Asbury Woods Adopts Conservation Stewardship Plan

In July 2023, the Asbury Woods board of directors took a monumental step forward in Asbury Woods’ mission to protect, manage and interpret our property by adopting a formal Conservation Stewardship Plan for the 216 acres owned by Asbury Woods. The adoption of the plan was the conclusion of more than 15 months of work by experts in the areas of land use, forest ecology, greenway planning, sustainable trails, stream restoration, and wildlife biology. The purpose of the plan was to inventory, analyze, evaluate, recommend, and provide implementation strategies to manage Asbury Woods for conservation stewardship. The plan covers the unique intersection of Asbury Woods' mission of conservation, outdoor recreation, and environmental education.

Asbury Woods undertook this process in recognition of our responsibility and commitment to actively manage the property in a responsible way, protecting the natural resources and environment while providing opportunities for public use. The long-term goal is to conserve, manage and protect the natural resources of Asbury Woods, ensuring that current and future generations can continue to access this community treasure.

The conservation stewardship plan is an exciting step in helping Asbury Woods identify and prioritize immediate, mid-term, long-term and ongoing activities and projects needed to protect what we all hold so dear. Examples include documentation of threatened plant species on our property that Asbury Woods can take steps to protect; inventory of invasive species and recommendations on strategies to control or eliminate them; a specialized review of the riparian zone and banks of Walnut Creek for the portion that flows through our property with steps to stabilize the banks and slow erosion; more than 150 proposed trail improvements; and suggestions for managing the built environment.

The conservation stewardship plan provides a roadmap for the next 5-10 years as Asbury Woods strives to protect the natural beauty of our property, protect the diversity of flora and fauna, manage the acreage in a way that allows native species to thrive and allows for public use for outdoor recreation and environmental education. In the coming years we will keep you updated on the projects we undertake and we invite you to become engaged in the plan. There are a multitude of opportunities that will be available as we roll out various monitoring strategies, as we undertake invasive plant control and when implementing trail improvements. It will take all of us who love Asbury Woods getting involved and contributing to make the implementation of this plan a reality in the years to come.
FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Planning for the Future

As Asbury Woods continues to grow, evolve, and mature as an organization, we have undertaken some significant planning projects. Our most recent is the Conservation Stewardship Plan featured in our cover article. This is a major step for Asbury Woods to be firmly planted in the conservation mindset to manage and protect these precious 216 acres of green space. We are striving to strike the balance between conservation and protection of natural resources, while staying true to the other components of our mission which include outdoor recreation and environmental education. Over the coming years the plan will come to life as we monitor, evaluate, protect, restore, and improve various parts of the property. Along the way we will be inviting many organizations and individuals to partner with us in this important work.

I am excited to welcome several new people to our board of directors who will be helping to shape and guide the organization over the next several years: George Dusckas, T.J. Richter, Steve Ropski, Bridget Shames and Aaron O'Toole. They join us at a moment of great growth and excitement as we implement our vision for Northwestern Pennsylvania. Likewise, I’m personally grateful to our outgoing board members, whose terms have expired per our bylaws including board chair Dan Franks, treasurer Dave Uhlig and board member Chris Dolanc. Each of them has been on the board during my nearly six years at Asbury Woods, and I’m grateful for their leadership, service, dedication, and vision these past several years. During their tenures important things were accomplished such as the completion of our Preserving a Legacy campaign, the building of our accessible boardwalk, expanded staff, increased programming, the adoption of a strategic plan, the acquisition of an additional 51 acres of property and most recently the conservation stewardship plan. Our new board members will build upon the groundwork that these outgoing board members helped lay as we look to the future of Asbury Woods.

The future for Asbury Woods continues to be exciting and grounded in our mission, but we cannot do it without your help. As our programs, impact and footprint grow, we continue to rely on the incredible generosity of our supporters, whether through volunteer hours or charitable contributions, you are what makes it all possible. Thank you for being part of our circle of supporters.

