



# ANNUAL REPORT 2021

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

[greenforestswork.org](https://greenforestswork.org)







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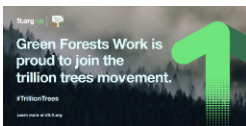
## ON THE COVER

**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:** Volunteers plant trees at a community event held on Glencore's Collinsville mine in Australia. Tree planters on a legacy mine in Pennsylvania. The threatened white fringeless orchid (*Platanthera integrilabia*) on a restoration site in Kentucky. Buckets of trees ready to be planted.



# LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

The 2021 Glasgow Climate Change Conference (COP26) reaffirmed the need to limit global warming to 1.5° C by 2030 and emphasized the importance of protecting, conserving and restoring nature and ecosystems, including forests, which act as sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases and protect biodiversity, while ensuring social and environmental safeguards.



Green Forests Work joined two global initiatives, the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration and 1t.org, in 2021 to do our part in efforts to help heal our planet. The Decade on Ecosystem Restoration aims to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems on every continent and in every ocean. Its goals are to help to end poverty, combat climate change and prevent mass extinctions. Similarly, the US Chapter of 1t.org - the global trillion trees platform - is championing a new approach in the US to creating healthy and resilient forests. Central to this approach is a diverse community of forest champions from the public and private sectors who help facilitate knowledge exchange, surface new collaboration opportunities, and unlock the full poten-

tial needed to accelerate and scale up forest-related ambitions and actions.

On April 20, 2021, Green Forests Work joined the US Chapter of 1t.org and the #TrillionTrees community to create healthy and resilient forests for future generations. In alignment with the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030, and in contribution with the goal of one trillion trees conserved, restored, and grown, we pledged to plant five million trees on roughly 7,500 acres by 2030.

This work will cost an estimated \$10 million and will be achieved by using private and corporate donations, grants, and our staff time to leverage matches by public land agencies, other non-profits, and regional initiatives, as well as our partners' expertise, time, and materials. We are very appreciative of all the past and future support that allows us to take on this globally important task.

Thank you,

*Chris Barton*



President of Green Forests Work, Dr. Chris Barton, surrounded by 10-year-old red spruce (*Picea rubens*) at the Mower Tract on Cheat Mountain, West Virginia.



**RIGHT:** Aerial photograph of the Mower Tract 2013 restoration site after non-native species removal and decompaction.  
**BELOW:** 8 years later planted red spruce dot the ground.



## BACKGROUND

### OUR MISSION

Green Forests Work's mission is to re-establish 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 healthy, productive 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 nearly 4 million trees across more than 6,200 acres.



