



ANNUAL REPORT 2022

Restoring healthy and productive
forests on formerly mined lands
in Appalachia and beyond.
greenforestswork.org





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INSIDE

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT	5
2022 YEAR IN REVIEW	6
2022 BY THE NUMBERS	7
MONONGAHELA NATIONAL FOREST, WEST VIRGINIA	8
MAMMOTH, WEST VIRGINIA	9
CF ATAYA PROPERTY - KENTUCKY	10
FLIGHT 93 NATIONAL MEMORIAL	12
PENNSYLVANIA PROJECTS	14
PARTNERSHIP SPOTLIGHT - ONE TREE PLANTED	16
AUSTRALIA CORPORATE CARBON	16
GFW STAFF AND PARTNERS	18



ON THE COVER

A collage of past and present images from Green Forests Work's planting sites and events.

GREEN FORESTS WORK

OUR MISSION

Green Forests Work’s mission is to reestablish healthy and productive forests on formerly mined lands in Appalachia.

OUR VISION

GFW’s vision is to create a renewable and sustainable multi-use resource that will provide economic opportunities while enhancing the local and global environment by converting reclaimed, non-native grasslands and scrublands into native forestland. Our reforestation projects provide jobs for equipment operators, nursery workers, and tree planters, and improve the environment by eradicating exotic species and restoring ecosystem services. With the help of our partners and volunteers, this vision is quickly becoming a reality... Since 2009, we have planted more than 5 million trees across more than 9,400 acres.



Shortleaf pine (*Pinus echinata*) planted on a former coal mine in 2017 underwent a prescribed burn in spring 2022 to help restore ecosystem processes in shortleaf pine communities of the Cumberland Plateau.

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Green Forests Work was created from a big idea that had the potential to make a big impact on the environment and economy in Appalachia. Big ideas are easy enough to develop, ask my son who thought we should invest in a face mask factory in 2019...who knew? Making it happen is an entirely different issue. With the help of the Appalachian Regional Commission and the United Nations, we embarked on a journey to see if we could make Green Forests Work a reality. Over a decade later, I am happy to report that we have exceeded our original expectations. With faith from a multitude of funders, collaboration from a group of great partners, excellent contractors, and help from an army of volunteers and friends, we have managed to plant 5 million trees on over 9,000 acres of land.



Former students of Dr. Barton’s come together on a snowy day in March 2022 to plant trees. From left: Emilee Stepoulos, former GFW Intern; Dr. Claudia Cotton, Soil Scientist for the Daniel Boone National Forest; Dr. Kenton Sena, Lecturer in the UK Lewis Honor College; Michael French, Director of Operations of Green Forests Work; Dr. Patrick Angel, Forester USDI Office of Surface Mining, Reclamation and Enforcement (retired); Dr. Chris Barton, President of Green Forests Work; Mac Cherry, Forest Hydrologist for the Daniel Boone National Forest; and Dr. Sarah Hall, Professor and Chair of Agriculture and Natural Resources at Berea College.

This year marked the completion of several long-term initiatives. In 2012, we started planting trees with the National Park Service at the Flight 93 Memorial with a goal to plant 150,000 trees by 2022. Complete! That same year we started working on a 1,500 ecological restoration project at the Mower Tract on the Monongahela National Forest in West Virginia. We will plant the final acres of the Mower Tract next spring. We also initiated a 300-acre project at Sharps Knob on the Monongahela a few years later. We will wrap that up next spring as well. A million trees in one National Forest!

Along the way to making these projects a reality, our organization grew, and we made lasting relationships that will propel us into the future. Just because the tree planting is finished on those projects doesn’t mean that our work is done; we will continue monitoring each site and ensuring they develop into productive forests. We also have many new projects in the queue that we look forward to sharing details on in the coming years. Hoping that the next decade will be as fun and productive as the first.

As always, the staff of Green Forests Work and I extend our sincerest thanks to all that have contributed to this work. We are greatly appreciative.

Chris Barton



TOP: University of Kentucky graduate students measured amphibians in wetlands created on restored surface mines. ABOVE: “Moss tosses” are performed to transplant diversity-rich plant material to created wetlands. Plants spread and flourish, and wildlife utilize the new habitat.

