2026 Fall Newsletter



Greetings from the Executive Director

The last few months have been characterized by substantial mission impact, and also loss. Where do I begin?

In August, Wendell Berry, renowned author, poet, and longtime friend of FSF, passed away at the age of 92. As his wife Tanya put it when we last spoke, Wendell was "aging in place" at their Kentucky home in recent years. I hope those years brought peace, time with family, and connection to the land he loved so well. Here we offer a few reflections of Wendell and the profound impact he had on our organization (pp.3-5).

In September, Bennett Gould, our Conservation & Outreach Coordinator, accepted a new position and wrapped up his time with FSF. I am grateful to Bennett for his years of service to FSF's mission and wish him so well in his next chapter. See page 9 for a farewell in his own words.

Meanwhile, the mission work continues. In June, FSF accepted the donation of 100 acres of open space in Butler County, to be known as "Kennedy Sanctuary". We introduce you to the site and some of its history on pages 7-8.

FSF is also progressing towards the conservation of 670-acres in Villa Maria, Lawrence County, later this year, in partnership with the Sisters of the Humility of Mary.

And, a recent grant award from the PA DCNR's Community Conservation Partnerships Program brings FSF closer to conserving 428 acres of forestland in Venango and Mercer Counties, a project that is further described on page 9.

This exciting conservation momentum is made possible by you. I hope you will consider including FSF in your end-of-year giving, so that this momentum can continue. Your support is strengthening communities through healthy forests- thank you!

Annie Maloney

ERIE & CRAWFORD GIVES

Over $54,000 Raised!

Thank you for supporting healthy forests during these campaigns! Your gifts unlocked an additional $4,000 in funds from the Erie Community Foundation, Crawford Heritage Community Foundation, Corry Community Foundation, and employer match programs.

Inside

3 Remembering Wendell Berry

5 Photo Gallery

7 Landowners Tell Their Stories: Margaret Kennedy

9 A message from Bennett Gould; DCNR grant award announcement

10 Ethan Tapper introduces *The Forest Year:* Corry Artists' Guild highlights FSF

Cover Image: *Wendell Berry stands alongside horse-logger Ray Blystone and his team at the "Loving the Land Through Working Forests" conference in 2013. Wendell passed away in August at the age of 92.*

Photo Credit: *Guy Dunkle, originally published in Farming Magazine*

Remembering Wendell Berry

August 5, 1934-August 31, 2026

In late August, Wendell Berry, the Kentucky-based novelist, poet, essayist, farmer, conservationist, and long-time friend of the Foundation for Sustainable Forests, passed away at the age of 92. Wendell made exquisite contributions to American literature, was a thought leader in sustainable working land use, and had a significant impact on this organization when he attended our first two *Loving the Land Through Working Forests* Conferences in 2012 and 2013. He wrote an essay about his experiences with FSF, titled "A Forest Conversation."

In loving memory of Wendell, and with deep gratitude for all he has done, we share these brief remembrances with you.



John Bartlett

When I met Troy and Guy and was subsequently hired by FSF, I heard a lot from them about Wendell Berry. I knew of Wendell, but truth be told I was more familiar with his poetry than his novels and non-fiction writings.

I first talked with Wendell while arranging for FSF's first *Loving the Land* Conference, and again the subsequent year. We chatted in person, but at one of the conferences—I don't recall which now—I was designated to drive Wendell to the Erie Airport.

The one-on-one conversation was thought-provoking, to say the least. Wendell, true to his nature, was low-key and soft-spoken, yet profound even in the most casual comment.

One comment struck me and remains clear. I asked how one maintains hope given all that we face. His reply was – if I remember the exact words correctly – "hope creates hope".

Shortly after, I read his (then) new book "A Place in Time". It touched me deeply, and remains among my favorites of all his fiction that I've read since. His work, his presence, will live on within me, and I suspect many others.

Listen to "A Forest Conversation", read aloud by Wendell Berry

In 2015, Wendell Berry published *Our Only World,* a collection of essays that included a piece about the Foundation for Sustainable Forests and its founders. A few years ago, Wendell recorded himself reading the essay aloud and we have made it publicly available with his permission. To listen, scan the QR Code, or visit https://www.youtube.com/@forestsandpeople



Wendell Berry and Guy Dunkle discuss forest health at the 2013 Loving the Land Through Working Forests conference, near Caldwell Creek in Grand Valley, PA.