# 2021 BY THE NUMBERS

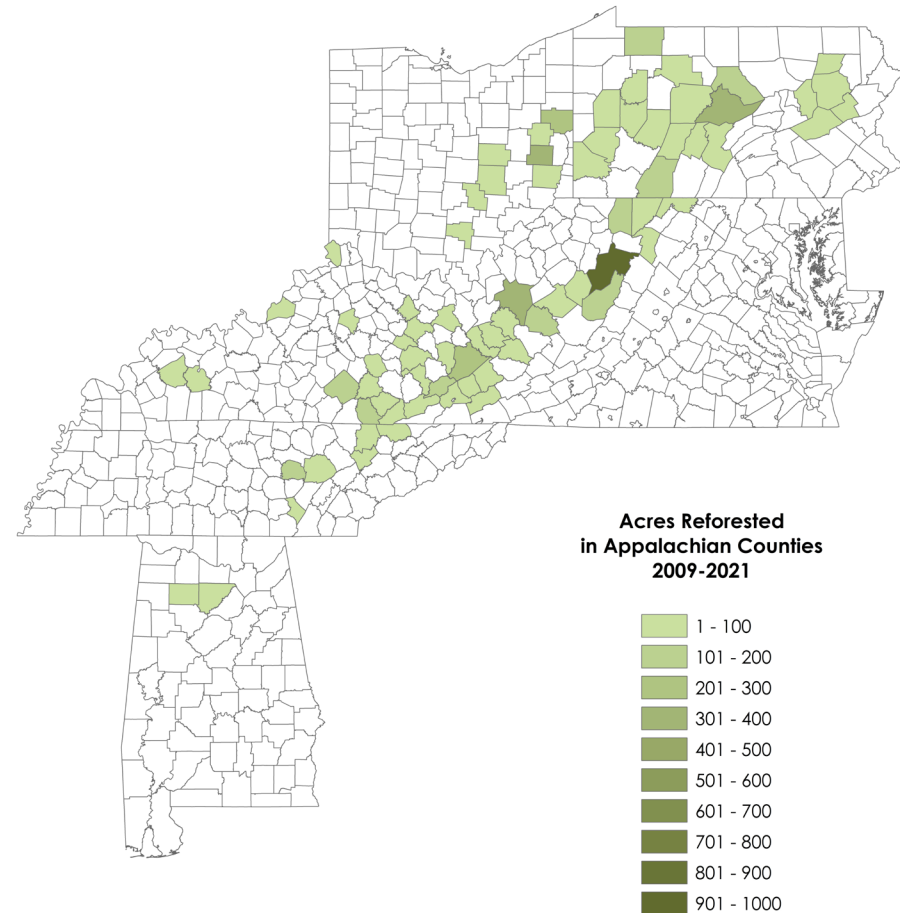
**1,277**  
ACRES  
PLANTED

**759,184**  
TREES  
PLANTED

**30**  
PLANTING  
EVENTS

**578**  
PLANTING  
VOLUNTEERS

Year	Acres Planted	Number of Trees Planted
2009	37	35,155
2010	204	145,285
2011	670	352,516
2012	321	228,249
2013	381	256,182
2014	362	200,181
2015	629	374,038
2016	386	239,720
2017	349	259,305
2018	665	401,728
2019	466	318,938
2020	515	328,350
2021	1,277	759,184
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,262</b>	<b>3,898,831</b>







## 2021 YEAR IN REVIEW

2020-2021 was undoubtedly challenging, as the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted many aspects of everyone's daily lives. Our deepest sympathies are with everyone who is suffering from the emotional, economic, and other burdens that the pandemic has placed upon us all. Our hearts especially go out to those who have lost loved ones during these challenging times.

Throughout the pandemic, GFW and our partners quickly adapted to working remotely and complying with CDC guidelines to help keep our communities and front-line workers safe. This allowed us to make strides in fulfilling our mission. In 2020, we were fortunate that we were able to complete the majority of our planned projects on time and we were even able to host a few volunteer events. In 2021, we supported ecological restoration projects in Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, West Virginia, and Australia. By the summer, we had wrapped up our largest year to date, in terms of number of acres and number of trees planted. In fact, we nearly doubled the number of trees and acres from our previous record! The following pages highlight some of the projects that we supported in 2021.