2022 YEAR IN REVIEW

We entered 2022 with anticipation that the pandemic, and all of its associated complications, were slowly coming to an end. Although there were still many challenges that lingered due to COVID-19, much of our work was back to normal. We held volunteer tree planting events, developed new partnerships, trained young adults, finished several long-term projects, started several new projects, planted over 1 million trees and provided economic contributions to Appalachian communities.

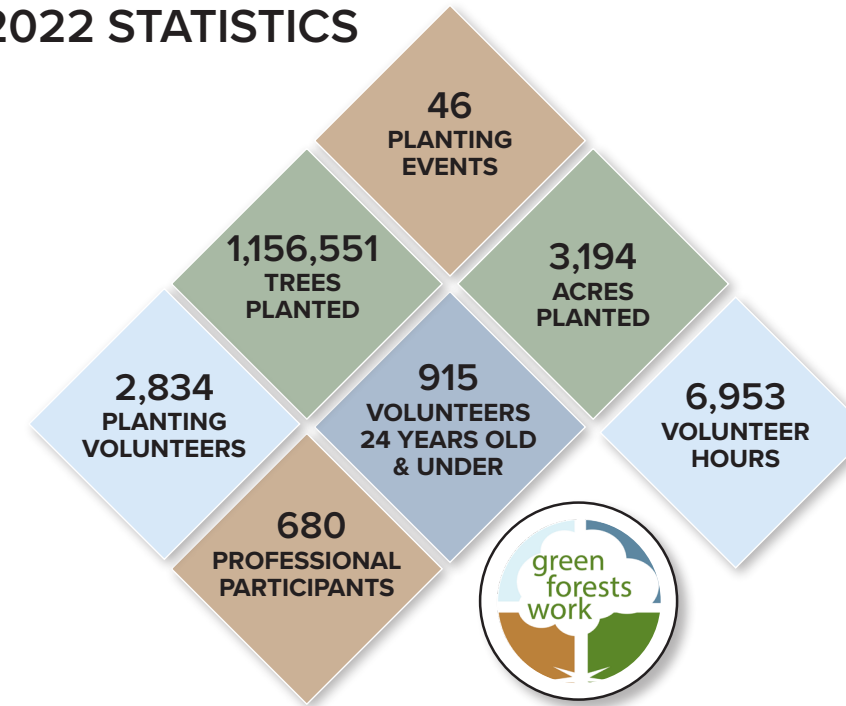
2022 marked the 3rd year that Green Forests Work and the U.S. Forest Service partnered with the Appalachian Conservation Corps (ACC) to provide jobs and training in ecological restoration work. The ACC teams performed various types of fieldwork- trail building, invasive species removal, chainsawing, and tree planting, among many other things. These projects provided college students and recent graduates an opportunity to do conservation work in beautiful, off-the-beaten-path places, while making some money and learning new skills.

In addition to the ACC, four graduate students from the University of Kentucky’s Department of Forestry and Natural Resources participated in research on our restoration sites this year. Projects included an evaluation of reforestation success on mine land, as well as several studies that examined wildlife (birds, bats, amphibians, large and small mammals) use of our restoration areas. These studies provide valuable information that we use to evaluate success and inform future restoration work.

