



Spring 2019

the Forest Steward

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Women of the Woods

"With women we add a voice

Look at trees and rejoice

With days, and years to come

Making sure we nurture

All of the forest

And the girls who rise up next"

*~Excerpt from a poem by Lynn Levine,
Consulting Forester and author of books
about the forest.*

*Ashland TREX in 2017 on the Rogue Siskiyou National
Forest. Photo by: The Nature Conservancy.*



Forest Stewards
 **Guild**
putting the forest first

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*A women practicing safe chainsaw operation
skills at Hidden Valley Nature Center. Photo by:
Amanda Mahaffey, Forest Stewards Guild*

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To our Members and Supporters

Women in Forest Stewardship



Amanda Mahaffey, Northeast Region Director, Forest Stewards Guild

This issue of The Forest Steward highlights the work of women in forestry, fire, science, and woodland ownership. Across these realms of influence, women today engage deeply in forestry issues and make impactful decisions. Women are an integral part of the story that shapes forests across the landscape. Here, we offer insight from some of the women leading that change.

We know that this work is constantly evolving, and that the world in which we work is far from perfect. The barriers to women in natural resource management are very real. Even more tangible than any virtual glass ceiling, however, are the daily triumphs of women who practice and advance responsible forest management. Most importantly, the stories in this issue highlight quintessential Guild forest wisdom, shared by wise women in forest stewardship.

In 2019 women are a driving force in forest stewardship. A century since women first made gains in the right to vote, and four decades since Women's History Month was first celebrated, we at the Forest Stewards Guild are pausing to reflect on challenges, celebrate successes, and look forward to history yet to be made by women forest stewards.

We hope that as you read, you will be inspired to consider diverse perspectives in your thinking about forests. The Guild values diverse forests because they are more productive, more resilient, more adaptable, and better able to recover from disturbances. The same is true of being inclusive of a diversity of staff, partners, and collaborators. Like the forest ecosystem, our society is strengthened by diversity in our ranks. Women bring immeasurable benefits to forest stewardship by perceiving a problem from a different viewpoint, offering varied solutions, expanding connections to the community, increasing organizational morale, and enhancing collaboration.

Foresters are in it for the long term. We hope that forty or a hundred years from now, the next generations of forest stewards – women and men – will benefit from the choices we make today.

Amanda Mahaffey

Mentorship in the forestry profession



Amber Ellering



Kathryn Fernholz

**Interviews with Amber Ellering,
Forest Policy and Planning Supervisor,
Minnesota Department of Natural
Resources, and Kathryn Fernholz,
CEO/President of Dovetail Partners**

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Q *What role do mentors play in the forestry profession and within the Forest Stewards Guild?*

Amber: Mentors provide wisdom, teaching, support. In the forestry field, where the knowledge foundations are incredibly broad and varied, we must work with people to understand the many skills that enable success. The Forest Stewards Guild is a hotbed of curious professionals, an asset to anyone dedicated to lifelong learning.

Kathryn: Mentors can help reduce the learning curve for new entrants into a field of practice. The experiences of a mentor can provide additional perspective on potential challenges and opportunities. Mentors can provide encouragement and constructive advice. Sometimes it also just helps to hear another person's story to better understand what might be on the path ahead. In forestry, our practice requires an appreciation of what has been done in the past – at the stand level as well as within policy decisions and planning activities. Forestry, like many professions, is a product of its history and mentors can help new natural resource professionals gain perspective on “how we got to now”.

Q *What are the benefits of having women as mentors in the forestry profession?*

Amber: I've been lucky to have some amazing mentors, both men and women. Women encounter different experiences in professional settings. Another woman's insights about how to deal with some challenging situations is useful in a very practical way.

Kathryn: Often, mentors help new forestry professionals to easily imagine “that could be me”. Diversity in mentors facilitates diversity in mentees and, ultimately, diversity in the forestry profession.

Q *What challenges or barriers do women mentors face in forestry?*

Amber: Women mentors are very popular with women students and emerging professionals. Women mentors in forestry are in short supply compared to demand by women (and men) entering the

profession. But mentoring two students instead of one, or for my professor colleagues, advising 50 students instead of 30, means our time is not available for other leadership pursuits. Therefore, our allies and our communities need to be sensitive about the fact that empowering and promoting women leaders means supporting us in the roles we choose, and sharing the responsibility for mentoring while finding ways to connect mentees to women's experiences in forestry.

