

The West Virginia Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation NEWSLETTER



In the heart of American chestnut's natural range

October 2023

WV-TACF Officers

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Treasurer--Sam Muncy
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Report from AL-TACF

TACF's chapter president's meeting in September featured a report from **Jamie Van Clief**, the southern Regional Science Coordinator. Jamie reported that the Alabama chapter has become 'sleepy'. Jamie was reporting since the Alabama chapter has a lack of leadership, and no one else would report. They have a current president, secretary and treasurer, but virtually no volunteers. The president has a full-time job, and while he is more than willing to work in the orchards, he does not have time for leadership.

Jamie reported that Alabama has two active orchards: TVA in Muscle Shoals and Redstone, near Huntsville. The TVA orchard was started by Dr. Jimmy Maddox who worked for the Tennessee Valley Authority. Sadly, Jimmy has passed, leaving a lack of leadership for maintenance. The TVA orchard is important since it has 70 crosses that represent some very rare germplasm. Currently, there are 50 trees that are older than 15 years. About 400 new trees have been planted in 2022-23 as replacements of trees that died. There are 4-5 events per year in Alabama with a handful of non-repeating volunteers.

The Redstone orchard sits on an Army/NASA base. As a consequence, a guide must accompany anyone working in the orchard. Oftentimes the paperwork to get onto the site takes a good deal of time, taking away time to actually work on the trees. This seed orchard contains a number of trees from the TVA orchard. There were only two individuals who worked on these trees; one no longer works at the facility and the other individual does not have the time. There was absolutely no access to this orchard during Covid, so it has been sorely neglected. Sadly, it is the largest seed orchard in the State of Alabama.

Membership in the chapter runs around 90 members, and it is not under the umbrella of the national organization; it is its own 501c3 organization.

The Alabama chapter hosted TACF's 35-year celebration in 2018 in Huntsville, but their last chapter meeting was in 2019. Jamie indicated that she is hoping for new leadership and new volunteers. The chapter has a lot of potential, and it has some wonderful trees.

WV Chapter Fall Meeting and the Rowlesburg Chestnut Festival

The fall WV chapter meeting was held on Sunday, October 8, in conjunction with the WV Chestnut Festival in Rowlesburg. The meeting was held from noon to 2:00 pm in a second-floor classroom of the historic Rowlesburg school. About 40 members attended in person with others via Zoom.



Some of the members attending the chapter meeting in a classroom.

After **Jeff Kochenderfer's** spring meeting minutes (from Glenville University) were approved, **Sam Muncy** gave the treasurer's report. The WV chapter has \$71,000 in its account. Rick Sypolt reported that the WV chapter currently has 150 members, a number that has not changed much in the last few years.

TACF's new President and CEO, **Dr. Will Pitt** was introduced. He provided a brief background of his scholastic and work activities. Other TACF staff were in attendance including **Cassie Stark** (Mid-Atlantic Regional Science Coordinator), **Sara Fitzsimmons** (Director of Restoration) and **Catherine Martini** (Northern Regional Outreach Coordinator). Each staff member introduced themselves and provided a brief summary of their duties with TACF.



Laura and Will Pitt

Catherine Martini then provided an overview of new proposals from the national office: volunteer waiver form; and chapter insurance. A form, both on paper and electronic, is being considered for all volunteers who work on chapter projects. When writing grants, oftentimes the number of volunteer hours is part of the information that is requested. A volunteer form will facilitate keeping accurate hours of our volunteers.

In terms of insurance, each chapter should have, at a minimum:

- Volunteer accident insurance
- Director and officer insurance
- General liability insurance

The insurance company that TACF has been working with is USI/PHLY in Philadelphia. Chapters are welcome to shop around for their own policy.

The cost of volunteer accident insurance through USI/PHYL is \$3.00 per volunteer with a \$300 minimum policy that will cover 100 volunteers.

Dr. Alice Morgan provided an overview of the recipient of the WV chapter's first \$1,000 grant, West Virginia University's Science Adventure School (SAS). Alice stated that the SAS is a 4-day, 3-night program offered at the beginning of a student's sixth-grade year. Both students and their teachers attend the 4-day program at one of four sites around the State of WV. SAS combines adventure, ESTEM education, and experiential education. Chestnut was a 4-hour curriculum during the camp, and some students stated that it was their favorite part of camp. That says a lot when other activities included rock climbing, zip lining and archery. Some of the grant money went toward the purchase of powerful pocket microscopes, a binocular microscope, loupe magnifiers, a digital microscope and an adjustable focus-loupe magnifier. The microscopes were used so that the students could make observations in a lab-like setting. The more portable microscopes and lenses were used so students could make in-field observations.