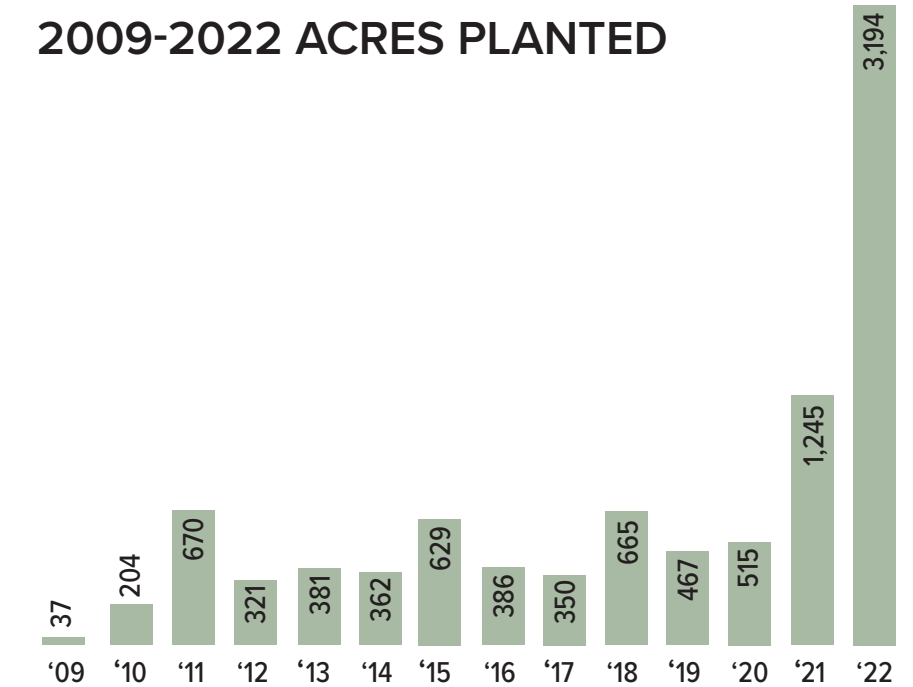
2022 BY THE NUMBERS

In 2022 we supported restoration projects in Kentucky, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia and Australia. By the end of the planting season, we had surpassed our previous largest annual totals for number of trees planted and acres restored. As our impact grows, so do we. In 2022 we hired a Director of Marketing and Communications to help us with our expanding portfolio of projects and we are preparing to hire more foresters and interns as the need and desire to increase reforestation activities expands globally. The following pages highlight some of our accomplishments in 2022.

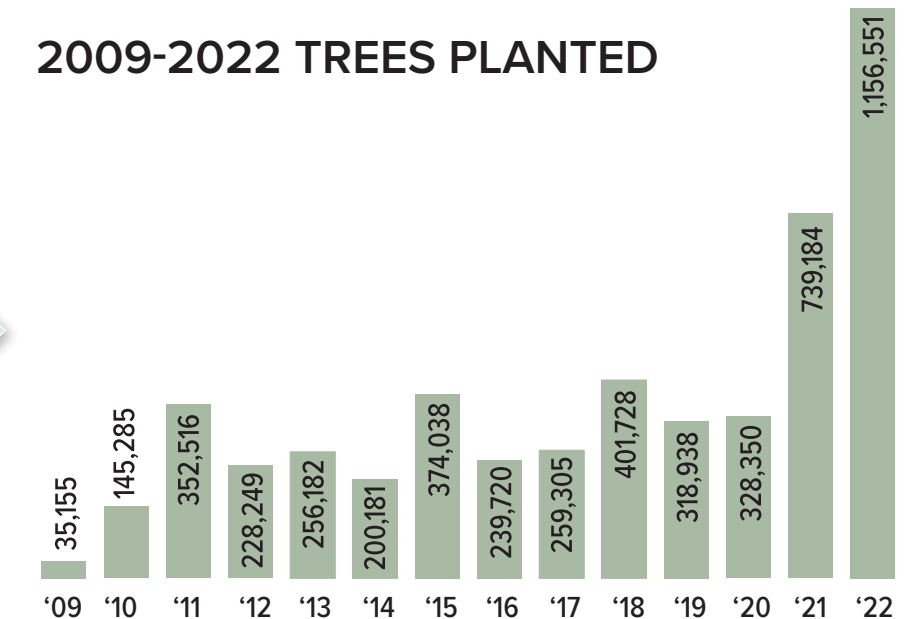
2022 STATISTICS



2009-2022 ACRES PLANTED



2009-2022 TREES PLANTED



MONONGAHELA NATIONAL FOREST, WEST VIRGINIA

It was yet another busy year on the Monongahela National Forest (MNF) in West Virginia. At the Mower Tract, after 11 years of restoration work, 190 acres made up of bits and pieces of mined land left over from previous phases were decompacted and planted for the final ‘clean up’ phase. 117,252 seedlings of 31 native species were planted. The ‘clean up’ restoration area included the creation of 180 wetlands (3.5 total acres of wetlands), and we planted tens of thousands of native wetland shrubs. At Sharp Knob, 46 acres were reforested with 34,230 seedlings of 19 native species. The Sharp Knob restoration work included the creation of an additional 78 wetlands, and we planted them with over 7,000 native wetland shrubs. To date, 1,500 acres have been restored across both sites through soil decompaction, wetland creation, and the planting more than 810,000 native tree and shrub seedlings. Additionally, 1,740 wetlands have been constructed, and 582 volunteers have been involved in tree planting events across both project areas. GFW, USFS, and our partners are hoping to wrap up both Mower and Sharp Knob in 2023.