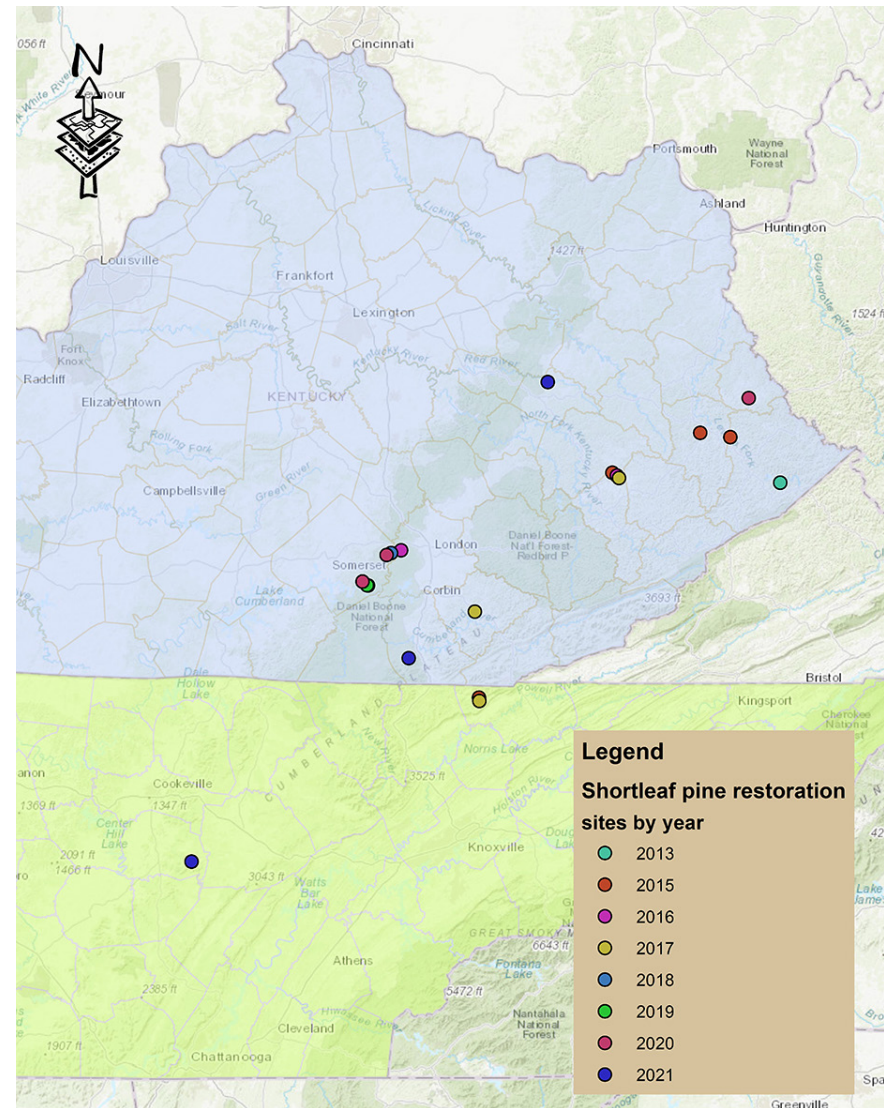
**TOP:** A created wetland on the Monongahela National Forest, West Virginia. **LEFT:** Team members from Komatsu brave the cold conditions and plant trees on Earth Day.



# SHORTLEAF PINE-UPLAND OAK FORESTS IN KENTUCKY AND TENNESSEE

In 2020 and 2021, GFW and the Office of Kentucky Nature Preserves collaborated on a grant administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. This grant allowed GFW to restore 103 acres of shortleaf pine-upland oak forest on a former surface mine owned by the University of the Cumberlands and supports GFW's ongoing efforts to restore shortleaf pine influenced forests in the region. The project location was adjacent to the Daniel Boone National Forest in Whitley County, Kentucky and complements prior projects undertaken by GFW to reduce forest fragmentation and increase forest connectivity throughout the region. A contractor was hired to remove the non-native invasive species that were pervasive on the surface mine. After the unwanted vegetation had been removed, the entire site was cross-ripped by a large bulldozer to mitigate the compaction resulting from the mine reclamation. Due to its proximity to campus, University of the Cumberlands staff envision the area being used for research, monitoring, and as an outdoor classroom. A second component of this grant was the restoration of a shortleaf pine stand on 82 acres of a former hay field on the Red River Wild River Conservation Area. A total of 121,500 seedlings composed of 20 different species were planted by volunteers and professional tree planters for these projects, including 16,000

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Shortleaf pine (*Pinus echinata*) restoration sites on the Cumberland Plateau.





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white oaks and more than 65,000 shortleaf pines.

GFW and the Arbor Day Foundation also helped The Nature Conservancy to restore shortleaf pine dominated forest on the Bridgestone Nature Reserve. The property in White County, Tennessee was donated to TNC in 2018. TNC currently has botanists and biologists conducting surveys of the forest and they intend to use the property as a living laboratory for nature-based solutions to combat global warming. Before the 5,763-acre property was donated to TNC, some tracts of



the Nature Reserve had been clear cut. TNC's plans for the clear cuts included conducting prescribed burns and restoring shortleaf pine at differing densities to create demonstration areas that they could use to promote shortleaf pine restoration and management

throughout the region. Experimental plots were established by University of Tennessee researchers to determine the survival and growth rates of the plantings to help guide future management recommendations. Shortly after TNC conducted prescribed burns, GFW hired a planting contractor to plant 75,000 shortleaf pine seedlings across approximately 190 acres of clear cuts.