I hope to see you in the Woods and on the trails soon!

Jennifer Farrar, CFRE
Executive Director

Vision Statement: Asbury Woods strives to realize a future for Northwestern Pennsylvania where appreciation for and protection of natural places is a deeply held personal and community value.

The Mission of Asbury Woods is to inspire a greater connection to the natural world by protecting, managing and interpreting our property; providing outdoor recreational opportunities; and offering environmental education experiences.

Jennifer Farrar, CFRE
Executive Director

Sarah Bennett
Director of Education & Community Programs

Anush Dulgaryan Bruno
Visitor Services Associate

Sharon Burton
Visitor Services Associate

Stephen Engro
Director of Development & Marketing

Rachel Hull
Development and Grants Associate

Casey Keating
Interpretive Naturalist

Andrea Krivak
Marketing Manager

Aaron Kulich
Facilities and Grounds Manager

Emma Mader
Environmental Educator

Erin Paquette
Environmental Educator

Derek Rafeew
Facility and Grounds Assistant

Amy Shook
Interpretive Naturalist

Jeanine Timon
Gift Shop and Rental Coordinator

Sheila Walmer
Constituent Relations Manager

Steve Wasiensky
MTSD Environmental Education Coordinator

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The Asbury Woods Partnership is a 501(C)3 nonprofit charity registered with the Bureau of Charitable Organizations. The official registration and financial information may be obtained from the PA Dept. of State at 1-800-732-0999. Funding for the Asbury Woods Partnership is provided through grants, program fees and the generosity of our members, donors and patrons.
UPCOMING EVENTS & FESTIVALS

From Hive to Honey | September 9
Time: 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Program Fee: $6, children under three are free
Pre-registration preferred

From Hive to Honey celebrates the wonderful honey bee and the vital role it plays in agriculture, pollination and the food chain. The event offers fun and learning for all ages in an outdoor setting. Kids and adults alike will delight in the honey extractor demonstrations and learning about the social life of bees.

Sponsored by:

Scary Creature Feature | October 12, 13 and 14
Time: 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Program Fee: $9, children under three are free
Registration Required

This is a family event, complete with activities, storytelling and a guided walk through the woods where guests encounter and learn about some not-so-scary nocturnal creatures that live in the forest. It’s the perfect chance to explore the woods at night and enjoy the cool, crisp air of an autumn evening.

Sponsored by:

6 Mile Trail Run | October 14
Time: 9:00 a.m.
Cost: $30

Our 216 acres of property is the perfect place to present a challenging trail race. Join us for the final race of the 2023 trail run series! Wind your way through six miles of trails, fields, and streets to go the distance. Enjoy the beautiful fall colors of nature as you race to the finish line.

Sponsored by: UPMC Health Plan  Special Thanks

Winter Wonderland | December 1 - 31
(except December 24 and 25)
Time: 5:30 – 8:30 p.m.
FREE, open to the public.
Donations accepted but not required.

Our extended version of Winter Wonderland is back! The boardwalk adjacent to the Andrew J. Conner Nature Center at Asbury Woods will be lit up each night in December (except December 24 and 25) from 5:30 – 8:30 p.m. for the community to enjoy a peaceful evening stroll on the boardwalk through the woods. Holiday lights will twinkle in the woods and wetlands along the boardwalk which covers 1/3 of a mile. Stop inside the Nature Center and view our animal exhibit and browse holiday items for sale in our expanded gift shop with products from local artisans.

Sponsored by:
FALL PROGRAMS: September - December 2023

Supported through the generosity of

J. THOMAS TREE SERVICE, INC
"out on a limb for you"

YOUTH

EcoExplorers Club for Middle Schoolers

**Dates:** 1st & 3rd Thursday of every month
Starting September 21 through December 21
**Time:** 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.
**Age:** Currently enrolled in 6th-8th grade
**Location:** Nature Center
**Supporting Donor Fee:** $32
**Program Fee:** $42

EcoExplorers Club is back! This club is perfect for kids who love nature, science, and the outdoors. Club members will also gain valuable volunteer experience. Previous members and new members are welcome. Come join us for the perfect blend of learning and fun!

