



White Township
Stewardship
Committee
2022
Annual Report

**A summary of work by
residents researching and
writing a stewardship plan
for White's Woods**

A message from the chair...

The Stewardship Committee came together in January 2022 with divergent interests but with a common desire to protect White's Woods as one of our communities' greatest natural gifts.

Committee members endeavored to reconcile the various opinions voiced throughout White Township and discovered much common ground on which to work.

The committee's focus now is on hearing many experienced professionals, understanding the facts, and objectively weighing their valuable opinions for developing the best plan for the care and protection of White's Woods.

Going into 2023, we continue to find encouragement in the support and participation of all stakeholders of this woodland and remain committed to producing a stewardship plan that all can support.

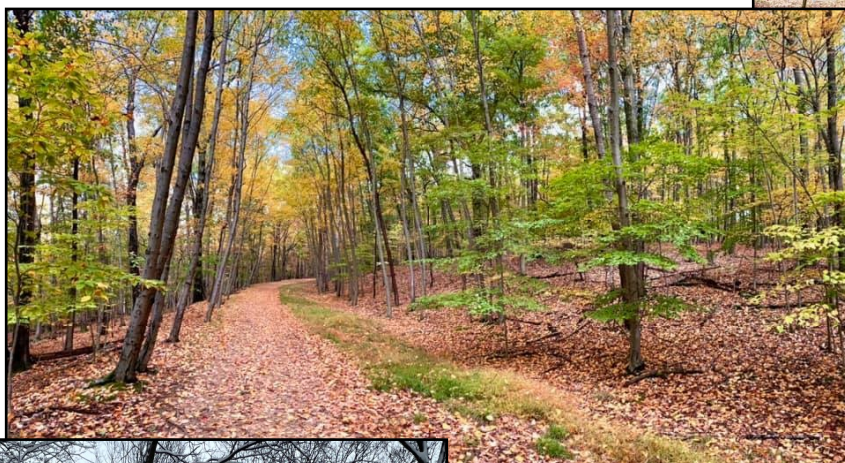
Barb Hauge



Margaret Weaver photo



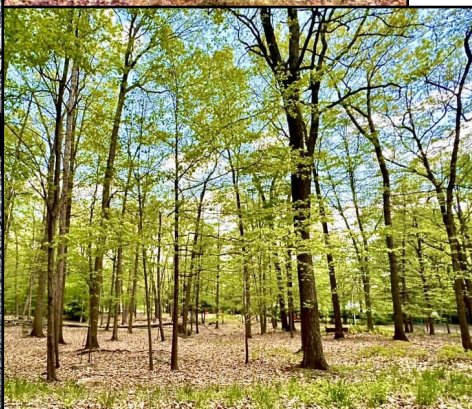
Rebecca Lynn Craig photos



Visitors to White's Woods can find new vistas on every journey into the forest ...

From well-trod paths to stony overhangs to expanses of wildflowers ...

From the budding branches of spring to the glorious palette of autumn to the stark beauty of winter...



Sierra Davis photo

White Township photo



“... the oversight and protection of White's Woods ...”

The White Township Stewardship Committee was formed Dec. 15, 2021, by the White Township Board of Supervisors upon the recommendation of the township administration. Earlier proposed to be called the Woodlot Subcommittee of the Recreation Advisory Board, the panel was

renamed on the advice of the township staff and was given an 18-month mission, “tasked with researching, fact-finding and updating the White Township Stewardship plan including addressing comments from DCNR. The completed Stewardship Plan will oversee and protect Township properties using best practices and expert recommendations.”

The supervisors approved the appointment of Barb Hauge, an advisory board member, as chair; and the selection of David Dahlheimer, Sierra Davis, Matt Klunk and Jeff Geesey from among many community residents who applied for membership on the committee.

The committee first met for an organizational session Thursday, Jan. 20, 2022, at S&T Bank Arena in the White Township Recreation Complex. The committee selected Mr. Dahlheimer as vice chairman and Ms. Davis as secretary, opted to hold future meetings at the



White Township municipal building public meeting room to allow remote attendance by online guests, and set out to conduct business at 6:30 p.m. on the third Thursday of each month.

