

Reaching Out to Forest Landowners with the Young Forest Project

Mike Pruss, PA Game Commission
Shorna B. Allred, PhD, Cornell University
Jim C. Finley, PhD, Penn State University



Canada lynx
Michael Zahra



Chestnut-sided warbler
WikiMedia Commons



Yellow warbler
Paul Asman and Jill Lenoble

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Indigo bunting
Kevin Bolton



Brown thrasher
Dan Panzamo



Karner blue butterfly
Joel Trick, USFWS

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Woodcock
Vic Peters

Smooth green snake
Patrick Coon

Wood turtle
Eugene van der Pijll, USGS

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Bill Burne

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Young Forest Habitats



Aspen-Birch Forest

Jim Oehler




Shrublands

Kelly Boland

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Young Forest Habitats



Alder Swales

Chuck Fergus




Old Farm Fields and Pastures


Jim Oehler

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Young Forest Habitats



Pine Barrens




Regenerating Clearcuts

Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission

Jim Oehler

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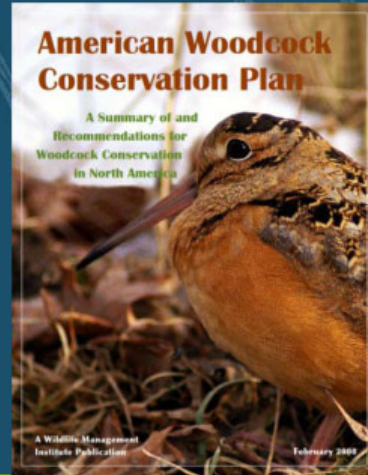
Pennsylvania Young Forest Case Study: Golden-winged Warbler



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Using Communications Information from the Woodcock Conservation Plan

- Literature Review
- Interviews
- Focus Groups
- National Woodland Owners Survey



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Key Findings

- Family forests owned mostly for beauty, privacy, nature protection; *rarely economics*
- Owners are older, white, male, more educated and wealthier than average
- Many owners interested in protecting land from development, but few have easements
- Clearcutting has negative visual impact—many people believe it should be banned
- Personal contacts by professionals is critical
- Demo areas are often needed to convince.

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Messages

- Enjoy natural beauty, scenery
- Conserve wildlife/nature for future generations
- Young forest habitat contains high plant and animal diversity
- Iconic species of local or special interest

Tips

- Use “young forest” not “early successional”
- No “shrub” or “scrub”
- No jargon or acronyms

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Three Recommendations

1. Create Large-scale partnerships
2. Develop comprehensive website
3. Work in “Five-county focus areas”



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1. Large-scale partnerships Broader than woodcock



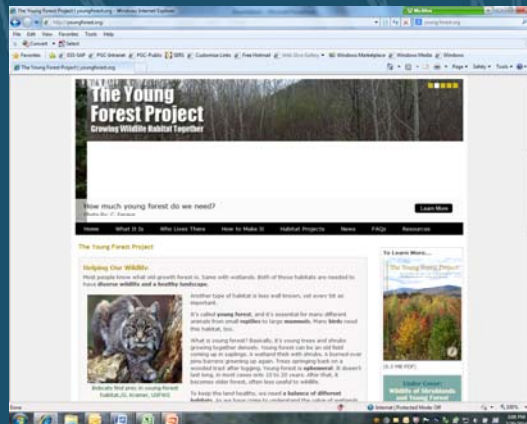
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2. Comprehensive Website

YoungForest.org

umbrella website
developed from
Timberdoodle.org



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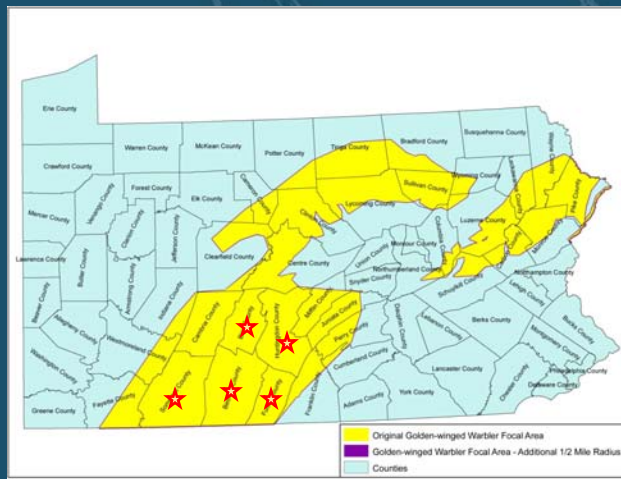
3. “Five-County Focus Areas”

- Too much variability across a species range for one campaign
- Large enough to show impacts, but small enough to implement communications and evaluate
- Customized to local landowners, ecology, assistance programs, wood markets, etc.
- Take what works and expand to larger areas.