**LEFT:** A box of shortleaf pine seedlings ready to be planted.

**INSET:** Green Forests Work Director of Operations, Michael French, plants shortleaf pine on the Daniel Boone National Forest, Kentucky.



# A MAMMOTH PROJECT

In 2016, Appalachian Mountain Advocates received a 4,800-acre property near Mammoth, West Virginia as part of a lawsuit settlement against a large mining company for numerous violations of the Clean Water Act. Appalachian Mountain Advocates created a nonprofit, Appalachian Headwaters, to administer the settlement and the property was donated to the West Virginia Land Trust. Approximately 3,100 acres of the property consists of second-growth hardwood/coniferous forests that have not been directly disturbed by surface mining, but the remaining 1,700 acres had been surface mined.



GFW and Appalachian Headwaters partnered to reforest the surface mined areas of the property

and to collaborate on other ecological restoration projects throughout West Virginia. In 2020-2021, contractors cleared invasive exotic species (primarily autumn olive) and loosened the compacted ground on portions of the surface mined areas to prepare for tree planting. In the spring of 2021, 270 acres of the property were planted with a diverse mix of 173,625 seedlings. GFW and Appalachian Headwaters plan to restore additional areas in the coming years and plans are being made to develop hiking and mountain bike trails so that the area can be used for public recreation.

**TOP RIGHT:** Seth Yoho of Williams Forestry examines site preparation activities.  
**RIGHT:** Planting of the Mammoth mine near Smithers, West Virginia.





# RESTORING FORESTS IMPACTED BY MINING AND EXOTIC PESTS IN PENNSYLVANIA

In 2021, GFW, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, the Susquehanna River Basin Commission, Pennsylvania Environmental Council, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, ARRI, One Tree Planted, and other partners supported 14 planting projects that resulted in the planting of more than 210,000 seedlings across Pennsylvania. We were happy to support the reforestation efforts undertaken by the National Park Service at the Flight 93 National Memorial again, and we helped to reforest 42 acres on the Gallitzin State Forest, as well as a few Abandoned Mine Lands projects. While the majority of the Pennsylvania projects undertaken in 2021 were on formerly mined lands, GFW expanded our efforts to restore Appalachian forests and maintain forest resiliency by working with the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) on several Game Lands where invasive insects were threatening, or had decimated the native forests.

Large sections of State Game Land 060 in Centre County, Pennsylvania were severely degraded by a gypsy moth outbreak that swept through the area approximately a decade ago. After the infestation, a salvage harvest was performed, but natural forest regeneration was limited due to excessive deer browse and an understory composed largely of ferns and mile-a-minute vine, a non-native invasive species. PGC staff had been conducting repeated herbicide applications to control the ferns and mile-a-minute vine, but they recognized that this would be a never-ending battle unless a forest canopy could be established to shade out the invasive species.



Volunteers plant trees at the Flight 93 National Memorial in Stoystown, Pennsylvania.

A 70-acre fence was constructed to protect tree seedlings from deer browse. GFW hired a contractor to plant more than 23,000 seedlings across 50 acres of the fenced area. The remaining 20-acre area has some nice overstory oaks and should have no problem regenerating naturally.

On State Game Land 029, emerald ash borer had decimated mature ash trees and a windstorm had resulted in the loss of much of the canopy along a riparian corridor. PGC had conducted a salvage timber harvest and eastern hemlocks

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dominated the canopy along some sections of the riparian corridor. Fearing the loss of the hemlocks to hemlock woolly adelgids in the near future, PGC wished to stock the understory to maintain a coniferous forest type and to protect the watershed. GFW hired a contractor to plant a mix of more than 50,000 red spruce, white spruce, balsam fir, and eastern white pine across 182 acres of the Game Land. The red spruce component is intended to create future habitat for the endangered Northern Flying Squirrel, which has been detected on the nearby Allegheny National Forest.

