

# Unpacking NJFA's Annual Meeting Agenda

March 16, 2024 @ Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ

## **“New Jersey’s Forests in Crisis – Can we afford to sit by and watch?”**

This is perhaps the most critical time in history for NJ’s forests. In a world filled with extreme positions, forests are not immune. At one end of the spectrum, there are those who want to clear and develop every square inch of land; at the other, those who would ignore the risks to our forests and insist that no tree should ever be cut. At this year’s meeting, the NJFA examines the impacts of the latter, juxtaposed against science-based active forest management for resiliency and sustainability.

At the NJFA’s 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting we will explore, through a series of focused presentations, provocative questions, panel discussions, and audience Q&A, the impacts of a hands-off approach to forest management. We will examine serious threats to NJ’s forests, including diseases, pests, invasive plants, wildfire, even-aging, weather events, and climate change.

We will also explore real, on-the-ground options and activities for woodland owners.

## **The “Who” and “What” of this Year’s Annual Meeting**

**Presentation from the NJ Forest Service team, including Todd Wyckoff, State Forester.** Hear about the state of NJ’s forests from staff members at the NJ Forest Service. They will cover a range of subjects including the condition of our forests (both private and public), forest data trends, current areas of focus and risk, the Farmland Assessment program, and much more.

**Welcome from Elmer Platz, NJFA President and Board Member and a NJ Tree Farmer, and Andy Bennett, SAF, NJFA Board Member, NJ Approved Forester and Family Forest Owner**

**Presentation by NJ Forest Service and NJ Forest Fire Service on the “Allen Road Project” and what it means for fire risk management.** The Allen and Oswego Road Fire Mitigation and Habitat Restoration Project in Bass River State Forest will help reduce the risk and severity of wildfire, protect the area from southern pine bark beetle outbreaks, increase forest health and restore local wildlife habitats. The project includes a firebreak, forest thinning, and road maintenance. Bass River has been the site of several significant forest fires.

**Panel #1: “The Unintended Consequences of Doing Nothing.”** This panel of experts will discuss the “do nothing” approach to forest management and how it will impact our forests in the short and long term. Audience Q&A will follow.

**Panel #2: “Can Cutting Trees Actually Benefit Our Forests?”** This panel will peel the onion from the skin of inflammatory language and get to the heart of sustainable forestry practices and the science behind them. Audience Q&A will follow.

**Introduction of Collaborating Organizations and Sponsors.** NJFA will introduce the organizations with which it has collaborated in the past year.

**Break:** This is a chance to meet with collaborating organizations, including the NCRS and the NJDEP, as well as others, and visit with vendors. Our board members generously donated a group of fun door prizes, so keep alert for your number during the break. Refreshments will be available.

**Partner Highlight: NRCS Presentation on Current Programs.** This is a special opportunity to learn about current funding and cost-share opportunities for woodland owners and the “how-to” of working with the NRCS.

**Panel #3: “Will We Have a Future Forest?”** This panel will discuss the challenges facing our forests, including diseases, infestations, invasives, wildfire, deer browse, weather events, climate change, and the inherent risks of limiting science-based forest management. Audience Q&A will follow.

**Lunch Break:** Everything in the previous break, plus lunch, the NJFA Annual Business Meeting, Woodland Stewards introductions, and more door prizes. Please take some time to visit with our collaborators and vendors.

**NJFA Year in Review: Richard Kelsky, NJFA Vice President and Board Member.** He will provide a recap of the NJFA’s activities and successes in 2023.

**Presentation by the NJ Forest Service: Atlantic White Cedar Restoration Project.** Atlantic White Cedar acres in NJ have dropped 80% from 125,000 acres to 25,000 acres. This critical project will add back 10,000 acres of Atlantic White Cedar over ten years. Learn how this monumental task is moving forward.

**Panel #4: “Why Does Biodiversity Matter?”** The panel will explore the need and far-ranging benefits of biodiversity and the significant role of forest management in its achievement. Audience Q&A will follow.

**Break:** This is another chance to meet with collaborating organizations, including the NCRS and the NJDEP, as well as others, and visit with vendors. More door prizes, so keep alert for your number during the break.

**Panel #5: “Now What? How To Move Forward and Steward Our Forests.”** The panel will discuss real-world approaches and activities that you can adopt for your woodland property. Audience Q&A will follow.

**Wrap Up Events: 2024 Outlook, Awards, Chainsaw Raffle, 50/50 Cash Raffle, Door Prizes, and More.**