Guy Dunkle

In October of 2005 I was a freshly minted college grad with the title "Forester" on my business card. But, as the leaves fell I struggled to differentiate between hard maple and soft maple trees by their bark. I was eager, but inexperienced.

Wendell Berry's writing had been featured in several of my college courses, so when Troy Firth invited me to travel with him to Virginia for Biological Woodsmen's Week, to meet Wendell and horse logging experts from around the country, I was thrilled. I was also suffering from a bit of imposter syndrome at the thought of walking the woods with figures who were shaping the national discourse on sustainable forestry, advocating for draft animal log skidding and "worst first" tree selection.

It took only a few minutes with Wendell, sharing a bottle of Virginia Gentleman, to calm my nerves. Despite a lifetime of accomplishment and wisdom, Wendell was incredibly curious, asking questions about my upbringing, about the forests and communities of my home. I had travelled to Viriginia with the hope of learning from practitioners who shared my values and it was clear that Wendell had the same objective. Throughout that week, Wendell was unavoidably in the spotlight but you could see that his preference was to converse and to learn.

Each spring my family butchers pigs to fill our freezer for the year. Overall it's an unpleasant event, but I have the habit of reading the poem *For the Hog Killing* as we're washing the tables and sharpening knives. "For today we celebrate again our lives' wedding with the world". Wendell Berry was a man who celebrated the inextricable connections between humans and nature. He recognized that those connections weren't always idyllic; sometimes we slaughter livestock or fell trees, but people are always wed to the natural world. The poem closes with a line that I think about often while working in the forest: "...by this provisioning we renew the bond". When done well, forestry and farming renew the bond. That's something I learned from Wendell Berry.

Troy Firth

I first met Wendell Berry through Jason Rutledge, a horse logger from the western tip of Virginia. Wendell had hosted several woodland events in Henry County, Kentucky, where he lived. He invited Jason to bring a team of horses to demonstrate horse-logging as an ecofriendly component of forest management, and Jason in turn invited me to come and discuss what he had termed "worst-first forestry". I went on to attend several other conferences where Wendell was present, and we formed a friendship. Wendell traveled to northwestern Pennsylvania to attend the Foundation for Sustainable Forests' first two *Loving the Land Through Working Forests* Conferences in 2012 and 2013. Needless to say, he was the star attraction.

Wendell Berry was one of the best known, if not the best known, writers of our time who advocated for a slower-paced lifestyle and one that showed a far greater respect for the world in which we live than is typically demonstrated today. He had a humble respect for the community in which we live and an unmatched ability to harness the English language well.

I am sure that a great many tributes have been written about Wendell Berry in the last couple of months. For my part, I would simply say the world will indeed be a poorer place without Wendell Berry.



Pictured left to right: Dr. Jim Finley (Penn State University), Troy Firth, Wendell Berry, Mike DeBonis (Forest Stewards Guild), and Jason Rutledge (Healing Harvest Foundation) participate in a panel discussion about sustainable forestry at Allegheny College, Meadville, PA in May of 2012.

PHOTO GALLERY

Recent events at Robert Crawford Memorial Forest

In August, FSF held Jim Finley Stewardship Day at this 282-acre forest in Washington Twp, Erie County. Staff and volunteers focused on the cleanup of two former dump sites where the old farmhouse and barn once stood, installed signs and cleared the main trail. We thank the volunteers who lent a hand (or a tractor - thanks, Alan!) for a day.

In September, FSF's *Loving the Land Through Working Forests* weekend included an Annual Dinner with a keynote by author and environmental historian Allen Dieterich-Ward at the Iroquois Club in Conneaut Lake. The next day, Guy Dunkle (pictured top row, right) (*continued on p. 6)*













Loving the Land Through Working Forests Weekend



(*continued from p.5)* led a Forestry Walk at Robert Crawford Memorial Forest to highlight management practices that promote ecosystem health and resilience.

Many volunteers came together to make these events successful, including Board members and a great crew of students from Allegheny College (pictured below, left). We thank all who participated and supported these events. We are grateful for the chance to gather and celebrate what we have accomplished together!