Mark Double reported on some of the 2023 WV chapter activities.

- To date, seven chapter newsletters have been sent to members.
- A number of germplasm conservation orchards were replanted.
- Around 900 American chestnuts were harvested at Clements nursery the first week of October this year. Harvesting was done in conjunction with **Stephen Rist**, president of the OH-TACF. Those nuts have

already been soaked in a 10% Clorox solution and packaged in a moist potting mix for overwintering in a refrigerator.

- Five sites in WV were used to grow seedlings in 2023: WVU greenhouse; Potomac State College; Shepherd University; Fayette County; and Central Preston Middle School.
- A report from **Susan Thompson** (Shepherd University) was shared. Susan has two field plots, pure American and hybrid trees that are being tested with and without the ectomycorrhizal fungus, *Cantarellus*.
- TACF's documentary film, **Clear Day Thunder: Rescuing the American Chestnut** was shown hourly in a classroom in the school.
- One hundred American chestnuts were direct-planted at three of our State Forests, Greenbrier, Seneca and Calvin Price by members of the WV Division of Forestry.
- The WV chapter has its own email address: **wvchapter@gmail.com**. One individual emailed to ask about native American chestnut trees in Nicholas County that he saw on the TreeSnap app. The email was forwarded to **Jerry Legg** (VP of the WV chapter), and Jerry reported that the trees were on his property. The individual who emailed was concerned that no one knew about the trees. As it turns out, Jerry knows the trees quite well.

Cassie Stark reported on some of her activities in WV. She toured parts of the state in early August, visiting orchards in Monongalia, Preston, Braxton, Fayette, Greenbrier and Monroe Counties.



Cassie Stark talking at the WV chapter meeting.

A USDA multi-state project on chestnut holds an annual meeting. The 2023 meeting was held in Chattanooga, TN and many reports were given at that meeting. Excerpts were provided from several of those talks.

- *Phytophthora* fungicide trials were conducted at Clemson University in South Carolina. *Phytophthora cinnamomi* is a soil-borne organisms that kills the roots of American chestnut. Eight fungicides were tested and two were reported to be the best: Reliant and Aliette. The fungicide trial is of interest to the WV chapter as *P. cinnamomi* has been detected at the Waddell orchard in Preston County and at the Summit Bechtel Reserve in Fayette County.
- **Sara Fitzsimmons** talked about American chestnut restoration. While there has been a lot of research centered around the genetically-modified Darling 58 chestnut, developed at the State University of New York, Sara stated that Darling 58 is not the final product. Chestnut restoration is a process, not product. Sara explained that the oxalate oxidase (OXO) gene in Darling 58 that detoxifies oxalic acid is produced constantly. This has an energy drain on the tree. As a result, American chestnut trees with the OXO gene grow more slowly than those trees without the gene. Currently, another promoter is being tested (a promoter is a region of DNA upstream of a gene where relevant proteins bind to initiate transcription of that gene). This new promoter is referred to as DarWin, where WIN represents 'wound-inducible'. That means that the OXO is produced only during a wounding event, including an attack by the chestnut blight fungus. Thus, even before Darling 58 is deregulated, a better tree may be on the horizon. Sara went on to say that if TACF's goal is to reforest just 5% of the 120 million acres where American chestnut once thrived, it will take until 2053 to plant 1 million trees on 50,000 acres. Thus, reforestation is a multi-generation project. Tree planting in 2023 is greatly different from a century ago. There are a multitude of problems now that did not exist 100 years ago. Insects such as emerald ash borer, ambrosia beetles, Asian longhorn beetle, spotted lantern fly are recent invaders. Plant invaders include stilt grass, bittersweet, mile-a-minute plant, honeysuckle and multiflora rose. These new pests may pose silviculture issues when attempting to replant American chestnut. Just because we have the will to plant trees does not mean that our efforts will be successful.
- An update on Darling 58 was presented. The three Federal agencies that oversee deregulation include USDA, EPA and the FDA. It was hoped that a decision

regarding deregulation would be made in 2023, but that hope has been dashed. It is unknown when a decision will be made. Even if deregulation occurs, any planting of Darling 58 seedlings or the use of Darling 58 pollen will be greatly restricted. Tree in WV may not be in the first round of pollen distribution.