On State Game Land 024, PGC has been conducting annual herbicide applications since 2018 to control glossy buckthorn, a non-native invasive small tree which suppresses native forest regeneration, with future herbicide applications planned as well. Like Game Land 060, PGC managers recognized that the best long-term approach to control the non-native species would be to restore an intact forest canopy, so PGC and GFW planted nearly 20,000 seedlings composed of 13 native tree species across 30 acres of the property. All of the Game Lands projects in 2021 had a red spruce component and supported our efforts to restore connectivity to a corridor of red spruce along the Appalachian Mountains. GFW and PGC are continuing this collaboration and we intend to reforest additional areas on Game Lands 029 and 024 in 2022 that will enhance the work undertaken in 2021.



Tree planters plant red spruce and a variety of hardwood species on legacy mine land in Pennsylvania.





**ABOVE:** Green Forests Work Forester and University of Kentucky graduate student, Breezey Snyder, measures woody debris in a constructed wetland on the Mower Tract, West Virginia.

**INSET:** Tree planters make their way across ripped ground planting red spruce and other native tree species at the Mower Tract.

## RED SPRUCE RESTORATION ON THE MONONGAHELA NATIONAL FOREST

In 2021, GFW continued our work with the US Forest Service, Komatsu America, Mennen Environmental Foundation, the Argosy Foundation, Appalachian Stewardship Foundation, and other partners to reforest more than 225 acres of land impacted by surface mining on the Monongahela National Forest. As in previous years, a holistic approach was taken to restore the hydrologic and ecological function of the restored areas. Methods included the creation of wetlands and vernal pools, deep ripping



to mitigate compacted ground, and tree and shrub plantings. A diverse mix of species was selected, but included approximately 50% red spruce and nearly 150,000 trees and shrubs were planted. An Appalachian Conservation Corp crew also thinned hard-

woods at the forest-mined land interface to release red spruce in the midstory and create early successional habitat and they spread nearly 160 pounds of native grass and wildflower seeds.



# AUSTRALIA

In 2020 Green Forests Work began a global experiment to test the transferability of the Forestry Reclamation Approach to other mining regions of the world with the planting of 4,000 trees on a coal mine near Biloela, Australia. With the devastating bush fires experienced across Australia in recent years and the urgent need to do something “now” to combat climate change, interest in reforestation in Australia has grown substantially. In 2021, we secured funds from the Arbor Day Foundation and others for the planting of 230,000 trees in Queensland. Two projects were on coal mines, Anglo American’s Dawson mine and Glencore’s Collinsville mine, one project aimed to reforest old pasture for carbon sequestration benefits and the fourth project reforested riparian areas adjacent to the Fitzroy river in an effort to reduce erosion to the Great Barrier Reef.

As with our projects in Appalachia, COVID-19 did limit our ability to travel and host volunteer events. However, with assistance from our collaborator, Nardia Grant of Unearthed Environmental Services, two community events were held. On October 26th an event that included staff from Komatsu and Anglo American, 5 Gangulu indigenous traditional owners, and 50 school children planted 1,500 seedlings. On November 16th Glencore hosted a community event that involved their staff, 8 Birriah traditional owners, and 44 school children from two schools (Scottville State School and Saint John Bosco’s Primary School) and 1,000 seedlings were planted.

With help from partners like the Arbor Day Foundation, Komatsu, Anglo American, Glencore, the Fitzroy Basin Association and Corporate Carbon, we have a vision to scale-up and restore 10,000 hectares over the next 10 years in Australia, which will require the planting of nearly 10 million trees.



**TOP:** Students from the Banana Shire primary school plant trees with staff from Anglo American and Komatsu at the Dawson mine near Biloela, Australia. **ABOVE:** Birriah Traditional Owners and staff from Glencore and Unearthed Environmental Services plant a Dawson River bottlebrush (*Callistemon viminalis*) at the Collinsville open cut mine.



# APPALACHIAN CONSERVATION CORPS

Through a grant from the National Forest Foundation and in cooperation with the US Forest Service, GFW trained and employed fourteen young adults to perform restoration of coal mine impacted landscapes from May to November 2021.

