

Swarthmore College Ad-Hoc Crum Woods Stewardship Committee
Final Report
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Introduction. The Crum Woods Stewardship Committee was formed by Provost Jennie Keith in October, 2000 as an ad-hoc committee of faculty, students, and administrators. In December, 2000, the committee established the following goal statement:

"Our goal is to create a protection, restoration, and stewardship plan for Crum Woods. The planning effort will begin with an evaluation of biodiversity, teaching and recreational resources in the context of the College's educational mission and its commitment to social responsibility. The committee will develop the plan in collaboration with College faculty, staff, and students as well as stakeholders in surrounding communities, and will engage the services of professional experts."

During the spring of 2001, a request for proposals was developed to solicit professional assistance in performing an inventory of ecological resources and developing a conservation and stewardship plan for Crum Woods. Proposals were received from several different consulting firms. The committee selected a team consisting of Natural Lands Trust and Continental Conservation (a company formed recently by Swarthmore alumnus and former faculty member Roger Latham). The study was conducted over a two year period, and it benefited from substantial input from the College community and review by the Committee.

The consultants' report was completed in December, 2003. The report contains much valuable information of a scientific and historic nature on the past and current state of the College's properties in the Crum Creek valley. This information will be available to guide future decisions regarding management of these properties. The report also provides the consultants' recommendations regarding many management issues such as response to threats that could reduce the forest and wildlife habitat integrity, recreational use, institutional oversight and management infrastructure, and many others. *Although the Committee provided guidance to the consultants regarding the kinds of recommendations we desired, the recommendations in the report are those of the consultants themselves and are not necessarily endorsed by the Committee.* The report was released by the committee in February, 2004. Copies were placed in both college libraries, in the Swarthmore Public Library, and on the web at link: <http://crumwoods.swarthmore.edu>.

The Committee met regularly during Spring 2004 to discuss the issues raised by the report and to develop its own recommendations regarding many of the issues raised in the report, particularly regarding the policies and procedures that the College should adopt to assure effective stewardship of the woods and the creek. This report contains the recommendations resulting from these deliberations, and the work of the ad-hoc committee is now completed.

Recommendations

1. *Continuing Committee.* The committee requests that the Provost submit to COFP a request to create a new *continuing* committee consisting of faculty, staff, and students to be called the Crum Woods Stewardship Committee. The committee's main function would be to develop and evaluate policies to guide decisions affecting the woods. This committee would not be well suited, though, to deal with the increasing frequency of management tasks and decisions, so the committee is not a substitute for staff dedicated to woods management. However, we believe that there will continue to be several faculty, staff, and students who are enthusiastic about improving stewardship of the woods and who will be willing to serve on such a committee. To some extent, this committee can help to bridge the gap until the staffing needs, identified by the ad-hoc committee, are permanently met.

Current members of the committee are willing to serve on the new committee. The committee has discussed the pros and cons of requesting that the Board of Managers appoint a member to the committee, but a clear consensus has not emerged. Maurice Eldridge has offered to bring up the idea with the Board's Governance Committee. We recommend that the committee have two subcommittees, one to oversee research activities in the woods, chaired by a faculty member (Jose-Luis Machado has volunteered, and Julie Hagelin will fill in while JLM is on leave), and another to oversee restoration and remediation activities, chaired by a staff member (Jeff Jabco has volunteered). A faculty member should be added to represent the curricular interests of the humanities (especially art and literature) in the woods (in previous years, Randy Exon and Betsy Bolton have served on the committee). The committee should continue to have two students, preferably one with interests in the instructional/environmental aspects of the woods and another who can represent recreational users of the woods. Also, it is desirable to have at least one of the students at the sophomore or junior level to provide for the possibility of multiple years of service on the committee.

The relationship of the new committee to the Land Use Planning Committee has also been discussed. One idea is that a Crum Woods committee become a subcommittee of Land Use Planning. The ad-hoc committee rejected this idea because the role of advocacy for the woods would probably not be compatible with the mission of the Land Use committee. So, the committee believes that a continuing Crum Woods committee should be separate from Land Use Planning, but ways should be developed to encourage greater interaction such as an annual joint meeting of the two committees.

The pressing issues occupying the first year of the new committee will involve developing guidance for the college community and the broader community of users of the woods regarding which uses the woods can accommodate and which uses should be modified or curtailed. For example, new policies need to be developed regarding uses such as dog walking, deer management, safety hazards (i.e. abandoned cistern), trail use by mountain bikes, and possible relocation of the community composting center. Ongoing policies that maintain natural resources in the woods are also required, such as erosion control and trail maintenance, and potential reforestation projects. Over time, the

committee should try to develop policies that provide general guidance for management of the woods. However, the committee must be careful not to become bogged down in day-to-day management of the woods. We know, based on our experiences over the past three years that it would be very easy to become caught up in operational matters that are best handled by an administrator. Moreover, the committee can meet only 8 or 9 months each year and will not be functioning during the summer. These concerns lead to our second recommendation regarding the need for a new staff position.

2. *Staff Position.* The committee has determined that there are needs that can not be met with existing staff, so it would appear that addressing these needs will require future allocation or reallocation of resources. We reviewed the work load and commitments of current staff positions in Facilities Management, the Scott Arboretum, and the Biology Department, and found that grounds management and other duties on College properties and facilities outside the woods are fully occupying such staff. The use of outside contractors to help evaluate the impacts of future projects on the woods is one, possibly interim solution, and whenever possible, we should find ways for students to obtain field experience through involvement with such contractors. However, in the longer term, we believe that it will be necessary to add a staff position of *Crum Woods Steward*.