Nature Tots

**Dates:** Wednesdays, September 13 – November 15 (Except Oct. 4)
**Time:** 9:30 – 10:15 a.m.
**Age:** Children 18 – 36 months accompanied by an adult
**Location:** Nature Center
**Supporting Donor Fee:** $6
**Program Fee:** $8

Calling all little explorers! Toddlers and accompanying adults will enjoy nature play and exploration through sensory experiences, hands-on activities, and crafts. Most weeks include an outdoor activity so come dressed for the weather.

Preschool Nature Discovery

**Dates:** Wednesdays, September 13 – November 15 (Except Oct. 4)
**Time:** 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
**Age:** Children 3 - 5 years old, accompanied by an adult
**Location:** Nature Center
**Supporting Donor Fee:** $7
**Program Fee:** $9

Big adventures begin at Asbury Woods in our nature class for preschoolers. Classes will include science and nature explorations through sensory experiences, hands-on activities, and crafts. Most weeks include an outdoor activity so come dressed for the weather.

Pumpkin Hunt

**Dates:** Saturday, October 28 and Sunday, October 29
**Time:** 2:30 – 3:30 p.m.
**Age:** Children 3-8 years old, accompanied by an adult
**Location:** Nature Center
**Supporting Donor Fee:** $8
**Program Fee:** $10

It’s pumpkin season! Children and an accompanying adult can join a naturalist for a pumpkin story, look for signs of fall on a hike, and enjoy a pumpkin hunt. Each child will take home a small pumpkin.

Scout Naturalist Day

**Dates:** Saturday, October 21
**Times and Ages:**
10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m: Grades K-1
1:00 – 3:00 p.m: Grades 2-3
1:00 – 3:00 p.m: Grades 4-5
**Location:** Nature Center
**Program Fee:** $8

Join us for Scout Naturalist Day! Cub Scouts will complete their “My Tiger Jungle,” “Fur, Feathers, & Ferns,” or “Into the Wild” adventure. Girl Scouts will partially complete their “Eco Learner,” “Eco Friend,” or “Animal Habitats” badge. Children under age 9 must be accompanied by an adult, but there is no charge for adults. Children 9 years of age or older may be dropped off and then picked up at the end of the program. Each child must register for the correct grade level.

Kids Night Out!

**Dates:** Fridays, November 10 and December 15
**Time:** 5:30 – 8:30 p.m.
**Age:** Children 5-10 years old
**Location:** Nature Center
**Supporting Donor Fee:** $36
**Program Fee:** $45

Want to get a jump start on holiday shopping or enjoy a night out? Let your kids hang out with us at the Woods! We’ll do indoor and outdoor activities and have pizza for dinner!

Homeschool Programs at the Woods

**Time:** 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.
**Age:** K – 5th
**Location:** Nature Center
**Supporting Donor Fee:** $10
**Program Fee:** $12

Homeschool programs with pre-lessons and extension activities are back! Sign up for one or all of the classes below and you’ll receive pre-lessons and extension activities prior to the class. Classes that address the Ecology and Environment PA State Standards are indicated with an EE. Parents may drop children off or choose to stay with them regardless of age.

September 14 – Wonderful Water (EE):
Explore our wetland and learn about the animals and plants that live there by collecting water samples, looking for macroinvertebrates, and identifying plants.

October 16 – Be Resourceful:
Discover what natural resources we have right here at Asbury Woods while learning about the products those natural resources provide in our everyday lives. We’ll play a matching game with natural resources and their products and complete a natural resource-inspired craft.

