

TAB 7

Forest Management

Issue:

Initiation of a strategic plan to protect and renew a healthy, sustainable forest as part of LHCC land management objectives.

Background:

One of LHCC members, John Sorna, initiated this project by introducing a private forest management consultant to the Master Planning Committee. As a result, two foresters came to Lake Holiday to do preliminary walks of our forested land. The forester from Virginia Department of Forestry, Matt Wolanski, visited on August 19 and Mike Wolf of Appalachian Forest Consultants in Pennsylvania visited on August 31.

- Master Planning Committee goals:
 - Sustainability for many generations going forward
 - Improving forest health by encouraging regeneration of native trees/shrubs
 - Minimizing growth of invasive plants
 - Improving wildlife habitat
 - Maintaining aesthetics of the property
- Both foresters agreed our forest is not a high fire risk due to the lack of undergrowth; homes with lots of shrubs and dry leaves near foundation are much higher risk
- Both foresters agree our forested areas are in poor health:
 - Areas that were pasture 50 years ago and receive sunlight are full of invasive, non-native plants (shrubs, trees, vines, weeds) that deer don't eat. They prevent native plants from growing.
 - The former pasture has dead and dying trees that are not being replaced with new seedlings.
 - Some of the forest has a full canopy of very old trees (some at least 200 yrs old) but the forest floor is bare. Deer have eaten every new seedling that comes up.
 - Eventually these old trees will die with nothing new to replace them. Increased sunlight will bring invasive plants.
 - Some of the forest has large areas of thin diameter trees and these areas were probably clear cut 50 years ago.
- Invasive Spotted Lanternfly is everywhere in Winchester but has not come here yet. It congregates and eats Tree of Heaven, also invasive and everywhere. Very little known about how to eradicate yet. May decimate orchards and vineyards.

Recommendations:

- Private forester can help initiate federal grant funding through Natural Resources Conservation Services (and maybe state grants) to help pay for efforts to renew health of forest.
- To obtain grants, a forest management plan would be written by the forester.
- Forest management plan would include multiple steps accomplished over about a 10 year time span.
- Some of the steps:
 - Choose several acres of mature trees with no understory to fence, keeping deer out so seedlings (oaks and maples) can grow. Fencing is 8 feet high, \$5 per linear foot.
 - Perform some selective cutting of large unhealthy trees in those areas to bring more sunlight to new growth. Tops of trees left behind would provide some safety for new seedlings and disintegrate over time.
 - We have a group of logs lying near Beach III, freshly cut, that we could find a logger to sell to. Could potentially receive \$4,000 if all good. These funds could help pay for other forest work as would any selective cutting. Logger pays us and then gets his money from the sawmill.
 - Herbicides would need to be sprayed on areas of invasive plants to clear them out. Then fencing would have to be erected there to keep deer out.
 - Clear cutting not recommended. Harvesting significant numbers of trees would only occur after a healthy understory develops (minimum of 10 yrs).
- Mike Wolf plans to contact VDOF to discuss level of complexity required in the forest plan to be acceptable to submit for grant funding. Obtaining grants may take a year. He charges by the hour, would write the plan and help implement its steps. He does not own a logging company. He is only a consultant.
- Once we get further info from forester and sense of costs for a plan, we will then need to decide if we want to do more.
- **We have learned that preserving, protecting and renewing our forested land requires similar strategic planning and implementation as our lake.**

Motion:

None at present. For information only.

Pat Majewski, Chair, Master Planning Committee

September 28, 2021