

Penn State **Extension**

# Future Forest Steward

Learn about and help Penn's Woods



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Cooperative Extension  
College of Agricultural Sciences

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Mike Houtz

## Is Everyone Who Owns Forestland a Forest Steward?

Not every forestland owner is a forest steward. Some don't have time to care for their woods. Others don't think much about their forestland or don't care about its future. It takes a special person to care for the forest!

🍷 Do you care about forests? Why?

## Total Makeover

Forest stewards enjoy the woods all year long. Look closely at these two pictures. They were taken in the same location at two different times of the year. 🍷 Can you find at least five seasonal differences between these two pictures?

🍷 Which of the four seasons (spring, summer, winter, or fall) do you like best? Why?

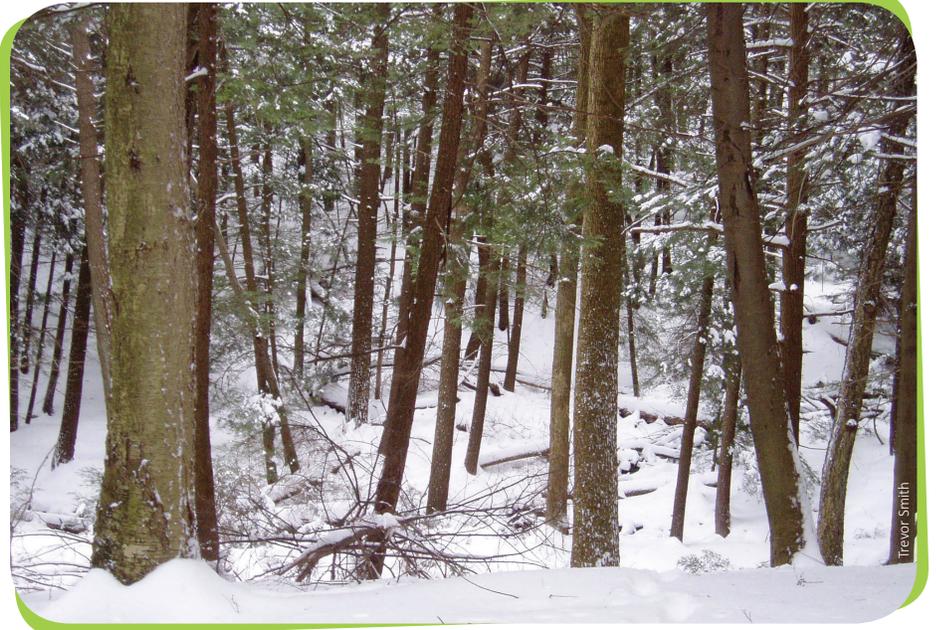
## What Is a Forest Steward?

A forest steward is a person who owns and cares for a piece of forestland. Forestland is sometimes just called "woods." It is land where trees, plants, insects, and other animals all live and grow. Some forest stewards own only small areas that are one or two acres in size. Others own large pieces of forestland that are many acres in size. Forest stewards own their forestland for many reasons, and they do many different things with their woods. When forest stewards do things today in the woods, they are always thinking about tomorrow. The future of their forests is important to them. They want to make sure their forests will always be there, healthy and growing well. They hope that future generations will enjoy and use their woods just like they do now.

When you see an 🍷, stop and think about the question that follows it.



Trevor Smith



Trevor Smith

## Wildlife Signs

Wildlife is not always easy to see. Many animals roam the woods at night and hide by day. Sometimes they leave signs and markings that tell us they are near. Match each wildlife sign in the pictures with the six animals that made them (A–F).

- (A) pileated woodpecker
- (B) black bear
- (C) bobcat
- (D) white-tailed deer
- (E) eastern chipmunk
- (F) wild turkey



1



2



3



4



5



6

## What Kinds of Forests Do Forest Stewards Own?

Forest stewards own many types of forests or woods. Their woods may have lots of evergreen trees (conifers), or they may have many trees that lose their leaves each fall (deciduous). Their forests may be filled with trees that are small and very young. Or their forests may have trees that are quite large and old. Some trees in the woods can be over 400 years old, but these are not very common! Forest stewards care about trees, but they are also

interested in the other plants in their woods. Wildflowers, shrubs, and ferns are important too. Forest stewards own pieces of forestland in locations near towns and cities as well as in the country. Chances are a forest steward lives near you!

## Do Forest Stewards Like Wildlife?

Forest stewards care about the wildlife in their woods. These animals are important to them. Most forest wildlife need trees, and many trees need wildlife. Wildlife use trees for shelter, food, and places to hide and rest. Trees need wildlife to spread

their seeds, fertilize the soil, pollinate their flowers, and protect them from insects that eat their leaves. Some forest stewards like to hunt deer and other game animals in their woods. Other forest stewards just like to see, study, or photograph wildlife. Forest stewards want to make their forests better for wildlife. They usually do this by cutting some trees to allow the remaining trees to get more sunlight and grow better. The trees they leave provide good shelter and food for wildlife. Sometimes forest stewards plant trees and shrubs that provide food and shelter too. 🌿 Do you like to see wildlife? If so, what kinds?

## What's Fun about the Woods?

Can you think of some fun things people do in forests? How about camping, hiking, fishing, or painting? What about swimming, hunting, or bird watching? Some like mountain biking, horseback riding, or photographing nature. All the fun things people do in the woods are called **forest recreation**. Forest stewards help provide places for people to recreate. They often try to improve their forests for interesting and fun activities. 🍏 Can you think of some ways they could do this?