- Figures on the number of native American chestnuts in eastern forest was shown. It is estimated that there are 200 million American chestnut seedlings that are less than 1" in diameter with 27 million trees in the 1"-4.5" range and 15,000 trees that are in the 17"-19" range. Thus, American chestnut is certainly not extinct, but it is functionally extinct.
- A map of the 20+ germplasm conservation orchards (GCOs) in WV was shown. The GCOs are all across the state.
- TACF's Meadowview research greenhouse does not have the capability of being an all-year facility. With the spring appeal, a new, start-of-the-art greenhouse will be built and that includes a high-light facility to produce Darling 58 pollen.
- **Sam Muncy**, WV chapter treasurer, personally made ordainments for the Christmas tree that will be in front of the U.S. Capitol this Christmas. Sam also made ornaments for trees in the offices of WV Senators Joe Manchin and Shelly Moore Capito.
- TACF's *Chestnut* magazine featured an article by Mark Double and Lewis Cook on Camp Washington-Carver in Clifftop, WV (Fayette County). This camp, opened in 1942, was the first 4-H camp in the U.S. specifically for African-American youth. At the height of the camp in the 1950s, 1600 children participated in summer events.
- The WV chapter held elections and **Bernie Coyle** of Keyser was elected president replacing Mark Double. **Dr. Darrell Dean** was elected to the Board of Directors. Both Bernie and Darrell will serve a 3-year term from 2023-2026. Congratulations!
- A special recognition of **Dr. William MacDonald** closed the chapter meeting. Dr. MacDonald was honored for his many years of service to both the national organization and the state chapter. Dr. MacDonald was TACF's treasurer for 15 years and was a member of TACF's initial board of directors. He was instrumental in forming the USDA multi-state project that has been ongoing since 1982, making it the longest-running project in the history of the USDA. Sara presented Dr. MacDonald with a

chestnut serving tray made by **Charlie Wotring** of Preston County.



Dr. William MacDonald

Following the chapter meeting, **Cassie Stark** and **Dr. Lewis Cook** gave presentations at the 3:00-4:30 pm Technical Session. Cassie spoke about "A race to save an iconic species, the American chestnut". She reported on some of the tree's history and current efforts of restoration.

Dr. Lewis Cook presented an overview of the chestnut orchards in Fayette County, both germplasm conservation orchards, experimental orchards, and the orchards at the Summit Bechtel Reserve. The orchard at the Oak Hill School complex was moved to a higher area due to water accumulation at the original location.



Dr. Lewis Cook

During the day, vendors filled the park adjacent to

the Cheat River. Vendors sold everything from chestnut seedlings to honey to quilts to chestnut furniture. Most importantly, hot roasted chestnuts were sold at the park.



Sharon Cottrill selling chestnut items for Sam Muncy.



Robert Sypolt selling chestnut seedlings.



Bags of chestnuts from Route 9 Cooperative in Carrolton, OH await roasting.



Volunteers sell roasted chestnuts.

The festival was capped off with the gala banquet in the Rowlesburg school auditorium. Following songs by the Preston High School Madrigal singers, Mr. and Mrs. Chestnut for 2023 were crowned, **Bernie and Linda Coyle** of Keyser.



Mr. and Mrs Chestnut, Bernie and Linda Coyle

A pork dinner was served, complete with a chestnut tort. There was a good crowd in the auditorium who enjoyed the wonderful dinner.



Some of the banquet crowd.

WV Chapter Grant Program

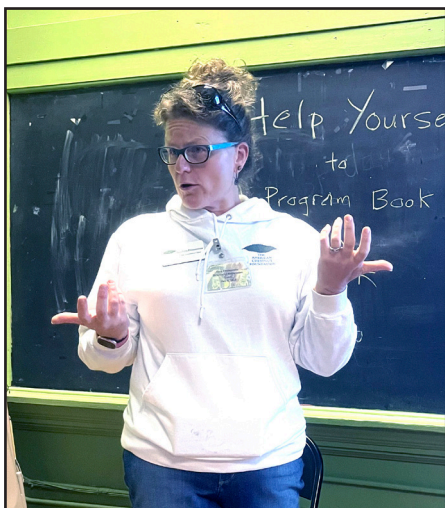
Due: 31 Jan 2024

One of the highlights of the evening was the premier showing of the WV chapter's documentary film, *'American Chestnut: The Once and Future Tree'*. The film was produced by **Robert Tinnell** and nine students of the George A. Romero's Filmmaking Program at the Douglas Education Center in Monessen, PA. The 31-minute movie showcased some older TACF members who recall the aftermath of the chestnut pandemic. Each state chapter was asked to conduct their own celebration for TACF's 40th anniversary. The documentary was the WV chapter's answer to an anniversary celebration. What a better way to celebrate than to document the memories about American chestnut. A special thanks to Robert Tinnell and his students.

A few candid photos were taken, one of which was a picture of Cassie Stark, Sara Fitzsimmons and Catherine Martini, all TACF staff.