Kathryn: The challenges to women entering the forestry profession are diverse and range from very personal considerations to institutional and systemic barriers. Some are unique while others are commonly shared. Barriers can start close to home and include discouragement from family members and other influencers such as guidance counselors or advisors who are not supportive of a career in natural resources. Challenges can occur throughout the academic years and in various employment situations, and change over time as a person works through the dimensions of work-life balance. In a word, a common challenge can be loneliness. This feeling can stem from being a member of an underrepresented group or from structures that create separation. Even the most introverted or self-referencing person can be sensitive to being the “odd one out” over and over again. Increasing the practice of inclusivity is essential to recruiting and retaining diversity in forestry. A variety of situations throughout a career can give rise to uncertainty and lead a person to wonder “is it just me?”— these are the times a mentor can help navigate the situations and determine a path of action.

Q *What inspires you to mentor the next generation of forestry professionals?*

Amber: I like people, especially people who are cultivating a stewardship ethic and hungry to learn. I learn from mentees too.

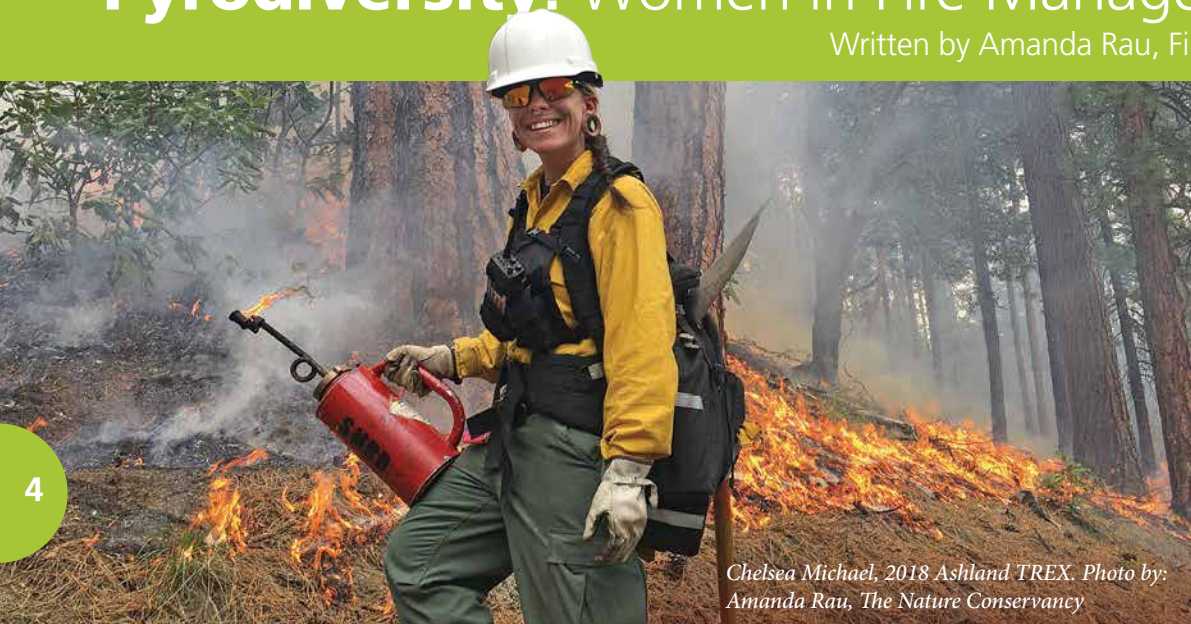
Kathryn: I think the forestry profession - and the forest itself - benefits when there is greater diversity. We are managing a diverse resource for diverse benefits. Diversity is a core principle of resilient forests and should be a core principle for our ecosystem of forestry professionals as well.



Pyrodiversity: Women in Fire Management

Written by Amanda Rau, Fire Manager

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Chelsea Michael, 2018 Ashland TREX. Photo by: Amanda Rau, The Nature Conservancy

Since I started in 1999, out of every 20 people I have met in wildland fire, on average just one or two are women. My career did not start with a notion that just showing up to work on a 20-person wildland firefighting hand-crew was a particularly radical thing for a woman to do. Knowing a handful of women who had worked during the summer together on such crews, emboldened by their biceps and boots, exposed me to a kind of confidence that I had not seen before and wanted to embody myself. When you become a part of that 10%, you become acutely aware of how radical it is indeed to do this job as a woman, and how much that number needs to change.

