



Annual Meeting

The 2019 Annual Meeting was held on October 17th at Grandma Bear's Restaurant in Kane. Guest speakers were ANF Supervisor Jamie Davidson and Forest Ecosystems Management Staff Officer Andrea Hille who spoke on ANF management accomplishments and plans for the coming year.

New Board Members elected or recognized included:

At-Large Representative—Nadine Pollack (retired ANF)

Forest County Townships Representative—Beverly Pollack (Howe Township Secretary)

Ridgway Area School District Rep.—Heather McMahon-Vargas (Superintendent)

Kane Area School District Representative—Brock Benson (Superintendent)

AFA Executive Director Julia McCray presented a draft Strategic Plan, which was approved by the membership. She also presented the newly created "2020 Vision" campaign which was also approved. (see details on pg. 2)

COVID-19 Effects

Many events and meetings have been cancelled or postponed, including some of ours. (See page 4 for changes to AFA planned events.)

Our partner, **AHUG**, is keeping the forestry and wood products industries updated on mandates regarding closure. They worked hard with the Hardwoods Development Council to get the Governor's list of life-sustaining businesses revised to include as many of these businesses as possible and were largely successful.

The ANF offices are closed, as are their other public facilities. See their **Facebook** page for the latest updates on facilities and services.

The USFS is pausing all spring prescribed fire treatment in Oregon and Washington to avoid introducing smoke in communities that may be affected by COVID-19. This will mean higher wildfire risk in those states this year.

The shutdown of so many businesses is starting to be felt in the forest products markets. We suggest you visit your **local SBDC** website for business disruption recovery assistance.

Spring 2020

Board of Directors

Officers:

Amanda Hetrick—Pres.
Bob Kirchner—Vice Pres.
Becky Lucia—Secretary
Michelle Bogacki—Treas.

*For a full list of AFA Board Members, please visit our **"About" page.***

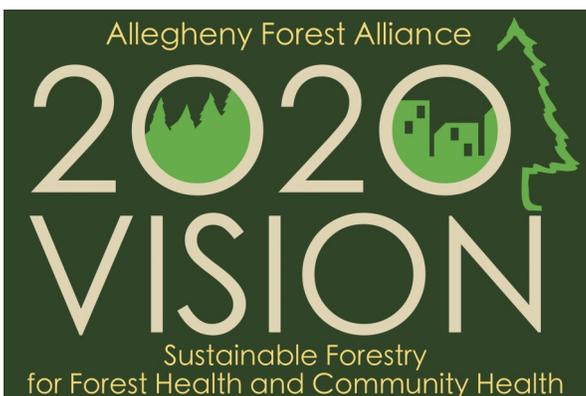
Executive Director:

Julia McCray
afaexec@gmail.com

Next Meeting:

Watch email for announcements.

AFA's "2020 Vision" Marketing and Education Campaign Begins



The 2020 Vision Campaign was approved by the membership at our Annual Meeting on Oct. 17, 2019. You can read the 1-page outline of the campaign on our website at: <http://alleghenyforestalliance.org/index.php/afas-2020-vision/>. The logo and slogan (at left) have been developed, and Facebook advertising is underway.

Window clings have been created to help promote this campaign and its initiatives, which will be distributed throughout the region. You can request clings for your personal or business display by contacting our Executive Director. We are also looking into offering various logo merchandise.

You can read about initiatives currently being planned on page 2 of this issue. We would also love to hear your ideas!

AFA Strategic Plan

Last October, the AFA Board approved its new Strategic Plan, directing where the staff and organization will now be focusing its attention and resources. The Plan includes:

1) Continuing to work with the ANF to advocate for sustainable forestry and recreation

- Establish a committee to write ANF project comments to be submitted by AFA. (*volunteers needed*)
- Develop a system for delivering suggested project comment language to members and public.
- ✓ Establish regular meetings between ANF and AFA leadership, quarterly or semi-annually.
- ✓ Continue to participate in Allegheny Forest Health Collaborative meetings.

2) Develop educational components related to sustainable forestry

- ✓ Partner with the Lumber Heritage Region and/or other partners to create one or more displays on sustainable forestry to be located throughout the region using an LHR Mini Grant. (*in progress, see article at right*)
- Work with school districts to implement sustainable forestry curriculum throughout ANF host counties.
- Hold Forest Health Awareness events at least annually.
- Develop a network of professionals and agencies to contribute articles to AFA blog. (*volunteers needed, see pg4*)

3) Continue marketing campaign to inform the public on the AFA and the issues

- ✓ Identify and create additional videos for web and social media. (*in progress, see article at right*)
- ✓ Continue social media posts re: AFA purpose, membership and events, ANF projects and how to comment.
- Re-design AFA tri-fold brochure.

4) Build sustainability of the organization

- ✓ Develop 2020 Membership Campaign: Slogan, Logo, Member brochure/form, Rewards, Marketing. (*underway*)
- Streamline annual membership and school district / township invoicing system.
- Visit each township which receives timber receipt funding to update them on AFA activity and encourage those who do not support the AFA to do so.