Two ACC groups, a hand crew and a saw crew, received hands-on training and worked on ecological restoration projects in the Monongahela National Forest in West Virginia (MNF) and Daniel Boone National Forests (DBNF), as well as in the Paul Van Booven Wildlife Management Area



Native willow shrubs commonly grow in roadside ditches in the Monongahela National Forest, and are great for stabilizing wet soils and preventing erosion. The ACC hand crew cut an estimated 2,870 willow stakes and planted them around constructed wetlands and in areas with potential for erosion on the Mower Tract.

in Kentucky (PVBWMA). Crews travelled to the National Forests and completed a total of 6 nine-consecutive-day periods of work, or “hitches”. The hand crew did one hitch and accomplished the following on 2 MNF mined land restoration areas: planted 4,955 trees and shrubs, and 38 herbaceous plants (9 acres planted); transplanted 148 5-gallon buckets of diversity rich moss and wetland material to recently constructed wetlands (across 4 acres); seeded 148 pounds of wetland, upland, and steep slope mixes, totaling 32 native species (19 acres, or 2 miles of roadsides); removed approx. 953 lbs. of large debris and 8 large bags of

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The ACC hand crew spent two days collecting patches of diversity-rich moss and plant material from a natural bog, then transplanted it to the perimeters of recently constructed wetlands on Mower Tract.



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trash (approx. 1.9 acres of roadside and bog); and controlled erosion across a forest road by diverting an overtopped ditch stream.

The saw crew completed 5 hitches and accomplished the following: on DBNF mined lands, removal of 17.9 acres of non-native invasive species (NNIS); on the MNF legacy mine lands, felling and girdling of 9.7 acres of exotic, stunted tree plantations, a percentage of which resulted in the release of native red spruce growing in the understory; and the removal of 4.9 acres of NNIS and exotic species with chain-saws and hand tools on the PVBWMA. All project goals were accomplished by both crews, and additional work was completed beyond what was originally planned. The young adults sharpened their skills and acquired many new ones. Hard work in teams built character and enhanced their sense of leadership. GFW and USFS staff educated the crews on the reasons for the greater ecological restoration work on the mined lands and their role in it, which elevated their sense of environmental responsibility and stewardship. Crew members had positive and memorable experiences, while enhancing the impact of the mined land restoration work and fulfilling project needs.



The ACC saw crew spent six weeks working on the Monongahela National Forest restoration project cutting and girdling exotic trees and releasing understory red spruce.

The Appalachian Conservation Corps saw crew.







**ABOVE:** Graduate research trainees from the University of Kentucky's Innovators at the Nexus of Food, Energy and Water Systems program plant trees at the Angel's Envy distillery in Henry County, Kentucky. **RIGHT:** Potted white oak (*Quercus alba*) seedlings were planted at the Angel's Envy distillery to create a seed orchard. Acorns from those trees will be collected, propagated and outplanted in future Appalachian projects. Green Forests Work has partnered with the Arbor Day Foundation and Angel's Envy since 2015 to promote white oak sustainability.



## PARTNERSHIP SPOTLIGHT THE ARBOR DAY FOUNDATION



For a decade, Green Forests Work has partnered with the Arbor Day Foundation to restore forests, ecosystem services and livelihoods in disturbed areas that were impacted by coal mining. Together, our strong partnership has resulted in the planting of over one million seedlings and the creation of much needed jobs and new economic opportunities in the Appalachian region of the US and beyond. As the need for global reforestation grows in response to our changing climate, we look forward to expanding our relationship with the Arbor Day Foundation in other parts of the world, bringing back the forest and sharing many success stories.



# GFW STAFF AND PARTNERS

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Anna Branduzzi – Reforestation Coordinator

Doug Potter – Reforestation Coordinator

Mike Elza – Reforestation Coordinator

May May Barton – Marketing Communications Director

Lauryn Haas – Communications Specialist

Emilee Stepoulos – Intern

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Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, Bureau of District Mining Operations  
Pennsylvania Game Commission  
United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service-Daniel Boone National Forest  
United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service- Monongahela National Forest  
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## **NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS**

1t.org

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American Bird Conservancy

American Forests

American Rivers

Anonymous (2)

Arbor Day Foundation

Appalachian Headwaters

Appalachian Mountains Joint Venture

Appalachian Stewardship Foundation

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