A nod to my friends who inspired me to become a firefighter - seeking a kind of sisterhood in wildland fire led me to look for ways to meaningfully invest in women beyond recruitment and retention. Efforts to help rebalance the gender and power dynamics within the wildland fire service ultimately result in different ecological outcomes and better stewardship practices in forest and fire management. The broader suite of approaches that comes from more diverse groups of people, particularly women, presents more options for dealing with increasingly complex challenges. Whether and how people are represented, included, and empowered as leaders, stewards, and decision-makers directly influences the success of these strategies. Effective recruitment and retention of women and other underrepresented people hinge upon intentional investments to ensure that they have the support they need to be successful and

fully participate. Looking beyond just getting women and other underrepresented groups through the door holds potential to elevate us beyond this point. Becoming aware of how all underrepresented groups of people are being treated as they strive to ascend, to ensure that they become empowered leaders who are then able to help contribute to decision-making, holds potential for real change.

The key to helping women succeed lies in a diversified approach, ranging from informal networking and the sisterhood, to formal training focused on women such as women's burn modules at the Prescribed Fire Training Center and the Fire Learning Network's Women in Fire Training Exchange (WTREX). Facilitation of mentoring and coaching relationships, empowerment through support and encouragement, and providing opportunities for experience and development all point to the kind of intentional investments that hold potential beyond the opportunities for women, as favorable outcomes for forests and communities.

Women on the fence about their futures and careers are more likely to stay in fire against the odds when they know they are not alone and have support. Connecting them to leverage their talents and differences beyond what either could do alone, providing safe spaces to make mistakes that lead to mastery, and seeing controlled ecological burns managed well by talented capable women, are all small changes that add up to big things. Women are moving the needle toward healthier forests, safer communities, and people more connected with nature, one burn at a time.



Liz Dunson, 2017 Ashland TREX. Photo by: Amanda Rau, The Nature Conservancy



Amanda Rau briefing for a burn near Eugene, Oregon in 2015. Photo by: Melissa Olson, The Nature Conservancy



Kara Baylog, 2018 Ashland TREX. Photo by: Amanda Rau, The Nature Conservancy

Women in Forest Science,

Written by Susan Stout, Research Forester Emerita

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Susan Stout leans on a black cherry tree after a day of inventory. Photos courtesy of Susan Stout, USDA Forest Service Research and Development

As a forest scientist, I experience joy in seeing how the renewability of forests applies almost anywhere there are managed forests. With the best science, careful application, and plenty of humility, humans can work with forests to produce basic and beautiful wood products, habitat for wildlife, wildflowers, and fungi, clean air, clean water, recreation, and human health.

When I began my career, the forests of northwestern Pennsylvania were threatened by overabundant deer, acid rain, and, increasingly, invasive exotic diseases, insects, and plants. The complex interactions of large-scale forces like these with traditional factors that silviculture could control, like shade and structure, were our research subjects. I believe they foreshadow the interactions we will see in forests as the climate changes.

My predecessors at the Forestry Sciences Lab in northwest Pennsylvania had established a community of practice with forest managers from industry, state and federal agencies, consultants, and non-governmental organizations. I came to northwestern Pennsylvania at a time when many were still uncertain that women belonged in forestry. I had the good fortune to encounter colleagues who may have differed with me on many things but welcomed my passion to understand these

forests and share what I learned. I have been honored to be part of our research team's work to make research meaningful to sustainable forestry. In my opinion, women bring needed humility to the forestry profession and the forestry community. Humility will only grow in importance as forests face the complex challenges we anticipate in this century. In our diverse - by gender and by perspective - community of practice, each voice contributes. Scientists and foresters exchange observations about emerging



Susan Stout with Steve Horsley, pointing out deer browse damage on a stump sprout. Stout worked with Horsley and others conducting research on the impact of deer on forest development throughout her career.

trends. Managers run informal pilot tests, focus on equipment development, help set research priorities, and provide sites for comprehensive studies. Scientists design rigorous studies and sustain them for the

long run, bring insights from the literature, and bring new expertise from our networks. Together, we have made progress on some important sustainable forestry challenges, especially the impact of overabundant deer. As a woman in this field, I was fortunate not to face some of the horrifying experiences that women still face, and I have been thrilled to watch as more women have joined and succeeded in both the forest science and forest management communities around me. Women have a special role to play to sustain the kind of science-management partnership that shaped my career, leading the call for society to reinvest in forest science at every level: industry, universities, and public research agencies like mine.

Some believe that forestry science has passed a viability tipping point. To build support for science and for a broader reinvestment in forestry, we need to build connections with all the communities that depend on forests. Here, too, women may have a special role. To achieve this goal, we must all reach out, lean in, stretch ourselves – to welcome, nurture, listen to, and share our wisdom with the full diversity of people, across every identity continuum: urban to rural, gender, ethnicity, and more. This is not identity politics, it is a recognition that a tree with roots in only one sector of the soil beneath it will not stand.