You will see that we have several of these checked-off as completed or underway. The article at right outlines some of them and we are excited to be making good progress!

Partnerships will be key to achieving our goals over the coming decade, which are quite different from what the AFA has undertaken in its first 25 years. You can also expect to see our goals and strategies updated regularly as we achieve these and identify new needs and opportunities.

“2020 Vision” Campaign

The AFA’s “2020 Vision” campaign is based on our original purpose and aligned with AFA’s new Strategic Plan.

ANF Supervisor Jamie Davidson was in attendance at our Annual Meeting last October, along with Environmental Management Staff Officer Andrea Hille. They liked our “2020 Vision” initiative very much and suggested that the ANF and AFA partner on some initiatives. We met with them in January to brainstorm some opportunities, which are outlined below.

LANTERNFLY PROGRAM

The first joint initiative will be to work with Penn State Extension, ANF/USFS staff and the PA Bureau of Forestry to present a Spotted Lanternfly program at the ANF headquarters in Warren. Originally planned for May 14th, the Coronavirus has forced us to put this event on hold. Watch for notice of the new date by email, or keep an eye on our [Facebook page](#).

ANF VIDEO & KIOSKS

We have partnered with the Allegheny Hardwoods Utilization Group (AHUG) to secure a Lumber Heritage Region Mini Grant. This project will include production of a 5-minute video on the history of how/why the ANF was established and how science-based sustainable forestry has helped the forest to recover and become a critical economic asset to host communities.

The second part of this project will be AHUG’s creation of kiosks using local hardwoods to house this video and others produced by both AFA and AHUG. These kiosks will be placed at high-traffic locations to help our messages reach both residents and visitors.

Other partnership initiatives with a variety of groups are being developed and may include:

- Creation of Conservation / Forestry Education programming for students and adults in cooperation with and taking place on the ANF.
- Creation of an ANF Speaker List for teachers in the four ANF host counties to use in inviting ANF specialists to present a variety of topics in the classroom.
- Creation of an annual one-week summer youth camp program to include conservation, forestry, wildlife, history, and vegetation treatment and monitoring activities with scientists from the ANF and other agencies. A USFS Citizen Science grant application is currently being outlined for submission later this year.

Do you have an idea for projects or programs that AFA might undertake—on its own or in partnership with another organization or agency? Are you able to help with any of these projects and programs? Contact our Executive Director at afaexec@gmail.com or 814-657-8290.

ANF Achievements in 2019

Notable activity on the ANF in 2019 included the awarding of sales for 46.04 million board feet generating \$9.1 million in sales. This volume is up from 40.7 million board feet in 2018 and exceeded the target of 42 million board feet. Unfortunately, only 46% of awarded sales were for sawtimber and prices are down. The target offer for 2020 is 45—50 million board feet.

At the AFA's Annual Meeting in October, Andrea Hille reported that the first weight scale sale and on-site chipping projects had taken place on the ANF, as well as remote sensing mobile technology for wildlife and invasive species, and initiation of the Good Neighbor Act in partnership with PA DCNR

The ANF staff is justifiably proud of their ability to move projects through the environmental assessment process much faster than both national and regional averages (25 and 22 months, respectively). The Otter project assessment took just eight months and the Cherry Run was completed in only six months.

Andrea Hille says efforts to reduce the age class distribution on the forest are working, starting to approach their 10—12 percent goal.

A 550 acre salvage harvest in 2019 focused on dead and dying pockets of ash, selling 5.4 million board feet at a value of approximately \$2.2 million. The loss of Ash that has gone unsalvaged was a focus of the AFA's Forest Health Awareness event last May.

The ANF held a [State of the Forest meeting](#) last October and plans to do so annually in an effort to “build stronger and more transparent relationships with our stakeholders, elected officials and local communities.”

USDA Land Conveyance Proposal

The USFS is revising regulations to implement certain changes in the Small Tracts Act, which was enacted in the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (2018 Farm Bill). ([News Release](#))

These changes would create new categories of lands eligible for conveyance outside of the National Forest System:

- Parcels of 40 acres or less that are physically isolated, inaccessible, or have lost their National Forest System character.
- Parcels of ten acres or less that are not eligible under previous conditions and are encroached on by a permanent habitable improvement for which there is no evidence that it was intentional or negligent.

Public comments are being sought and are due by April 27, 2020. The [complete notice](#) includes a comment link.

Causer Introduces Forestry Bills

January 16th, Representative Martin Causer, chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, [introduced two bills](#) in Harrisburg that aim to address two issues facing forestry in Pennsylvania.

The first would establish several requirements when public funding is used in an easement purchase. This was prompted by last year's funding of a 60,000+ acre easement with a \$50 million PENNVEST loan. The requirements would include public notice of the proposed purchase, compliance with a sustainable forest management plan, availability of the land for recreational use by the public, and approval by the Hardwoods Development Council.

The second bill would expand membership on the Hardwoods Development Council (within Dept. of Agriculture). It proposes the addition of a logger and a forester to the council and provide for representation by all three of Pennsylvania's HUGs. It would also guarantee representation by the largest of these, the Allegheny Hardwoods Utilization Group (AHUG).