November 14 – Natures Nutrients (EE):
Get your hands dirty and experience the process of making some of your favorite foods from start to finish. This lesson will connect the dots between the plants and animals that provide ingredients for all the things we need to survive, especially when it comes to food.

Pre-registration is required for all programs, unless otherwise noted.
**Fall Wildflower Hike**
Date: Wednesday, September 12
Time: 6:00 – 7:00 p.m.
Age: All Ages
Location: Nature Center
Supporting Donor Fee: $5
Program Fee: $7
Join our naturalist to explore fall’s beautiful asters and goldenrod. Learn to identify several of these late blooming flowers and their importance.

**Going Batty**
Date: Wednesday, September 20
Time: 6:00 – 7:30 p.m
Age: Adults and children 12 and up
Location: Nature Center
Supporting Donor Fee: $5
Program Fee: $7
For centuries, bats have been called sinister and spooky, likely because of their beady eyes and razor-sharp fangs. But there’s more to these nocturnal creatures than meets the eyes. Join Steven J. Ropski, Ph. D., Professor of Biology, Gannon University, for a lecture followed by a short hike to listen and search for bats. From pollinating our favorite fruits to eating pesky insects to inspiring medical marvels, bats are heroes of the night.

**Fall Campfire Hike**
Date: Friday, September 29
Time: 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.
Age: All Ages
Location: Nature Center
Supporting Donor Fee: $7
Program Fee: $9
Enjoy a peaceful evening on the trails of Asbury Woods during a guided night walk followed by a treat by the fire. Dress for the weather.

**Family Owl Prowl**
Dates: Tuesday, October 3 and Tuesday, October 17
Time: 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.
Age: Adults and children ages 10 and up
Location: Nature Center
Supporting Donor Fee: $8
Program Fee: $10
Kids and adults alike will delight in this unique evening learning about owls and attempting to get them to answer our calls. The program includes a brief indoor portion followed by a hike on the trails. Closed-toed shoes and weather-appropriate outerwear are recommended for all participants.

**Healthy Water, Healthy Critters**
Date: Tuesday, October 24
Time: 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Age: All Ages
Location: Nature Center
Supporting Donor Fee: $8
Program Fee: $10
In this introductory class you’ll learn what insect larvae can tell us about healthy water. You’ll also learn which insects fish like to eat and have the opportunity to tie flies for fly fishing.

**Cross Country Ski Clinic**
Dates: Saturdays, December 9 and 16
Time: 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Age: Adults and children ages 10 and up
Location: Nature Center
Supporting Donor Fee: $12
Program Fee: $15
No pre-registration required
The snowy trails at Asbury Woods are the perfect place to learn how to cross country ski. These clinics will teach participants the basics of cross country skiing. No prior experience is needed, and all equipment is provided. There must be at least 6” of snow for the clinic.

**Snowshoe Clinic**
Dates: Saturdays, December 9 and 16
Time: 1:30 – 3:00 p.m.
Age: Adults and children ages 10 and up
Location: Nature Center
Supporting Donor Fee: $12
Program Fee: $15
No pre-registration required
Snowshoeing is a great way to explore the outdoors during the winter months. The clinic provides you with basic techniques. If you can walk, you can snowshoe! No prior experience is needed, and all equipment is provided. Waterproof boots are recommended.

**Winter Solstice Night Hike**
Date: Thursday, December 21
Time: 6:00 – 7:00 p.m.
Age: Adults and children ages 8 and up
Location: Nature Center
Supporting Donor Fee: $5
Program Fee: $7
Embrace the long nights of winter as we hike the trails of Asbury Woods on the longest night of the year. The entire program is held outdoors. After the hike, enjoy the lights at Winter Wonderland!