Thank you to our event sponsors!

Jim & Connie Thompson

Northwestern Rural Electric Co-operative Association, Inc.
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

FOUNDATION FOR Pennsylvania Watersheds

KnoxLaw

ALLEGHENY COLLEGE

AHUG
Allegheny Hardwood Utilization Group

Catch FSF on the "Our Erie" Series

"Our Erie", a production of JET (WJET-TV/FOX66) in Erie, PA, recently interviewed FSF's Guy Dunkle and Annie Maloney for a feature on the Foundation for Sustainable Forests' mission and the role healthy forests play in supporting healthy communities. We thank Tia Porter and her team for bringing our work to new audiences!







Watch now

Loving the Land - Landowners Tell Their Stories

Margaret Kennedy introduces "Kennedy Sanctuary"

When I called Maggie Kennedy to ask some questions about her family's history at Kennedy Sanctuary, the property she donated to FSF earlier this year, I didn't expect the story to start as far back as it did. Maggie is the seventh generation tied to her family's property near Murrinsville, located in northern Butler County, PA.

The timeline begins when Maggie's grandfather many "greats" ago, Hugh Murrin, immigrated to the American colonies from the Sixtowns area of County Londonderry, Northern Ireland. Shortly after his arrival, the Revolutionary War broke out and Hugh joined the New Jersey regiment of the Continental Army. Following his military career, Hugh acquired the first piece of property in 1796 from famed fellow revolutionary Robert Morris in what may have been a "bounty payment" for his service in the war.

In the years that followed, Hugh, his wife Catherine, eight sons, and one daughter added acres, farmed the land, and built a hotel for travelers, whiskey distillery, small store, and both horse and water-powered mills on the property. The community grew as Hugh assisted other Irish families with relocation to the region. The flourishing village, located at what is now the intersection of Rt. 308 and Rt. 58 (Eau Claire Road), was aptly named "Murrinsville".

The Murrin family was also the religious anchor of the community, hosting Mass for other Catholic immigrants in their home until the congregation grew so large a church was needed. Hugh's son, John Murrin, donated an acre of land and fronted the capital to build St. Alphonsus Church. Founded in 1841, it is the oldest Catholic edifice west of the Alleghenies. As a family historical account describes, "The stones of which the church is constructed were quarried on his farm. The timber was hewed from the trees of his forests. Other necessary supplies were hauled by his teams from Scrubgrass, the nearest river access, nine miles away." St. Alphonsus Church held its last Mass in 2019, but reopened earlier this year as the nonprofit Murrinsville Community Center.

Fast forward seven generations to when Maggie Kennedy and her older sister spent their early childhood in the old farmhouse in the 1950s, and later spent summers there after their family moved away. They had a large barn to play in, lambs and cows across the street, and a tributary to Seaton Creek winding through the property. In a favorite memory, Maggie recalls one very snowy Christmas when her dad improvised the top of the washing machine as a makeshift snow saucer and pulled her to the midnight service at church. The property "was a grounded place; it was always home," says Maggie.

Though she looks back fondly on her family's legacy in Murrinsville, Maggie recognizes the

(*Continued on page 8*)

The Kennedy brothers, Tom, Hugh, and Jim, at the family home in Murrinsville. Circa 1945



Kennedy Sanctuary, Continued from p.7

difficult choices that were made in order to keep the land and support the family, a common story for multi-generational properties in the region. In the late 1800s, some of the family joined the oil boom by drilling wells and used their profits to relocate to Butler, where they pursued higher education. In the late 1950s to mid-1970s, Maggie's father, Tom Kennedy, and uncle, Jim, sold timber and leased the property for coal strip mines to pay the property taxes and offset other costs of ownership. The footprints of the surface mines are still evident on the land with varying levels of soil reclamation. More recently, the property drew interest from drillers during the Marcellus shale gas boom of the late 2000s and early 2010s. While a Marcellus well did not come to fruition, Maggie described the situation as "a wake-up call" to consider options for the property's future and not "forget about unintended consequences."

