustainable forest management and stewardship topics to become a Forest Steward in 2010, and now volunteers his time for peer-to-peer education with other private forest landowners in the region.

Continued on page seven.

Celebrating Mallory Family Woodland

On May 23, we celebrated the conservation of the Mallory family's property in Concord Twp., Erie Co., PA. Family members from California and Pennsylvania came together, making it an especially happy gathering!

Remarks were given by Annie Maloney, Guy Dunkle, and Sue Mallory (*seated, right*), who made the decision to protect the property alongside her daughters, Holly Fidrych and Stacy Tredennick. Afterwards, they took a walk in the woods and shared memories. Among the attendees were Tom Mallory (*seated, left*), whose brother is Sue's late husband, Jack, and Tom's children, Michele and Tom, and his grandson, Brett.



PLEASE JOIN US ON
AUGUST 12



TWO CAMPAIGNS, ONE BIG IMPACT!

Your gift during Erie or Crawford Gives unlocks a prorated match, conserving and stewarding forests for all!



Erie Gives

24 hours of giving on Tuesday, August 12

- NEW this year- ALL online fees will be covered!
- Checks to Erie Community Foundation will be accepted until August 5.
- Initiate a gift of stock or IRA distribution with the help of your financial advisor before August 11. Visit eriegives.org/info/ways-to-give to plan your donation.

Crawford Gives

4 days of giving on August 12-15

- Checks to Crawford Heritage Community Foundation will be accepted until August 15.
- Gifts of stock or IRA distributions are also accepted.
- Visit crawfordgives.org to learn more.



Who's Who in the Woods this Spring



Left column, top to bottom: A snapping turtle laying eggs and nestling birds, both found along Stony Hollow Trail, and a fawn bedding down at Mallory Family Woodland are wonderful markers of spring's arrival.

Middle: Allegheny College student Riley Hunter, shown holding a red-backed salamander at Ewing Family Woods, is focusing on FSF for her senior thesis.

Right: Volunteers Luke Gosnell (left) and Amelia Crowley (right) helped FSF with stewardship projects in early June. They installed sign posts, maintained bat boxes, cut grape vines, planted trees, and more. Please join us in thanking Amelia and Luke for their hard work!

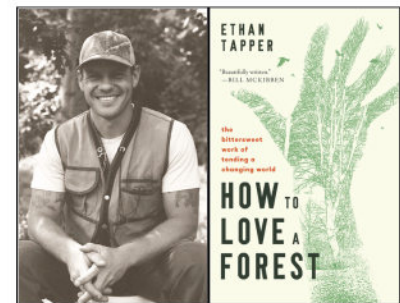
Save the Date!

Loving the Land Through Working Forests 2025 Conference Weekend

Annual Dinner - Friday, Sept. 19th, Titusville, PA

Field Conference - Saturday, Sept. 20th,
Rome Twp, Crawford Co., PA

For more details and to register, visit:
www.foundationforsustainableforests.org/events/



Featuring Ethan Tapper,
Vermont-based forester
and author of *How to
Love a Forest*



Gentle Bear Run, *continued*



Continued from page five.

Blaine and Terry wondered what would happen to their property after they are gone, wanting to see it protected forever and their legacy of stewardship carried forward. Mutual connections in PAFS introduced the Aikins to the Foundation for Sustainable Forests and they have been engaged supporters ever since. Recognizing an alignment of values and vision, Blaine and Terry approached the Foundation about partnering to conserve a portion of their Cooperstown property.

In 2024, FSF officially fell into place as a conservation partner, with the purchase of 100 acres via charitable sale to establish Gentle Bear Run. “We appreciate their thoughtful approach to forestry and can trust that the Foundation will do what it commits to,” says Blaine. “they are doing the work - actually performing forestry the way it should be done - and let us see what our woods can become.”

Right: Blaine and his helpers heading out for a stewardship project at Gentle Bear Run, shown above. Photo by Terry Aikin.

As with all FSF properties, Gentle Bear Run is a working forest, managed using sustainable forestry practices that improve woodland diversity, health, and habitat while supporting the local community with economic, recreational, and educational opportunities. “Having Gentle Bear Run next door is like having a classroom we can visit anytime.” adds Terry.

Gentle Bear Run is named after one of Blaine and Terry’s beloved dogs that enjoyed playing in the waters of a small, wooded creek. Bear was an exceptionally large and loveable white Labrador who regularly visited the woods on long walks with Blaine, but the forest provides habitat for actual bears, bobcats, fishers, ruffed grouse, and many other species too.

Prepared by Bennett Gould in collaboration with Blaine and Terry. To learn more about how you can access and enjoy Gentle Bear Run, visit

foundationforsustainableforests.org/conserved-lands/

If you are interested in learning more about joining the northwest PA Forest Stewards community, FSF is co-hosting a gathering in July. To learn more, visit

ecosystems.psu.edu/research/centers/private-forests/outreach



*Protecting forested land &
supporting rural communities
through working forests*



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The Foundation for Sustainable Forests is a 501(c)3 charitable organization dedicated to conserving and stewarding working forests, and promoting forestry practices that enhance health, resilience, and habitat diversity across the region.

Upcoming Events

July 31 - PA Forest Stewards Regional Meeting

PAFS is a statewide network of peer volunteers who provide forest landowners with information and assistance to promote healthy, productive forests. We will be co-hosting their regional meeting and walk in Cambridge Springs.

Aug. 12 - Erie and Crawford Gives

See page 5 for more information about ways to give before and during this impactful campaign!

Sept. 19 - Annual Dinner

The Titusville Mill, Titusville, PA

Sept. 20 - Loving the Land Through Working Forests Conference

Rome Twp, Crawford County, PA

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