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Golden-winged Warbler Five-County Focus Area



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Golden-winged Warbler Five-County Focus Area

- NRCS >\$1M in cost share for GWW in PA
- PGC private lands program and staff
- IUP grants/programs for GWW
- Northeast Habitat Tech Committee work
- WMI grant to assist PGC with young forest

BUT...

Not enough private landowner interest

Communication Planning Process

- Situation Analysis
- Goals
- Objectives
- Target Audiences
- Key Messages
- Media
- Strategic Guidelines
- Action Plan
- Evaluation



Communication Objectives

- Contact landowners to encourage YF mgmt
- Convince landowners to contact agencies for assistance
- Set up site visits by agencies
- Get landowners to sign up for young forest management programs
- Implement young forest mgmt on private lands
- Obligate all NRCS GWW funds.

Key Messages

- Young Forest management conserves wildlife and nature for future generations
- YF habitat contains high plant & animal diversity
- Focus on species of local or special interest
- Include wording: “young forests” and “a diversity of wildlife requires a diversity of habitats”
- NO “early successional” “shrub” or “scrub”
- “Young forest may be ugly to you for a short time, but it’s beautiful to many wildlife and plants”

Communication Actions

- Rapid Assessment Workshop (Feb 2012)
- Stakeholder interviews
- Gather background information
- Presentation about YF effort at 2012 Central Region Forest Landowners Conference
- Conduct workshop with SFI loggers (WMI)
- Communications workshops with natural resources professionals in the focus area
- Articles in publications – Game News
- Direct mail campaign to private landowners.

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Direct Mail Campaign

- Used key messages!
- Mailing list for all landowners in 5-county area
- Two test mailings: hunters and birders (1,500 each)
- Control group (365).

The image shows a sample of a direct mail campaign letter from the Pennsylvania Game Commission. The letter is titled "FOREST MANAGEMENT FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR A LIMITED TIME - REPLY BY MAY 30". It is addressed to "Dear Forest Landowner:" and contains the following text:

The Pennsylvania Game Commission is contacting you about an exciting opportunity to improve deer and turkey habitat on your land at little or no cost to you.

Significant state and federal cost-share funds are available for landowners interested in creating and/or maintaining young forest habitat on their lands in selected parts of these counties: Somerset, Cambria, Blair, Huntingdon, Bedford, and Fulton. If you are interested in creating ten or more acres of young forest habitat, we want to hear from you.

Young forest management creates excellent deer and turkey habitat, and benefits a host of other wildlife and plants as well. This is a great opportunity for landowners to create some new habitat for the next generation," said local forest landowner and Forest Steward, Dave Schreffler. You could pay thousands of dollars for this type of habitat work, but right now, you could get it free or at very little cost to you.

For a very limited time, cost share funds are available from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) to pay for young forest management. But after May 30, the funds may be gone.

To learn more about this unique opportunity, you can:

1. Call PGC Forester Patrick Ciarnowski at (814) 234-4099, ext 247, or
2. Go to www.youngforest.org/sustains.

Rarely is PGC in a position to offer free technical assistance at this scale. If you are interested in participating, please contact us right away!

Sincerely,
Mike Prose
Mike Prose
Private Lands Chief

Funds may be gone by May 30. If you're interested, please contact us right away!

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Response to Mailings

- 177 total responses (5.8% response)
- 157 responded by phone; 20 by e-mail
- 103 responded to hunter letter (6.7%)
- 74 responded to birder letter (4.8%)
- Only 2 responded from the control group.

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Repeat Customers? NO!

- Only 3 of 178 (1.7%) were in PA Forest Stewards or Tree Farm Program
- None were in EQIP, WHIP, or CSP Program
- Most were without prior linkages—NEW Customers!



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Response to Mailings

- 188 of 270 program contacts (70%) called because of the new communication efforts—specifically the letters
- Of 43 contracted/funded projects, 24 (56%) were because of the new communication efforts
- 48 projects were pending or deferred
- 1,651.5 acres of young forest contracted for implementation in the Focal Area.

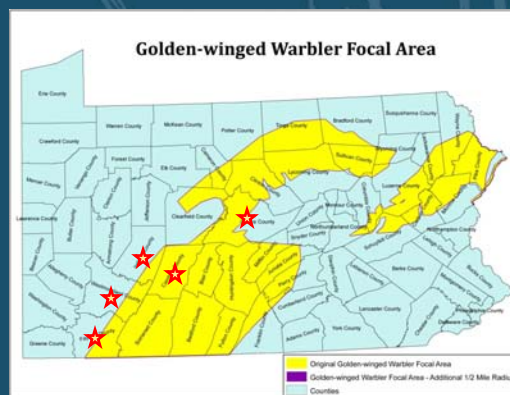


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Second Round Mailing

- NRCS offered more GWW funding
- PGC had landowner info for 5 more counties in GWW Focal Area