Women Landowners in forest stewardship

Written by Amanda Mahaffey, Forest Stewards Guild



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Allyson Muth speaks on women and working forests at a Loving the Land Through Working Forests Conference. Photo by: Amanda Mahaffey, Forest Stewards Guild.

The Forest Stewards Guild is proud to facilitate the national Women Owning Woodlands (WOW) network through the support of the USDA Forest Service. Women landowners play an increasingly significant role in the stewardship of America's 44 million acres of family forestland. The Guild facilitates the network of WOW leaders that empowers women landowners to make informed management decisions about their land.

It's hard to put a finger on what makes WOW gatherings so impactful. In a women-focused learning environment, we've found that participants are supportive of one another, eager to gain forestry knowledge, and a ton of fun to work with. Leaders in the WOW network develop all sorts of resources and programming for women landowners. Events are as simple as a women-only woods walk as part of a larger event, and as complex as a multi-day retreat. Evaluations consistently show that these events give women the boost they need to embrace forest management.

Take, for example, women's chainsaw safety workshops. Through the generosity of the Betterment Fund and other key supporters, the Guild has been able to respond to a growing demand for women's chainsaw safety training in Maine. Women landowners are cutting their own firewood, clearing their trails, and volunteering with their local fire departments. The course

covers the fundamentals of chainsaw safety and maintenance in a very hands-on setting. Our instructors are positive, patient, and adamant about putting safety first. Women typically come to the course with a dirty, dull saw and leave able to maintain the saw, seek out properly-fitted safety gear (sometimes a challenge for women), and operate their saws in the woods safely. After taking the course, one woman said, "Now I'm going to go home and teach my husband the right way to use a saw."

Once hooked, these women are eager to learn more about how to steward their land. At each workshop, we bring in local experts and trusted resources such as the state's landowner outreach foresters, and we encourage participants to work with a forester and insist on having their questions answered.

Across the landscape, WOW events are bringing together the community of women landowners in forest stewardship. Along the way, the Guild is strengthening the network of WOW leaders who support these activities. This "thinking community" will help ensure that our forests are stewarded today and for future generations to enjoy.

To learn more, visit:
www.womenowningwoodlands.net

CHAINSAW SAFETY Workshop

MIDCOAST CONSERVANCY'S HIDDEN
VALLEY NATURE CENTER



*Chainsaw Safety Workshop Participants,
Midcoast Conservancy's Hidden Valley
Nature Center. Photo by: Amanda Mahaffey*



*Chainsaw Safety Workshop participant running
a saw at Midcoast Conservancy's Hidden Valley
Nature Center. Photo by: Amanda Mahaffey*



*Women learning and practicing chainsaw
maintenance skills in Bridgton, Maine. Photo by:
Alanna Doughty, Lakes Environmental Association*



*It takes at least as much skill to saw off a thin tree
cookie as it does to bake! Workshop participants
at Midcoast Conservancy's Hidden Valley Nature
Center. Photo by: Amanda Mahaffey*



Upcoming Events

Registration and event details online at <http://forestguild.org/events>

► Learn and Burns: Controlled burning for wildlife habitat

Date: March 16, **Location:** Berea, KY (back up date March 23)
April 6, **Location:** Sewanee, TN (back up date April 13)

These day-long workshops include tours, a demonstration prescribed burn, and a wealth of information for landowners who want to connect with resources to support wildlife, native ecology, and resilience on their land.

► Loving the Land Through Working Forests Conference

Date: May 11, **Location:** Grand Valley, Pennsylvania

Join our Foundation for Sustainable Forests partners for their 8th annual event! Agenda topics include The Land Ethic, The Family Forest Carbon Initiative, land legacy planning and resources, and managing your forest for long-term adaptation to climate change. That's just a sample of what's in store!

► Stone Fence Farm Guild Gathering

Date: June 7 – 8, **Location:** Unity New Hampshire

Jeremy Turner and Laura French are excited to host fellow Guild members and friends for a spectacular field event at Stone Fence Farm. Even if you are not in the Northeast, consider traveling outside your region for this not-to-be-missed event. The well-managed, 300-acre working forest and farm is in a landscape of contiguous forest. Come learn in this “playground” and share your own forest wisdom on adaptive forest management! We'll enjoy tours, food, music, discussion, and comradery.

► Restoration Forestry Guild Gathering: Bottomlands, Bluffs and Birds!

Date: postponed until autumn, **Location:** La Crosse, Wisconsin

A special look at the driftless region and Upper Mississippi River landscape ecology from the perspective of restoration management, floodplain silviculture, practical applications, and their implications.

Stay tuned for more event opportunities and, as always, let us know where you'd like to see or host the next Guild Gathering!