This year, our tree planting efforts in the MNF grew to include 4 additional projects, and we diversified the type of reforestation work beyond our mined land restoration projects. This increase was made possible thanks to tree donations by the Arbor Day Foundation, Angel’s Envy, the White Oak Initiative, and WV Division of Forestry, whose Clements Nursery, unfortunately, closed its doors. Expansion was also a result of absorbing into our planting contract a project planned and laid out by the USFS, the WV Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR), and The Nature Conservancy, and working together to implement. This was the largest of the 4 additional projects; 55,625 seedlings were planted on 214 acres of riparian



Partners come together, each bringing unique expertise, to brainstorm ideas prior to implementation of wetland work.

restoration areas along the West Fork of the Greenbrier River, between Durbin and Beulah.

Oaks were donated, and our MNF partners prepared 2 project areas where planting various species of oak would be appropriate and beneficial: Big Mountain near Cherry Grove, and Brushy Mountain near White Sulphur Springs. Natural oak regeneration in these project areas is hindered due to fire suppression and mesophication, and harvests of less desirable species opened up the canopy, so we planted nearly 47,000 seedlings of 4 species of oak, as well as shagbark hickory. The final additional project was a lucky last-minute addition with the help of the WVDNR. We had 4,950 extra donated white oak, red oak, and walnut, so Russell at the WVDNR chose areas that had been mulched for early successional habitat creation last year on a mountain where oak grew historically, but where none had been found in years.



Professional tree planters hike over ripped ground to begin planting trees at the Mammoth 22 project area.

MAMMOTH, WEST VIRGINIA

GFW and Appalachian Headwaters partnered up again this year to restore native forest on sections of a surface mine located near Mammoth, West Virginia. The 4,800-acre property was donated to the West Virginia Land Trust by the nonprofit Appalachian Headwaters as part of a 2016 lawsuit settlement after clean water violations by a mining company. The mining company ripped the compacted ground as a part of the settlement. This year, after the site was prepared, Williams Forestry & Associates planted 202,400 seedlings consisting of 24 native species across 220 acres of the property. Since the objective was to restore an oak-pine forest community, most seedlings

planted were white oak, northern red oak, black oak, scarlet oak, sugar maple, white pine, and shortleaf pine, although many other hardwoods and wildlife shrubs were also planted. A small volunteer group, including students from Charleston, WV, and Appalachian Headwaters staff, planted an additional 370 seedlings on the property to celebrate Arbor Day.

Additional funding for the 2022 phase of this project was provided by Appalachian Headwaters and American Forests, and project partners are planning to reforest an additional 200 acres in the spring of 2023. Once the ecological restoration work is complete, West Virginia Land Trust and Appalachian Headwaters plan to create hiking and biking trails and use the property for public recreation.



Volunteers from Beam Suntory prepare to plant a section of the Ataya property in Bell County, Kentucky.

CF ATAYA PROPERTY - KENTUCKY

In addition to Borneo, the Amazon, and an area in Kenya north of the Serengeti, Appalachia has been identified by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) as one of four globally important regions for terrestrial biodiversity. To further its mission of conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends, in 2019, TNC acquired 253,000 acres in Tennessee, Kentucky, and Virginia. The acquisition included the Ataya property which spans 100,000 acres at the KY-TN border and includes thousands of acres that have been impacted by surface mining.

In 2020, GFW reached out to TNC project managers to discuss partnering to restore native forest cover on surface mined areas of Ataya. After identifying mutually beneficial

objectives, in 2021 GFW was awarded a grant from the US Forest Service – State & Private Forestry which allowed TNC and GFW to begin performing ecological restoration work on Ataya. The objective of the grant was to restore shortleaf pine-upland oak habitat, which has been declining for decades due to overharvesting of timber, fire suppression, pine beetle and other insect damage, and other factors. For the Ataya restoration, GFW hired contractors to remove invasive exotic species such as autumn olive. Afterwards, 110 acres of ground was cross-ripped with a large bulldozer to loosen the excessive compaction that resulted from the mining reclamation. A separate contractor was hired to create a series of wetlands