Cassie, Sara and Catherine



An animated Sara Fitzsimmons talking at the meeting.

We invite members of the West Virginia chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation to apply for grants up to a maximum of \$1,000 to support education, outreach and scholarly activities related to American chestnut in the State of West Virginia.

Purpose

Grants are available to assist members with active restoration projects in the State, outreach activities, as well as with their scholarly activities. Funding may be requested for supporting a range of ideas and projects, including but not limited to: chestnut demonstration plantings; signage for new or existing planting; travel and supplies for maintenance of existing plantings; educational outreach; research and scholarship related to chestnut restoration in West Virginia. Funding for completed work is not allowed unless the project has had prior approval by the WV chapter Board of Directors. Travel funds for conferences are not available unless you/your group will be representing the West Virginia Chapter.

Rules and Responsibilities

Recipients must be a current member in good standing with the West Virginia Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation, WV-TACF (see tacf.org to join). Each recipient is expected to present a summary of the results of the funded project to the West Virginia Chapter at a chapter meeting within two years of the award. Publications, public and private presentations, and other products derived from work funded by the WV-TACF must include acknowledgment of the funding received from the Chapter. Information and products of the funded work are required to be freely disseminated by the American Chestnut Foundation unless protected by copyright.

Proposal ideas should be discussed with the President of the West Virginia Chapter and/or members of the WV Board of Directors prior to submitting the written proposal. Proposals should be submitted electronically to WV chair of the grant award subcommittee:

Dr. Melissa Thomas-Van Gundy (mthomasvangundy@fs.fed.us). Include the completed information found on Page 7 as a cover. The proposal should be

three pages maximum (including the cover page), single-spaced, in Times New Roman (minimum 12 pt), minimum 1" margins. Proposals over the page limit will not be considered.

Research Grant Guidelines:

- Brief project overview, including goals, expected impact and relevance to chestnut restoration;
- Proposed activities and connections to project goals, including a project timeline;
- Plans for dissemination (e.g., publications and presentations) and subsequent funding request.

Attach a list of references cited, a line-item budget, evidence of cost-sharing (e.g., proposal, letter of award), and a description of special technology or infrastructure considerations (if applicable).

Education and Outreach Grant Guidelines

- Brief project overview, including goals, target audience and participants
- Proposed activities, including a project timeline and detailed budget (including shared costs)
- Plans for maintaining trees (if project involves tree planting)

Proposals will be evaluated by a subcommittee of the WV-TACF Board of Directors. Proposal reviewers will not necessarily be experts in any specific field, and therefore proposals should be written clearly for the educated layperson.

WV-TACF GRANT APPLICATION COVER SHEET

Deadline: 31 Jan 2024

Award announcement date: 01 March 2024

Submit electronically to: Dr. Melissa Thomas-Van Gundy
(mthomasvangundy@fs.fed.us)

Name(s):

E-mail(s):

Phone number(s):

Project Title:

Amount Requested:

Previous Grant Awardee? Yes No

Year of Last Award (N/A if not applicable) _____

New WV Chapter President, Bernie Coyle

At the fall chapter meeting in Rowlesburg, **Bernie Coyle** was elected as chapter president replacing Mark Double who served for seven years.

Bernie grew up in western Maryland and has forestry degrees from Allegheny College, West Virginia University and Virginia Tech. He worked for seven years in forest land management and wood procurement with Union Camp Corporation in Alabama and Georgia, including assistant manager of Union Camp's timber harvesting subsidiary at Rocky Creek Logging Company in Alabama. For 30 years, he worked for Westvaco and its successor companies, MeadWestvaco, New Page, and Verso in wood procurement. He was the wood procurement manager at the Wickliffe, Kentucky papermill, and he was the last wood procurement manager at the Luke, MD papermill that closed in 2019.

Since his retirement, Bernie and his wife, Linda, have enjoyed growing and planting trees to create an arboretum on their property on the South Branch of the Potomac River near Levin tree species that are declining in the area, such as butternut, but several years, they have been many surviving sprouts that occur home in Keyser. Despite the chilly summers, they are gradually American chestnuts on their land. work in activities, demonstrations American chestnut restoration. They efforts of so many people over American chestnut a common



els. They have a special interest in oak and especially chestnut. For collecting chestnut burs from on the Allegheny Front near their lenges from squirrels, deer and establishing wild and backcross They have been expanding their and plantings to promote American look forward to a time when the many years will once again make tree or our eastern forests.

Bernie will do a fine job as our chapter's next president. In any organization, new ideas and new energy are needed to move forward. Congratulations, Bernie.