Last year, Maggie began reaching out to land conservation organizations in the Commonwealth with an interest in protecting and enhancing the health of the property's natural ecosystems. Maggie found alignment for her vision with FSF's use of sustainable forestry practices to improve forest health and resilience, and was inspired to donate her 100-acre portion of the family property earlier this year. Kennedy Sanctuary, as the land has been named, is FSF's first property in Butler County and will be managed as a working forest that the public can access for recreation, hunting, and fishing. Looking ahead, FSF hopes to work with partner organizations to eventually reforest the strip-mined areas.

After donating the property, Maggie expressed her confidence in FSF's stewardship, saying "I feel like I've just handed over a baby and know that it will be well cared for." The Foundation for Sustainable Forests well understands the responsibility of caring for land, and it is a privilege to be the long-term stewards of Kennedy Sanctuary. To Maggie and her family, we hope that partnering with the Foundation feels like "keeping it in the family", albeit a greatly expanded one, for generations to come.

Prepared by Bennett Gould and Margaret Kennedy. To learn more about the Kennedy Sanctuary, visit: foundationforsustainableforests.org/conserved-lands/



Above: *An unnamed tributary to Seaton Creek, a subbasin of Slippery Rock Creek, runs through the property.* **Below:** *A former strip-mine area at Kennedy Sanctuary*



A Note from Bennett Gould



Dear FSF Friends,

As you may already know, I have accepted a new position and wrapped up my time as FSF's Conservation and Outreach Coordinator. It has been a pleasure getting to know all the great people that make up FSF's community, whether learning and sharing a family's history like the Loving the Land story at left, going for a woods walk and being shown someone's favorite spot in the forest, or working side-by-side at a stewardship day. Over the past five years, it has been a privilege to work for an organization whose mission I deeply believe in (as I know you do too) and I am proud of all we have accomplished together.

In my new role, I will remain in the conservation field and do hope our paths cross again in the future. If you would like to keep in touch, please reach out to FSF and they will pass along your correspondence.

PA DCNR awards $1.14 million to FSF towards forest and stream conservation and outdoor recreation access

In October, the PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources (DNCR) announced $81 million in Community Conservation Partnership Program grants, supporting more than 300 conservation and recreation projects. These projects support communities across the Commonwealth by protecting natural lands, improving park and outdoor recreation spaces, building trails, and supporting stream and watershed protection and restoration efforts.

Among this year's awards is a grant of $1.143 million to the Foundation for Sustainable Forests towards the protection of 428 acres of forested land in Venango and Mercer Counties, and the 282-acre Robert Crawford Memorial Forest in Erie County. These lands will be protected from parcelization, conversion to other uses, and degrading management. They will be stewarded using ecological forestry, and will be accessible to the public for passive recreation and hunting.



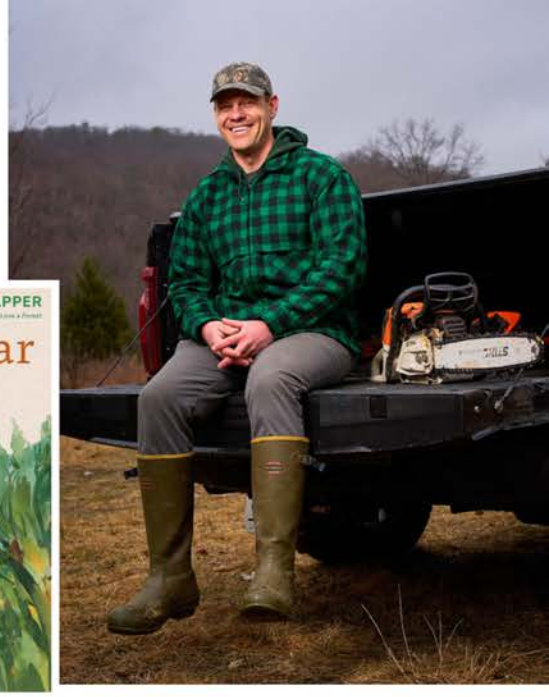
The project includes a 345-acre tract in Venango and Mercer Counties containing nearly a mile of Little Sandy Creek, a Class A Trout Stream, that will become accessible to the public for fly-fishing. FSF plans to carry out these acquisitions and prepare them for public access in 2027.