and vernal pools across the project area to benefit amphibians, birds, and other wildlife and to create a diversity of habitats. In the spring of 2022, a professional crew was hired to plant nearly 96,000 trees and shrubs across the 100 acres of ripped ground, and an additional 38 acres of steep slopes that lacked tree cover. A total of 24 species of trees and shrubs were planted and included shortleaf pine, white oak, chestnut oak, northern red oak, scarlet oak, shagbark hickory, mockernut hickory, yellow poplar, black cherry, sweet birch, red maple, wild plum, American hazelnut, eastern redbud, and others. The crew also spread 525 lbs. of seeds composed of several species of native warm season grasses and wildflowers across the ripped areas. In April of 2022, Beam Suntory volunteers planted the remaining 10 acres of ripped ground with more than 6,800 seedlings. After the project was completed, a total of 102,775 seedlings had been planted across nearly 150 acres. Although rigorous monitoring has not yet begun, in the fall of 2022, many of the wildflowers were blooming and the seedling survival rate appeared quite high.

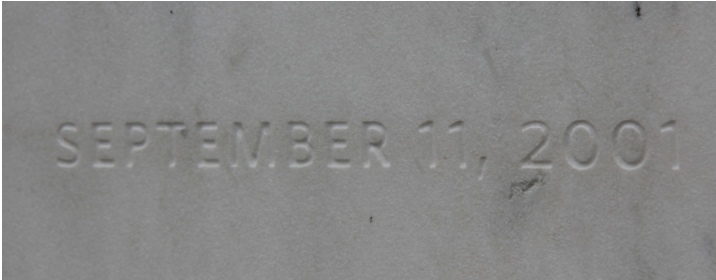
Additional funding for the project was provided by the Arbor Day Foundation, the Sheldon and Audrey Katz Foundation, Angel's Envy, Beam Suntory, Artic Express, and numerous other GFW donors. This project complements GFW's previous projects to restore shortleaf pine-upland oak forests in the Cumberland Plateau region of Appalachia. Over the years, GFW and our partners have restored more than 1,150 acres of shortleaf pine-upland oak habitat through the planting of nearly 750,000 trees. GFW and TNC are working to restore additional acreage on the Ataya property in the coming years.



Clockwise from top left — 24 species of trees and shrubs were planted; unwanted vegetation was removed from 110 acres prior to soil decompaction with a large bulldozer; a professional crew planted nearly 96,000 trees and shrubs; 525 lbs. of seeds composed of several species of native warm season grasses and wildflowers was spread and TNC staff enjoy a day of tree planting.

FLIGHT 93 NATIONAL MEMORIAL

In 2022, Green Forests Work participated in completing a major reforestation effort at the Flight 93 National Memorial and helped fulfill the original memorial design with the planting of 150,000 native trees on the former coal mine. The project started in 2012 with a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission to Green Forests Work for the planting of approximately 20 acres that first year and with hopes for establishing a cooperative partnership to reforest approximately 200 acres at the site over the following decade. Ultimately, over 160 businesses, service clubs, academic and government organizations helped ‘Plant a Tree at Flight 93’. Green Forests Work’s



role in the project varied over the years. We donated seedlings and organized the site preparation and planting plans with our partners from the Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative and

the National Park Service each year. We also received a grant from the US Department of the Interior’s ‘Get Outdoors’ program to engage college students in the work. Under this program, over 250 students from six colleges and universities were able to travel to the Memorial site and participate in the events. In addition, we conducted research at the site to evaluate the success of the plantings. Most of all, we were honored to have an opportunity to work with the ‘Friends of Flight 93’, families and friends of the passengers, and all the volunteers who showed up to honor those affected by the 9/11 tragedy and participate in an effort to ‘Heal Hearts and Heal the Land’.



SEE
FLIGHT 93
CUTLINES
ON PAGE 17





In mid-April, 81,540 seedlings were planted over 4 days across two riparian projects totaling 290 acres on State Game Lands 029 in Warren County, PA.