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Second Round Mailing

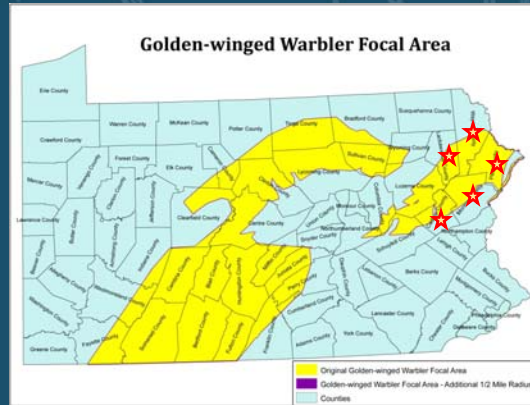
- Could we combine messages?
 - N=2,555
 - Birder, Hunter, and Combination (N=762 each)
 - Control (N=269)
- Are we missing willing participants with fewer acres (between 50 and 100 acres)?
 - Cambria county mailed to landowners with >50 acres

2nd Round Response to Mailings

- 157 responses from the mailing (6.9%)
- 43 responded to hunter letter (5.6%)
- 47 responded to birder letter (6.2%)
- 66 responded to combo letter (8.7%)
- Only 1 responded from control group
- 9 from Round 1 control mailing list
- 12 got no letter but were referred by another landowner or forester
- 6.6% for 50-100 acres, 9.8% for 100+ acres

3rd Round Response to Mailings

- “Last Chance” postcard sent to non-respondents (820) in Cambria County (22 more responses = 2.7% response rate).
- Round 3 mailing to 5 counties in the Poconos –
 - 501 letters mailed,
 - 71 responses.
- 14.1% response rate.



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On the Ground Results

- 122 Contracts with landowners
- 5,640.4 Acres under contract to harvest trees leaving 10-40ft of RBA
- \$3.2 million in scheduled payments to landowners
- 133 Applications awaiting contracts
 - 26 are in conflict with T&E species (IBATS)

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Focus Groups

- Conducted 3 Focus Groups (November 2013)
 - PARTICIPANTS: Responded to Letter and Participated in Program (n=11)
 - RESPONDENTS: Responded to Letter but did not Participate in Program (n=6)
 - NON-PARTICIPANTS: Did not respond to letter (n=2)

PARTICIPANTS

- Offsetting costs (taxes, etc.)
- Management assistance from a professional
- Improving wildlife habitat
- Role of organization (e.g. club)
- Development concerns
- Family legacy

RESPONDED BUT DID NOT ENROLL

- Issues understanding eligibility
- Perceptions of communication
- Understanding tradeoffs (e.g. challenges of regeneration)
- Attitudes toward harvesting/active forest management
- Importance of educating youth
- Development concerns

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DID NOT RESPOND

- Cutting of mature and over-mature forests would be “unpopular”
- “Using the saw wisely”
 - Understanding forest ecology, silviculture, benefits of harvesting
- Importance of markets

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INFORMING OUTREACH

- Need for additional follow-up
- Communicate the educational benefits of program
- Communicate the ecological benefits and tradeoffs
- Link with Conservancy groups; potential to protect land from development; role in legacy planning

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Communication Works!



Be strategic and systematic, just like you would for a habitat project or wildlife population issue.

Communicate even more with landowners (frequency, depth)

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Questions?



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Funding: USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service,
Wildlife Management Institute,
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation,
American Bird Conservancy

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Tapestry Analysis

- Socioeconomic data from US Census Bureau
- Combined into 64 “Lifemodes” based on residence
- Help us understand target audience.
- Nearly three-quarters covered in 3 Lifemodes
 - Factories & Farms (35% hunter; 36% birder)
 - Senior Styles (18% hunter; 14% birder)
 - American Quilt (16% hunter; 21% birder)

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Factories & Farms (35% hunter ltr: 36% birder ltr)

- Rural life
- Employment in manufacturing and ag
- Small, settled communities in breadbasket
- Classic families—married couples with kids
- Age mirrors US distribution—more retirees
- Median income slightly lower than US
- Most own their own homes
- Emphasize home & garden care; hunting and fishing; membership in local clubs.

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Senior Styles (18% hunter ltr: 14% birder ltr)

- One of the largest US Lifemodes
- Incomes cover a wide range
- Younger, more affluent seniors travel & relocate
- Settled seniors remain in life homes
- Golf is favorite sport—play and watch on TV
- Read daily newspaper and like TV news shows
- Only average Internet use.

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American Quilt (16% hunter ltr; 21% birder ltr)

- Small towns and rural areas
- More diverse than Factories & Farms
- Manufacturing & ag are strong, but also work in local govt, service, construction, utilities
- Older ones retiring to vacation spots
- Younger ones live in mobile homes to start
- Median income higher than average
- Most own their homes
- Like fishing, hunting, power boats
- Prefer pickup trucks and country music.