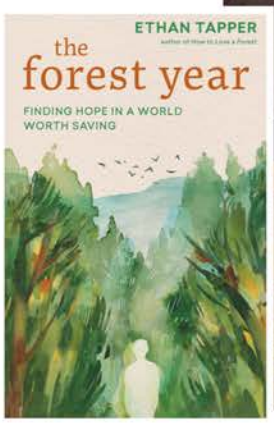
We thank the Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund, PA DCNR, Governor Shapiro, and state legislators for investing in communities by protecting ecologically rich forested and aquatic ecosystems and enhancing public outdoor recreation opportunities.

Greg Kedzierski fishes a stretch of Little Sandy Creek in Venango County last April. In addition to protecting the forest and sensitive riparian areas, this award will support public access at this site.

Ethan Tapper Introduces *The Forest Year*

Finding Hope in a World Worth Saving





My first book – *How to Love a Forest: The Bittersweet Work of Tending a Changing World* – is a book about the challenging, counterintuitive, and sometimes bittersweet actions necessary to care for ecosystems. I wrote *How to Love a Forest* over eight years, one hour at a time – every day, from 5:00 to 6:00 AM – a practice that became a ritual that I still hold to this day. Then, one day, *How to Love a Forest* was done. It was 5:00 AM. I said to myself: "What do I do now?" And so I began to write another book.

When I began to write my second book, I just wanted it to be an almanac — a book about birds and flowers, a tribute to the seasons, a celebration of the steady magic of phenology, a tribute to Aldo Leopold's seminal *A Sand County Almanac*. I wanted to write about spring ephemeral wild flowers, and wild leeks, and bird migration, and maple sugaring. But, of course, this book – *The Forest Year: Finding Hope in a World Worth Saving* – ended up being about so much more.

The Forest Year is about forests, about trees and plants and animals. It is about beaked hazelnut flowers and lowbush blueberries and serviceberry and sweetfern and red oak and sugar maple. And it is about bluebirds and tree swallows and yellowthroats and chestnut-sided warblers and mourning warblers and rose-breasted grosbeaks and ospreys and chickadees. And it is about spring and summer and fall and winter, and all the shades and colors between. And *The Forest Year* is also a book about reciprocity and community and responsibility; a meditation on the magical and vital thing that happens when we decide to stay — in this world, with these ecosystems, with each other — and to engage in the ancient and beautiful and complex and radical practice called "stewardship." This is a book about the treasures that cannot be attained by going far, only by going deep. This is a book about the wings that we may grow when we set down roots, wherever we are, and become stewards.

One April, as I was tending the fruit trees in my orchard, I had a realization that changed what *The Forest Year* would become. For the last eight years, each spring I have planted a few more fruit trees in Bear Island's little orchard. Now there are one hundred of them, standing in crooked ranks, rooted in the harsh gravel of the clearing. Each year there are more trees to prune and train, to weed and mulch and fertilize. Each year there are more problems to solve, more things to protect my orchard trees from. And each year the trees get bigger; each year the orchard is more work, more of my time and my energy, and my trees haven't even begun to fruit yet. This spring, as I was staring up into the crown of a Vermont Gold apple tree, my pruning shears in hand, I had a moment of clarity.

"Oh." I thought. "Planting a tree is the easiest part."

It is a sentiment that is echoed and repeated throughout this book, a thing that I tell people when they ask me what The Forest Year is "about." As time has passed, I have found my mind and my heart drawn back, again and

again, to this place, to what is here. I have learned that there are so many riches—of relationship, of stewardship, of knowledge, of ecology, of community—that cannot be attained by traveling far, only by traveling deep. And I began to wonder what it would mean to decide to stay.

I now believe that there is nothing radical about planting a tree and walking away. I now believe that what is truly radical, truly profound, truly beautiful, is to stay and tend the trees we have planted—to invest ourselves in this endless process of caring for this world and for each other. It is a process that is without easy joys and without finish lines, a process that is difficult to understand and to appreciate and to explain, a process too deep to be captured in a picture. But I have begun to see that this is where true abundance will be found: that it is not a treasure that we will unearth in some distant place, but a treasure that we will find when we allow ourselves to set down roots, wherever we are.

The Forest Year is a celebration of life, and the complex actions necessary to save this one, precious, irreplaceable world. It is not a book about raising alarms, a book about threats and perils, a book about fear or anger or despair. This is a book about abundance; about the joys and the beauty of a world worth saving — a world that we can and that we will save, if we take the actions necessary to do so. *The Forest Year* is a book about hope.