PENNSYLVANIA PROJECTS

In 2022, GFW partnered with the PA Department of Environmental Protection, Susquehanna River Basin Commission, ARRI, DEP Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation, Pennsylvania Environmental Council, Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, One Tree Planted, Altoona Water Authority, Pennsylvania Game Commission, The Nature Conservancy, and other partners to plant more than 358,767 native seedlings across 830 acres in Pennsylvania. Together, we reforested 3 mined

land projects and improved forest resiliency for 3 State Game Lands projects, and we supported 6 volunteer tree planting events and 1 seedling give-away.

This year, we continued our efforts with the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) to restore canopy cover to protect streams and to maintain forest resiliency in areas where exotic insect pests and/or invasive exotic plants were compromising the integrity of the native forests. A great example of this work can be found on State Game Land 143, which includes

Blue Eye Run, a tributary of Brokenstraw Creek, which stretches across nearly 4 miles of Game Lands. Blue Eye Run is a high-quality trout stream that draws many anglers for exceptional recreation opportunities. Blue Eye Run has a significant hemlock overstory shading the stream. Hemlock woolly adelgid, an exotic insect that is destroying stands of eastern hemlock throughout Appalachia is moving through Warren County, so underplanting conifers in anticipation of hemlock loss will maintain forest health and protect water quality. Beech bark disease and emerald ash borer also caused dieback and mortality across hundreds of acres on SGL 143, leaving canopy gaps and reducing species diversity. GFW contracted Napieralski Forestry Enterprise to plant 36,400 conifer seedlings, including red spruce, white spruce, white pine, and balsam fir across a 100-acre buffer along Blue Eye Run, targeting areas where sunlight reaches the forest floor. As the conifers grow, they will help protect and shade the stream if the hemlocks are lost due to woolly adelgid infestation. A similar project was undertaken on SGL 029, also in Warren County. Emerald ash borer decimated mature ash trees, and a windstorm caused canopy loss along the riparian corridor.



ABOVE: Bundles of white spruce ready to be planted in their new home at State Game Lands 143. RIGHT: At Altoona Water Authority's Murph project area, tree planting contractors walk up and down a steep recontoured mine slope planting trees.

On SGL 029 we planted 81,540 conifer seedlings across 290 riparian acres of Wildcat Run and West Branch of Tionesta Creek. These projects were adjacent to our 2021 planting area and expanded to protect the watershed and improve forest resiliency.

Our biggest PA mined land project this year, at 188 acres, was in Blair County, PA. Altoona Water Authority (AWA) purchased a large tract of land in 2021, a portion of which was surface mined for coal and reclaimed around 2015. The land is important to the watershed as a drinking water source for the city of Altoona, so AWA's goal is to reforest a large portion of the reclaimed grasslands for watershed protection. AWA worked with our group of partners, especially PEC and Eric Oliver of PA DEP, to develop a restoration plan, and this past spring we reforested three areas on their newly acquired property. These areas were decompacted in winter 2021-22, and in April the sites were planted with 130,015 seedlings of 39 different native tree and shrub species. Two additional mined land restoration projects undertaken this year were in Centre and Cambria Counties, where we planted a total of 54,200 seedlings across 89 acres.



PARTNERSHIP SPOTLIGHT: ONE TREE PLANTED

For the past two years, GFW and One Tree Planted have worked together to help our partners in Pennsylvania achieve their reforestation objectives. One Tree Planted

and GFW have provided funding to assist with purchasing seedlings and paying for professional tree planters to supplement the work being undertaken by PA-DEP, Pennsylvania Environmental Council, Susquehanna River Basin Commission, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Pennsylvania Game Commission, Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds, Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative, Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation, Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds, and others. These projects have included legacy mines, Abandoned Mine Lands, riparian buffers, and wetland plantings. Over the past two years, this partnership has led to the planting of more than 550,000 trees across more than 1,200 acres in Pennsylvania!



Planting contractors plant trees on Altoona Water Authority's Kittanning Run mined land reforestation project.



Nardia Grant of Uneathed Environmental Services and Gary Wyatt of Corporate Carbon plant trees at Pike Creek in Queensland, Australia.

CORPORATE CARBON PROJECT

Green Forests Work partnered with Uneathed Environmental Services and Corporate Carbon to regenerate forest on neglected and disused pasture land near Pikedale, Queensland, Australia. With support from the Arbor Day Foundation and the Team Trees campaign, this project saw more than 500 hectares of land reforested. The site was compacted from continuous grazing and overrun by weeds and grasses. Using site preparation techniques proven for mine lands, compaction was mitigated by ripping with a bulldozer and 200,000 seedlings were planted by hand and watered. Through this project, 95,000+ metric tons of carbon dioxide will be sequestered in the trees and a healthy, functioning native ecosystem that supports biodiversity will be protected for 100 years.