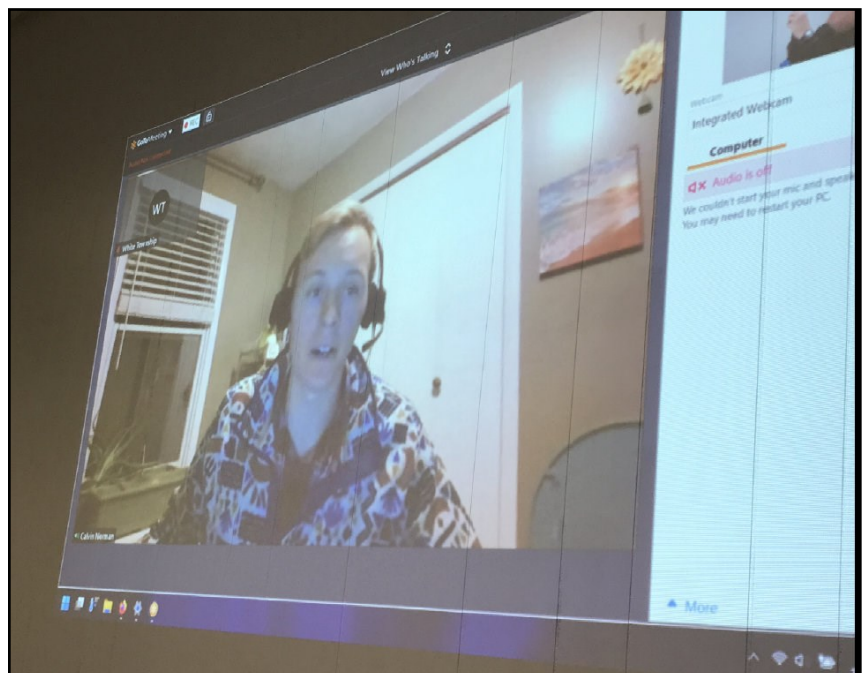
Early in its work to update a comprehensive stewardship plan to address all wooded township-owned properties, the board of supervisors directed the Stewardship Committee to first establish a plan for White’s Woods Recreation Area and then, time permitting, to recommend stewardship policies for White Township Recreation Complex on East Pike, Kennedy-King Park on Josephine Avenue, Getty Heights Park on Rustic Lodge Road and the White Township municipal complex on Indian Springs Road.

The committee has marked its first year of service to White Township.

“... using best practices and expert recommendations ...”

The White Township Stewardship Committee has cast a wide net in its task of collecting all possible information, evaluating past research, reviewing all relevant public policies and considering expert opinions for the creation of an agreed-upon plan for the stewardship of White’s Woods.

At its public meetings in 2022, the committee heard presentations by Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP) biology professor Dr. Ellen Yerger; IUP professor of biology Dr. Tom Simmons; Old Growth Forest Network Founder Dr. Joan Maloof; Penn State University assistant professor of forestry Calvin Norman; Allegheny Land Trust Vice President Alyson Fearon; and IUP biology professor Mike Tyree.



Earth Day at White's Woods

In observance of Earth Day, on April 22, 2022, a number of conservation, preservation, education and advocacy groups from the Indiana community and Indiana University of Pennsylvania set up information tables and invited area residents to celebrate with a "Walk to White's Woods."



Musicians, environmental supporters and those who simply appreciate the beauty and serenity of the White's Woods Nature Center joined for an afternoon of sharing their appreciation for this community asset.

The Earth Day event planner, [Friends of White's Woods](#), and many other cooperating groups and organizations encouraged visitors to explore the forest and to take free tree seedlings to plant in their own yards at home.

White Township photos



“... to keep all the park’s users aware ...”

In addition to its core mission of recommending stewardship policies and plans for White Township’s public properties, the stewardship committee has advocated for safe, comfortable and enjoyable visits by all of the uses of the township woods and parks.

Upon the Stewardship Committee’s recommendation, the White Township Board of Supervisors authorized and funded the construction of an informational kiosk in the North 12th Street parking area for the benefit of visitors to White’s Woods.

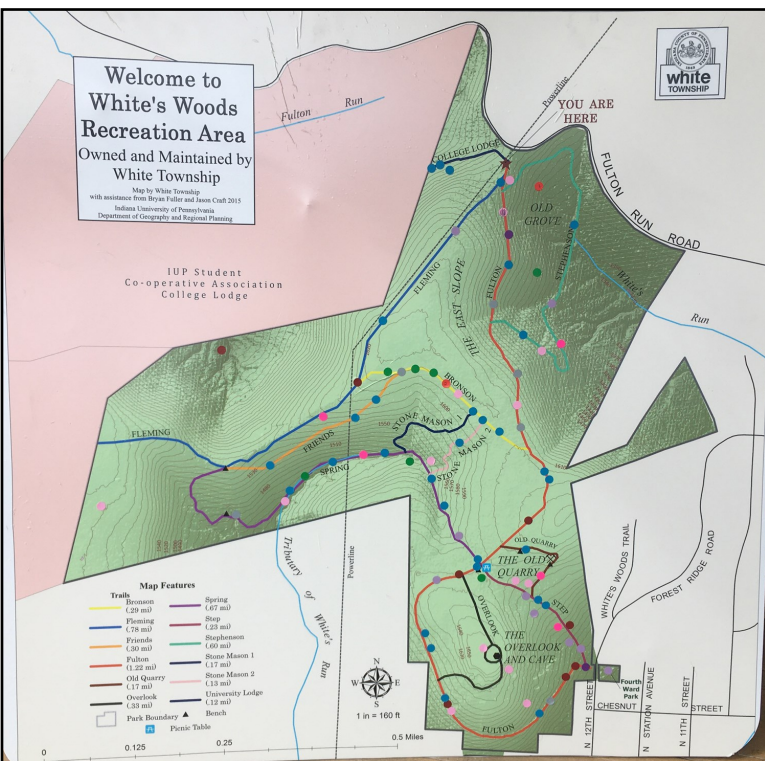
The committee in 2022 helped to publicize information about the presence of blacklegged ticks on township properties and the possible spread of spotted lanternflies in Indiana County.