**Drop-in and Discover**
Dates: September 2 - December 23 (no drop-in September 9 or October 21)
Time: 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.
Age: All ages
Location: Nature Center
FREE
No pre-registration required.
Looking for something wild to do? Stop in each Saturday to discover something new about the natural world. No pre-registration required. Check our website for upcoming themes www.asburywoods.org/programs/program-schedule/

Drop-in and Discover is presented by [National Fuel](www.nationalfuel.com)
Backyard Compost Workshop
Date: Saturday, September 23
Time: 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Age: Adults
Location: Nature Center
Program Fee: $40

This workshop, offered in partnership with Millcreek Township, focuses on diverting kitchen food waste from landfills by composting at home. Upon completion of the workshop, each participant will receive a Compost Wizard Jr. bin so you can put your new knowledge into action, saving valuable landfill space and producing nutrient-rich soil. One bin per household. You must participate in the program to get your bin. Bins will be available to take home after the program.

Invasive Species Happy Hour Hike
Date: Wednesday, October 25
Time: 4:00 – 6:00 p.m.
Age: Adults 21 and older
Location: Brown’s Farm
Supporting Donor Fee: $12
Program Fee: $15

We’ve partnered with Pennsylvania SeaGrant to offer an invasive species-themed happy hour hike. Pennsylvania SeaGrant will lead us on a trek through Brown’s Farm, identifying invasive species and learning why they’re a problem. Stay after the hike for a refreshing adult beverage and snacks.

Cold Process Soap Making
Date: Monday, September 25
Time: 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.
Age: Adults
Location: Nature Center
Supporting Donor Fee: $28
Program Fee: $32
Includes all supplies.

Experience the magic of soapmaking using regular kitchen equipment and inexpensive ingredients. Each attendee will make 2 bars of soap from natural ingredients. This class will be taught by an experienced soap maker and all safety equipment will be provided.

Mushroom Discovery Hike
Date: Saturday, September 30
Time: 2:30 – 4:00 p.m.
Age: Adults & Teens
Location: Nature Center
Supporting Donor Fee: $5
Program Fee: $7

Join local mushroom researcher, Dr. Matthew Gacura from Gannon University to learn how to identify a wide range of fungi while strolling the Asbury Woods property. Asbury Woods does not allow harvesting, so be ready to enjoy the hunt and take home only memories and photos. Comfortable shoes are recommended, and cameras are encouraged.

Lecture: The Plastics Paradox by Sherri A. Mason, Ph.D.
Date: Tuesday, December 5
Time: 6:00 – 7:00 p.m.
Age: Teens and Adults 16 or older
Location: Nature Center
Program Fee: FREE, pre-registration preferred

Dr. Sherri A. Mason, one of the foremost experts in the field of freshwater plastic pollution, will discuss the paradox that plastic causes. The versatility and durability of plastic allow it to be used in place of a myriad of natural materials, but these same features make it an environmental bane. Here we will explore this paradox and what it means for the freshwaters we love so much.

Nature Trivia Nights
Date: Fridays, October 20 and November 3
Time: 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.
Age: Adults
Location: Nature Center
Supporting Donor Fee: $16
Program Fee: $20

What do you call a group of crows? What is the strangest thing an animal eats? Bring your friends for fun-loving interactive trivia nights during the cooler Erie months. October’s theme will be Spooky Specimens and November’s will be Wild Feasts. Snacks and beverages will be provided.

Fall Flare: Macrame Décor
Date: Wednesday, November 8 and Thursday, November 9
Time: 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.
Age: Adults
Location: Nature Center
Supporting Donor Fee: $15
Program Fee: $18

Decorate your home with some fall flare. Our naturalist will teach you step by step through this knotting process to create a one of kind fall decoration!

Holiday Door Swag
Date: Tuesday, December 12 and Wednesday, December 13
Time: 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.
Age: Adults
Location: Nature Center
Supporting Donor Fee: $20
Program Fee: $25

Participants will use fresh-cut greenery, ribbon, and decorative items to create a door swag for their home. Feel free to bring hand trimmers and work gloves, if desired.