Unlike the tree species we plant in Appalachia (oaks,



hickories, maples, pines etc.), the reforestation area in Queensland was planted with a variety of Eucalyptus species such as white box, narrow leaf ironbark, red gum, gray box, and dusky leaved ironbark, to name a few. These trees will grow to provide forested habitat for a variety of animals that we do not encounter in Appalachia including: glossy black cockatoo, wedgetail eagle, black-faced rock wallaby, kangaroo, echidna, and the Australian reed warbler. Many native fish in streams on the site including threatened species such as the Murray cod, silver perch, purple-spotted gudgeon, olive perchlet, and freshwater catfish will also benefit from the project as the trees reduce erosion and provide shade, helping to cool surface water and improve the local hydrology.



Volunteers plant trees during a community planting event at Pike Creek in Queensland, Australia.



An organizational meeting at the Flight 93 site in 2011 included Paul Murdock, architect for the Memorial design; Keith Newland, Superintendent of Pennsylvania National Parks; Patrick Angel and Scott Eggerud with USDI Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement.

FLIGHT 93 PHOTO CAPTIONS

- 2012: Despite brutally cold weather conditions, volunteers gathered to plant at the first Flight 93 tree planting event.
- 2013: Chris Barton and Deborah Borza, the mother of Deora Bodley, the youngest passenger on Flight 93, plant the Gettysburg hemlock, the ceremonial first tree in 2013.
- 2014: OSMRE staff and Penn State Dubois volunteers pose for a photo after sorting and preparing all of the seedlings for the planting events.
- 2015: "Plant a Tree at Flight 93" volunteers enjoyed a day of camaraderie, despite the drizzle and mud in 2015.
- 2016: OSMRE, NPS, UK, and PSU volunteers sort and prepare seedlings for the volunteer planting events.
- 2017: GFW's former reforestation coordinator, Kylie Schmidt, poses by white pines planted in 2012, during the first year of volunteer plantings.
- 2018: UK's and "Plant a Tree" Team Leader Wendy Leuenberger and her volunteer team survey their planting area.
- 2019: Volunteers spread native grasses and wildflower seeds over the ripped ground to create pollinator habitat during the planting events.
- 2021: Volunteers pose for a photo during a beautiful day for tree planting.
- 2022: Chris Barton revisits the Gettysburg hemlock that he helped plant in 2013.

GFW STAFF AND PARTNERS

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University of Kentucky, Lewis Honors College

University of Kentucky, Robinson Center for Appalachian Resource Sustainability

University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill

GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

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Appalachian Regional Commission

Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative

Conservation Legacy – Appalachian Conservation Corps

Kentucky Department for Natural Resources

Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources

Kentucky Division of Forestry

Kentucky Division of Mine Reclamation and Enforcement

Office of Kentucky Nature Preserves

Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Forestry

Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation

Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, Bureau of District Mining Operations

Pennsylvania Game Commission



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United States Department of Interior,
Fish and Wildlife Service

United States Department of Interior,
Office of Surface Mining Reclamation
and Enforcement

United States Environmental
Protection Agency

West Virginia Department of
Environmental Protection

West Virginia Department of
Natural Resources

West Virginia Division of Forestry

**NON-GOVERNMENTAL
ORGANIZATIONS**

1t.org

American Bird Conservancy

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Anna Maria Branduzzi from *Rebecca and Fred Benton*

IN MEMORY OF

Ray Ritchie

from *Alex Dick, Gus, and Family, Scott Keister, Theresa Hare, and Denise Krueger*

Bobbi Richardson

from *Beryl Reker, Debra Christensen, Lee Gurney, Michael French, Patricia Meyer, Xyta and James Lucas, the Bella Vista Garden Club, and the Bella Vista Historical Society*

Jim Finley

from *Brian Lee*

Frances Midwig

from *Joan O’Connor*

Henry David Cutlip

from *Maureen Landis*

Loretta Littlefield

from *Green Forests Work*



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