The committee shared the platform of its monthly public meetings to allow promotion of recreational and educational events organized by community partners and users of the township’s properties.

To help acquaint the public with the beauty and opportunities of White’s Woods, and to generate awareness of its mission to protect White’s Woods as a valuable natural regional asset, the committee members distributed literature and answered visitors’ questions at a booth at the Northern Appalachian Folk Festival in September in downtown Indiana.



Stewardship Committee members David Dahlheimer, Barbara Hauge, Matthew Klunk, Sierra Davis and Jeffrey Geesey.



“... the efforts being made to preserve this community asset.”

The White Township Stewardship Committee has gone about its work in the public eye. It has welcomed all stakeholders in person at the monthly meetings at the municipal building and provided for their virtual attendance on the GoToMeeting platform online.

The record of the committee’s research and work has been compiled in digital form on a page hosted by the White Township website at <https://www.whitetownship.org/white-township-stewardship-committee>. The agendas and minutes of the monthly meetings, documents reviewed by the committee at the public sessions, information submitted by committee members and visitors, digital versions of online presentations by the committee’s invited guests and a spectrum of background information provided for the committee members to study are compiled for public asset on the Stewardship Committee’s web page.

Meet the members of the White Township Stewardship Committee



Barbara Hauge

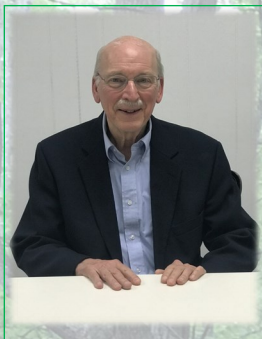
Barb has served more than 15 years as a landscape architect, arborist and green infrastructure professional for UpStreet Architects, and holds degrees in horticulture from Penn State and landscape architecture from City College of New York.

Serving on the White Township Recreation Advisory Board, she brings expertise and advocacy for safe biking and walking facilities in the township.

"I would like to use my credentials and community engagement experience to assist with the development of this stewardship plan," she said.

Barb and her family regularly enjoy the relaxation that the outdoor spaces throughout Indiana County offer.

"We are very fortunate to have nearby open spaces and woodlands to enjoy nature," she said.



David Dahlheimer

David brings a long record of visiting, studying and informing the community about White's Woods.

"For the last 28 years, I have been involved with Friends of White's Woods, learning about best practices for its management," David said. "I have made innumerable professional contacts whose input can inform decisions about a stewardship plan."

David holds degrees in psychology and counselor education from University of Iowa, Indiana University of Pennsylvania and University of Pittsburgh.

In Indiana, David has served as an advisor to the local chapter of National Alliance on Mental Illness.

"The opportunities to experience nature for all ages are invaluable, and I frequently observed their benefits in my psychology practice," David said.



Sierra Davis

Sierra, a scientist for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, serves the panel with a passion for engaging communities and building consensus.

Sierra holds degrees from IUP and University of Rhode Island, and has years of training and experience in environmental policy development and community resilience planning.

Sierra is a regular and avid blood donor. She enjoys serving her community and spends her free time outdoors.

"I would do my best to advocate for science-backed and evidence-based best practices for the management of woodlot parks," Sierra said. "My goal ... is not only to help develop a successful plan for our parks but also to help build a bridge between the governing body of White Township, the scientific community and the public."



Matthew Klunk

Matt holds a master's degree in safety sciences from IUP and has worked as a safety professional since 2005. He has been employed 15 years at Eastern Alliance Insurance Group.

His volunteer experience includes years of service work for the Boy Scouts of America and also several Catholic churches in the area.

Matt earned the Eagle Scout rank in 2000, and worked summers at Yellow Creek State Park scout camp teaching wilderness survival, nature, aquatics and lifeguarding classes.

Matt resides with his family in White Township. He enjoys hunting, fishing, and running in the local parks and trails. Matt's involvement in stewardship stems from his desire to preserve our local, state, and nation's resources that he enjoys, so that the future generations can do so as well.



Jeffrey Geesey

Jeff combines his training and experience as an educator and an administrator with his personal interest as a conservationist to his service as a member of the White Township Stewardship Committee.

"My wealth of experiences and background provide a solid foundation to be able to serve the township in a variety of capacities on various committees," Jeff said. "My extensive positions over four decades in education have provided skills sets to arrive at consensus on particular items of interest and concern."

Jeff has earned certifications as a school principal and an administrative director (master's equivalent), and in welding engineering technology.

He holds a master's degree in education leadership and now is an educational consultant for the River Valley School District based in Blairsville.