Both bills have been referred to the House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee for consideration.

Momentum and Litigation

Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities reports that the public's help is improving federal forest management, evidenced by the USFS announcement it sold nearly 3.3 billion board feet of timber in 2019. This is 75 million board feet more than the 20-year high set in 2018. They also implemented forest restoration and fuels reduction on over 4 million acres.

On the flip-side, there are over 80 million acres of national forestlands that still need treatment and anti-forestry groups are filing more lawsuits. The 2015 Cottonwood decision is enabling groups to secure injunctions anywhere there is a listed species or critical habitat designation. This forces the Forest Service and Fish and Wildlife Service to conduct long and expensive “consultations”, even though federal scientists determine a project would not adversely affect a vulnerable species. The Supreme Court has refused to review an appeal, so only [Congress can provide a permanent fix](#).

Since Cottonwood, there have since been hundreds of USFS projects threatened by copycat litigation. There are even bans on firewood gathering in New Mexico and Arizona.

This activity in the western states is reminiscent of what we saw on the Allegheny 25 years ago. Are we on a cycle of obstructionist attention swaying like a pendulum from one side of the country to another? Hopefully, Congressional action will prevent the ANF from coming back into the sites of those who would litigate the USFS into submission. You can help by sending a message to your [Congressman](#).

U.S./China Phase One Trade Agreement

In March, Congressman Thompson issued an invitation to a roundtable discussion with William Toerpe, US Commercial Officer, US Commercial Service to the US Embassy in Beijing, China. Topics of discussion were to include:

- China's agreement to increase purchases of American products and services by at least \$200B over the next two years;

- Sectors to include manufactured goods, hardwood lumber, agricultural commodities, coal and other energy products and services;
- Mr. Toerpe providing his perspective on the recent business climate and the economic changes in China relevant to U.S. exporters. He was also to describe the current supply chain challenges facing U.S. companies related to the COVID-19 outbreak in China.

Unfortunately, this meeting was cancelled due to the COVID-19 outbreak in the U.S.

Mr. Toerpe has instead offered to setup conference calls with individuals, companies and organizations interested in learning more about the export opportunities under the Phase One Trade Agreement.

If you are interested in scheduling, contact Deborah.Pontzer@mail.house.gov.

Hille Receives Award

In January, the ANF [announced](#) that Andrea Hille, former Forest Silviculturist and current Ecosystem Management Staff Officer, was the latest recipient of the USFS Richard Fitzgerald Award for Excellence in Forest Management.

"We couldn't be more proud of Andrea. She is passionate about taking care of the land and making a positive impact in the community and with our partners," said Jamie Davidson, Allegheny National Forest Supervisor.

The AFA couldn't agree more. Andrea has been an outstanding partner in our common goal of improved management on the ANF!

Our congratulations to Andrea and appreciation for her collaborative attitude!

What Can You Share?

The AFA is seeking writers (or talkers) to create articles on topics in their area of expertise. These would be used for our web blog to educate the public and, possibly, to create educational materials for our website and publications.

Many people don't feel they are writers, but if you can at least put your thoughts on paper or in an email—or talk while we take notes—we can polish them into an article.

We are looking for a variety of topics related in some way to the ANF, such as forestry, wildlife, geology, biology, timber and wood products, recreation, legislation (historical and current), etc.

If interested, contact us at afaexec@gmail.com or (814) 657-8290.

Upcoming Events

All AFA events are suspended while we comply with state and federal directives to avoid group activities. Please watch our Facebook page and your email for updates on the following events:

AFA April 23 Board Meeting—we will announce in mid-April either cancellation or use of an online platform.

Spotted Lanternfly Program—ANF Headquarters, 4 Farm Colony Drive, Warren, PA. (evening program) Originally scheduled for May 14, we have decided to re-schedule this program for a later date.

Allegheny Forest Health Collaborative **Media Day Tour**—postponed / to be announced.

ANF Project Comment Opportunities: January–March, 2020

We encourage you to keep informed of and comment on proposed projects on the ANF.

Use the link below to view the current Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) Report for the ANF. <https://www.fs.fed.us/sopa/forest-level.php?110919>

As we publish this newsletter quarterly, we suggest that you check the SOPA link frequently for any updates between issues. We will list critical projects and AFA comment actions here.

Japanese Stiltgrass Treatment: Elk, Forest, McKean, Warren; Vegetation treatment; **Comments due April 20, 2020.**

Cherry Run EA: Decision: No Significant Impact.

East Branch Tionesta Creek EA: Announcement: April 2020.

Yette Project EA: Warren; Forest Products, Land Management Planning, Vegetation management, Recreation management, Wildlife/Fish/Rare plants, Watershed management; **Estimated Com-**

ment Period: July 2020.

South Branch Kinzua Creek Supplemental EA: McKean; Forest Products; **Announcement: May 2020.**

Marienville ATV Connector and Wetland Restoration CE: Forest; Recreation mgmt.; **Decision Expected: 7/ 2020.**

***See our website for a guide on how to make helpful comments on USFS project proposals: <http://alleghenyforestalliance.org/index.php/participate/>**