I am not here to tell you about what has been lost from this world, the things that are missing. I am here to tell you that there is so much that is still here, and so much more to be discovered.

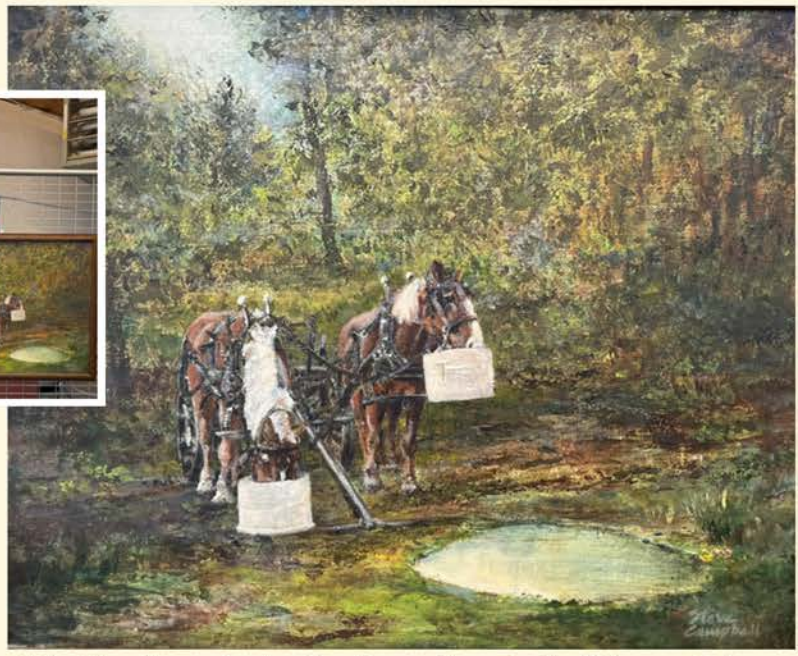
Ethan Tapper is a forester, ecologist, author, and content creator from Vermont. His first book – How to Love a Forest: The Bittersweet Work of Tending a Changing World – was released in 2024 and is the winner of the New England Book Award. His second book – The Forest Year: Finding Hope in a World Worth Saving was released in October 2026, and is a national bestseller. Find out more about Ethan and his work at EthanTapper.com or on Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube, under his handle @HowToLoveAForest

Corry event creates artwork inspired by nonprofits



In August, the Corry Artists' Guild hosted the first annual "Create for Change" art exhibition and auction, pairing nonprofits with local artists to express their missions through art. In support of FSF, artist Steve Campbell (*pictured above*) created the painting shown here, titled "Fueling".

Stories and personal experiences often connect people to charitable missions and inspire them to get involved. We thank the Corry Artists' Guild, especially Autumn Jells and Steve for telling a piece of FSF's story through art!



"Fueling", a painting by Steve Campbell of Corry, PA as part of the Corry Artists' Guild's first ever "Create for Change" event.

P.O. Box 146
Spartansburg, PA 16434

(814) 694-5830

foundationforsustainableforests.org

Board of Directors

Troy Firth
President

Cheryl Zalik
Chair

Richard Bowden, PhD
Treasurer

Thomas C. Hoffman II, Esq.
Secretary

John Noel Bartlett

Guy Dunkle

Patrick Maloney

David Yasenchack

Staff

Annie Maloney, PhD
Executive Director

We are hiring!

Scan the QR code above or visit foundationforsustainableforests.org/jobs to learn more.

The Foundation for Sustainable Forests is a 501(c)3 charitable organization dedicated to protecting forested land and supporting forest livelihoods through practices that maintain the long-term health of the land.

Upcoming Events

Jan 22 - Our Woods & Waters Film Series,
Virtual via Zoom Webinar

Feb. 19 - Our Woods & Waters Film Series
Edinboro VFW, 10613 PA-98, Edinboro, PA

PALMIERO TOYOTA

GIVE BACK PROGRAM

November 2-28

Palmiero Toyota's visionary giving event is back!

Cast one vote per day to support healthy forests and thriving communities.

Vote during business hours at 16165 Conneaut Lake Rd. Meadville, PA



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