## Why Do Forest Stewards Own Their Woods?

Forest stewards own their woods for many reasons. Sometimes they inherit it from their parents or another family member. They may have their properties for personal or sentimental reasons. Some buy their forestland from people who want to sell it. They may keep it as a place they can go to rest or have fun. Others buy forestland to produce forest products, provide wildlife habitat, or protect bodies of water like streams and ponds. There are almost as many reasons why forest stewards own forestland as there are forest stewards!

## Closer Looks

Sometimes the closer you get to things in the forest, the more different and yet beautiful they look. Match these objects, or things, with the correct pictures below.

- (A) mushroom
- (B) thistle flower
- (C) pine cone
- (D) wild turkey
- (E) white-tailed deer
- (F) acorn cap





Howard Nuernberger

## What Are Forest Products?

Forest products are things that people make or use from the forest. Things like maple syrup, firewood, lumber, and paper are forest products. Many different types of wood, food, medicine, and chemicals are forest products too. We all need and use forest products. Trees are renewable resources. This means that if we are careful with forests, they will keep producing the products we need. Most forest stewards like to grow or produce forest products in their woods. They also want to be sure that their forests keep producing forest products in the future.

## Water Everywhere

Forests are places where melted snow water and rain water are filtered and stored. Most of the drinking water we use comes from forests. Forest stewards know water is an important forest product. They care for their forests so that they keep producing lots of clean, cool water. 🍷 Where does your drinking water come from?

## Do Forest Stewards Want to Protect Their Forests and “Save” the Trees?

Forest stewards want to protect their forests, especially the special places in the woods. But forest stewards know that cutting trees is an important part of taking care of a forest. Cutting trees that are diseased or sick can help keep forests healthy. Also, cutting some trees helps the remaining trees grow better. This helps provide more food and shelter for wildlife and more forest products for people. Cutting trees also lets more sunlight into the forest so that new trees and other plants can grow.

## What Are Special Places in the Forest?

There are many types of special places in the forest that forest stewards want to protect. Areas near streams and ponds should be treated carefully so that soil or chemicals don't get into the water. Other areas called wetlands are also special. Wetlands have water on or under their surface for at least several weeks each year. They often have special plants growing in them that are not found anywhere else. They are home to many insects and animals. Some other special places that forest stewards want to protect are steep, rocky, or very dry areas. They can be damaged easily. Like wetlands, these areas are home to many special plants and animals.



Mike Houtz



## Cool Tools

Mobile devices help forest stewards explore and understand their properties by using satellite or aerial views, plant and wildlife identification apps, and even insect and disease tracking tools. 🍏 Could a “computer bug” be spread in the forest by a mobile device?

## Forest Fun

People love to spend time in the forest doing things that help them enjoy nature and learn about it. A few of these things are shown on the right. Match the letters below with the activities in the pictures.

- (A) wildlife watching
- (B) nature photography
- (C) horseback riding
- (D) mountain biking
- (E) camping
- (F) hiking
- (G) collecting wild food
- (H) nature journaling

Forest stewards provide places for these and more fun things to happen. Circle three things you enjoy or would like to do someday. Now tell your friend why you circled the ones you did!



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8

## Wooden Cookie

Tree cookies are round slices of tree trunks that show the growth rings of the tree. A new ring of wood is formed toward the outside of the trunk every year. Count the tree rings on these two tree cookies to see how old they are. Write the age of the tree on the line below the photo. 🍷 What might explain why one tree has a bigger trunk? 🍷 Can a forest steward do anything that might cause this to happen?



## From Days Gone By

Forest stewards want to understand the past history of their forests. This forest steward is showing a future forest steward a place where barbed wire is growing through the center of a tree. 🍷 How do you think this wire got here? 🍷 What might have been the history of this forest? Hint: Could cows have anything to do with it?

## What Is a Forester?

Foresters are people who have studied about the science of trees and how they grow. They can be a big help to forest stewards in deciding how to make their forests more useful and healthy. They can also help forest stewards decide when some trees can be cut and how to be sure new trees will grow back in their place. 🍷 Do you remember some of the things trees are used to make? 🍷 Did you use any of these things today?

## Would You Like to Be a Future Forest Steward?

While you may not be old enough to own a forest, you can become a future forest steward now. In fact, you have already started the process of becoming one! Learning about forests and how to care for them is the first step to becoming a future forest steward. You can do this by reading or hearing information about forests and wildlife. You can also learn directly from today's forest stewards themselves. The second step to becoming a future forest steward is to take action. Go to the woods and learn about it. You can

help forest stewards take care of their forests. Or you can tell others about forest stewardship.

Be sure to read over this flyer carefully. Think about the information presented, especially the questions marked with an 🍷. Discuss these with your teacher or adult helper. Lastly, carry out one of the recommended forest stewardship activities listed in the *Educator/Helper Guide to the Future Forest Steward Program* to earn the official Pennsylvania Future Forest Steward award. Do this with a group or on your own. Then you will be a future forest steward!

## Trees Everywhere

Forests need lots of young trees. Young forest trees are called regeneration. Regeneration grows in to replace old trees that die or larger trees that are cut down. Forest stewards work hard to protect young trees from damage. 🍷 Can you think of things that might damage young trees?



## More Online

This publication, the Educator/Helper Guide, and lots of other great information can be found online at [ecosystems.psu.edu/youth/sftrc/future-forest-steward](http://ecosystems.psu.edu/youth/sftrc/future-forest-steward).

Prepared by Sanford S. Smith, extension specialist in natural resources and youth education; Allyson B. Muth, forest stewardship program associate; and James C. Finley, professor of forest resources.

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