First Day Hike
Date: Monday, January 1
Time: 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.
Age: All Ages
Location: Nature Center
FREE, Registration required

Celebrate the New Year at Asbury Woods! Join us on New Year’s Day for a 1 - 2 mile guided trail hike. Dress for the weather; if there is over 6 inches of snow we will use snowshoes – bring your own or use Asbury Woods’ equipment.
Asbury Woods thrives because of volunteers who play a vital role in helping us to achieve our goals of conserving the land, connecting people to nature and inspiring environmental stewardship. We were fortunate to have 285 volunteers spend 7,747 hours of their time caring for the Woods and sustaining our educational programs this past year.

The recipients of Asbury Woods’ annual volunteer of the year awards go above and beyond in their efforts to inspire a greater sense of environmental awareness, sustainability and stewardship to visitors. We are proud to announce the distinguished recipients of our annual Volunteer of the Year awards.

**Adult Volunteer of the Year: Cindy Gathers**

Cindy grew up in Millcreek not too far from Asbury Woods and always loved walking the trails, so when she retired and was looking for a place to volunteer, Asbury seemed like the perfect fit! Since 2016 Cindy has given over 741 hours (and counting!) of her time helping us in visitor services, with maple production, during festivals as an exhibit greeter, and with Monday Music concerts. She is always willing to fill in when we put out a call! Cindy states that she, “Loves the variety of volunteer opportunities to choose from, the people I get to meet and talk with, the love of nature that is shared with others and, of course, feeding the fire in the sugar shack in winter!” Congratulations and thank you to Cindy Gathers, 2023 Adult Volunteer of the Year!

**Youth Volunteers of the Year: Alaina and Lilly Nichols**

Identical twins Alaina and Lilly Nichols have been volunteering at Asbury Woods since 2020. With a combined total of 524 hours, this dynamic duo first devoted their time as Animal Care assistants and more recently as assistants with our Summer Camps! The first memory they have of Asbury Woods is visiting during elementary school field trips. “We always looked forward to learning from Mr. Steve (Wasiesky), hiking in the woods and seeing the animals in the Nature Center.” Now they love helping with our summer camps, getting to see the campers learn about the outdoors, and getting to teach them about the animals in the Nature Center. Congratulations Alaina and Lilly on being named our Youth Volunteers of the Year! We love having the younger generation come full circle and give back as you two have. Thank you for all your time and energy, and we hope you will keep it going!

**Group Volunteer of the Year: Erie Homes for Children and Adults (EHCA)**

Erie Homes for Children and Adults (EHCA) has been sending volunteers every week this year to help with indoor and outdoor maintenance, compiling a lifetime total of 186 hours.

“The EHCA Move Program has been a long-time volunteer at Asbury Woods. We value going there, enjoying nature, and having connections. All the participants say that they appreciate being involved in the community and helping at a place that they love to visit!” said Cindy Olson, Program Specialist for EHCA.

We admire their commitment to Asbury Woods, their hard work in the surrounding gardens, cleaning of the facilities and wanting to make this a better place for the community to enjoy. Congratulations to EHCA for being the Group Volunteers of the Year!

Read more about our distinguished award recipients and the full article on our website at asburywoods.org/news.
If you are a Target shopper, shopping for back to school supplies, you’ll be racking up the votes! We wanted to let you know that Asbury Woods is participating in the Target Circle program. Now through September 30, you can vote for Asbury Woods and help direct Target’s giving to benefit our organization.

Sign up online or download the app to become a Target Circle member. It’s easy and free! Then you can cast votes anytime you shop in-store or online! For full program details, visit Target Circle target.com/circle

Did you know that you can rent our outdoor pavilion during Winter Wonderland?

It’s great for a family get together or a corporate gathering!

Asbury Woods provides a natural setting that makes a perfect backdrop for any occasion. We have several unique and beautiful rooms and areas on the grounds that would make your special occasion a memorable experience for you and your guests.

Visit our website to see spaces and pricing asburywoods.org/rentals