Regarding the consultants' recommendation that a faculty member be put in a supervisory role over the steward, we see no obvious benefits to this approach and most likely great difficulty in identifying faculty willing to take on such a role, even if it is compensated by teaching reductions. For example, none of the current Biology faculty would be willing to take on this supervisory role. Rather, we recommend that the position report directly to the Vice President for Administration with an arrangement similar to that of the existing Occupational and Environmental Safety position. The person chosen for the position should be someone with an appreciation for the teaching and research functions of the Crum Woods who can work with faculty with such interests in the woods, and we expect that several faculty will be willing to serve as resources for this person. The person should have an applied science background in forest and wildlife management and have skills in working with volunteers and with the public.

The committee is confident that the new Crum Woods Steward will be able to draw upon a wealth of knowledge, biological data, and enthusiastic support from faculty, staff, and students. It is plausible that the new Steward could work in collaboration with faculty to guide student projects, so that critical information is collected that can guide the implementation of new projects.

3. *Threats to Crum Woods.* The committee recommends that the consultants' findings regarding the current threats to the integrity of Crum Woods (Chapter 3) be taken very seriously. We are particularly concerned about *fragmentation* of the woods which threatens its very existence as a distinct feature of our campus. We recommend that the College consider very carefully any new development that would increase fragmentation, and we should be alert to opportunities to decrease existing fragmentation. The committee considers the value of the woods in recruiting students to be high, particularly among those who are excited about field work in biology and environmental science, and

that the woods ranks highly among the many features of the College that attract excellent students. We recommend that the College establish a goal of *no net loss of natural wooded areas and, where possible, a net gain*. Implementation of this recommendation will require careful consideration of how we define “natural wooded areas.” The consultant’s report provides a wealth of data and analysis to help guide us towards this goal, but future decisions will also require ongoing discussions, scientific assessments and interpretation by the stewardship committee.

The committee also recommends that ongoing attention be addressed to the threats presented by use of the woods by the broader community. There are several areas of concern that require further conversation with the community, such as those listed in #1, above. We recognize that there exists a need to create a process for involving the community in addressing these concerns. Voluntary compliance with guidelines for use of the woods will most likely be the preferred way to deal with these problems. Use of signage and other community education efforts should be attempted and ongoing attempts should be made to open a dialog with the community about the use of the woods for recreation.

The committee held a meeting on May 5, 2004 for “public discussion” of the consultants’ report with the wider community of woods users and municipal officials in Swarthmore and Nether Providence. The session was very well attended, with 21 attendees plus the committee. Attendees included the managers of both Swarthmore Borough (Jane Billings) and Nether Providence Township (Garry Cummings), an elected member of the Swarthmore Borough Council, a member of the Swarthmore Borough Planning Commission, several members of the community Environmental Advisory Council, a consultant for the current multi-municipality planning study, college grounds crew staff, and several other interested residents of both municipalities. Many of the concerns (threats) discussed in the consultant’s report were echoed and amplified by the attendees. A productive dialog was started, and, we believe, the groundwork was established for ongoing discussions. The committee was impressed by the enthusiasm shown by community members for working with the College in the future to smoothly implement new policies that will be developed through the stewardship process.

4. *Priorities.* The committee believes that conservation and stewardship of the Crum Woods is entirely consistent with the mission of the College. Regarding the ranking of priorities among the major uses of the woods, the committee takes a “big picture” view that considers preservation of the natural and historical identity of the woods and its ecological integrity to be the overriding concerns that guide, inform, and occasionally restrict other uses. The committee does not agree entirely with the consultants’ statement that “scientific and educational values should be placed above other values in terms of management priority.” The main problem with this blanket statement is that the Crum Woods is not monolithic. Rather, it is a mosaic. Indeed, Chapter 5 of the report, which identifies Management Units, categorizes the woods into five ecological zones consisting of a total of 24 different land parcels. Conflicts among the various competing uses must be resolved differently depending on the ecological importance, historical uses, and strategic location of the land parcels affected. In most cases, though, we expect that

preservation and ecological integrity goals will be closely aligned with scientific and educational uses of the woods.

5. *Funding.* The committee recommends that high priority be given to allocation of resources for the creation of the *Crum Woods Steward* staff position. During its brief existence, the committee has had to deal with many management issues that would be handled much better by a manager on staff. These issues range from handling requests for access to the woods from a student trail biking club and a boy scout troop to dealing with the construction of a parking lot by Delaware County on the Martin Tract and plans for athletic field expansion. Projects to protect and restore sensitive ecological areas of the woods will also require significant resources and specialized expertise. We believe that the Crum Woods presents a particularly attractive opportunity for gifts from alumni since it is an important part of many students' experience at Swarthmore, as demonstrated by the results of the alumni survey in the consultant's report. We strongly recommend that the next capital campaign include fundraising for an endowment to protect and preserve the woods. Also, there are many opportunities to attract government and foundation funding to protect the Crum Creek watershed, and opportunities for partnership building with surrounding communities such as the Crum Creek Watershed Partnership should be pursued as a means to attract additional funding.