

To: ETSU University Council
From: *Ad hoc* Committee to Propose a Protected Status for University Woods
Date: Thursday, November 29, 2018

Proposal to Protect University Woods revised 11-29-18

I. Overview

University Woods, the wooded area south of the CSX railroad bypass on ETSU's campus, is a remarkable place. The 30-acre tract features glorious hardwood tree specimens -- including approximately 2 dozen, 200-plus year old trees, and some trees estimated to be over 300 years old, concentrated on an 11-acre ridge and slope. These woods provide outstanding educational, aesthetic, and recreational value to the university. The woods also provide substantial ecological, environmental, and human health benefits.

For these reasons, we propose that the area be protected from future development. We propose three instruments to provide that protection:

- A. A memorandum of agreement between ETSU and the Old Growth Forest Network.
- B. A statement in ETSU's master plan.
- C. A dedication ceremony.

The rest of this document provides further details about who we are and why we're proposing this now; further discussion about the instruments that we propose; and a discussion and delineation of the specific area to be preserved.

II. Who are the members of this committee, and why are we making this proposal now?

This is a group of ETSU faculty and staff who have long appreciated the Woods, some of whom have a professional interest in the area. We were prompted to make this proposal after a March 2018 visit to campus by Dr. Joan Maloof, Professor Emeritus, Salisbury University, and a founding director of the Old Growth Forest Network, based in Easton MD. Dr. Maloof's visit was sponsored by the Department of Literature and Language. During a public walk and lecture, she assessed the area and described the value of the trees, and she said it would be a good candidate for registry in the Old Growth Forest Network.

Most of us were along for that talk, and we recalled an occasion about 10 years ago when a proposal was made to develop the woods. At that time, some faculty spoke out in opposition to that proposal, and the process unfolded in a haphazard fashion. In the end, the proposal to develop did not move forward, for a variety of reasons, but in the meantime some feelings were hurt on all sides. So rather than wait for that sort of thing to happen again, some of us discussed the benefits of getting the university to recognize the area for its current value. Kevin O'Donnell then asked Dr. Noland for a meeting to discuss the area, and at that time Dr. Noland said in a general way that he welcomed a proposal regarding the University Woods. The *ad hoc* committee was then formed:

- Fred Alsop, Professor, Dept of Biological Sciences
- Tim McDowell, Professor Emeritus, Dept of Biological Sciences
- Kathleen Moore, Director of Sustainability & Recycling
- Dave Mueller, Assistant Director of Outdoor Adventure, Campus Recreation
- Kevin O'Donnell, committee chair; Professor of English, Dept of Lit and Language, and Director of the Environmental Studies minor
- Brian Rowe, Professor, Biomedical Sciences

III. More about the instruments that we propose

A. A memorandum of agreement

Proposed text for a memorandum of agreement between ETSU and the Old Growth Forest Network is included here in appendix A (page 3 of this doc). As a land conservation instrument, a memo of agreement has been called "legally weak" -- that is, it does not provide a high degree of legal protection, in perpetuity. But it does provide considerable moral and ethical force, if signed by the ETSU President.

B. A statement in ETSU's master plan.

Proposed text for a statement in ETSU's master plan is included here in appendix B. This text will carry considerable weight because any land use on campus that runs contrary to an explicit statement in the master plan must be approved at the State level.

C. A dedication ceremony.

In addition to a memo of agreement, and a statement in the master plan, a dedication ceremony would add further moral and ethical weight to the area's protection. A dedication ceremony might feature Dr. Noland and/ or other ETSU officials announcing to the community that the university prizes the area for its old trees, and as a preserve for its educational, aesthetic, and recreational value, and for its ecological, environmental, and human health benefits.

IV. Discussion and delineation of the specific area to be preserved

The area we propose for protection is the 30-acre parcel bounded by the CSX railroad, to the northwest and west; Southwest Ave to the east; and College Heights Drive to the south and southwest--"Washington County - Parcel: 054O A 015.00" on the map in appendix C. An image compiled by ETSU's GADS (Geoinformatics and Disaster Science) lab, in Appendix D, shows the locations of some of the most notable trees.

Within that parcel is the area of highest value, the 11-acre ridge and north-facing slope with the highest concentration of old trees. The committee emphasizes the importance of protecting the entire 30-acre tract because it provides a critical ecological buffer (preventing, for example, edge species such as kudzu from gaining a foothold and thus ecologically degrading the area of highest value), and also provides a wind buffer for the large trees. In addition, the 30-acre tract has a network of hiking and mountain biking trails, plus some impressive old trees in the southwest corner.



OLD-GROWTH FOREST NETWORK

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

To include ETSU University Woods in the Old-Growth Forest Network

Whereas:

1. The mature and old-growth forest of the ETSU university woods harbors a rich diversity of plant, animal, and fungi species;
2. This old forest provides vital environmental services including purifying the air and the water, and creating fertile soil;
3. This forest provides our University community with valuable out-door recreational opportunities and a sanctuary of natural beauty in the midst of an increasingly urban environment; and it enhances the overall beauty of the campus;
4. The on-campus access to a mature and old-growth southern Appalachian forest is an outstanding asset distinguishing ETSU among universities across the region and nation;
5. The close proximity of the university woods to our campus makes ETSU competitive for student recruitment;
6. The old-growth forests remaining in the eastern United States represent less than 1% of our eastern forests and are in urgent need of protection for future generations to visit and enjoy;

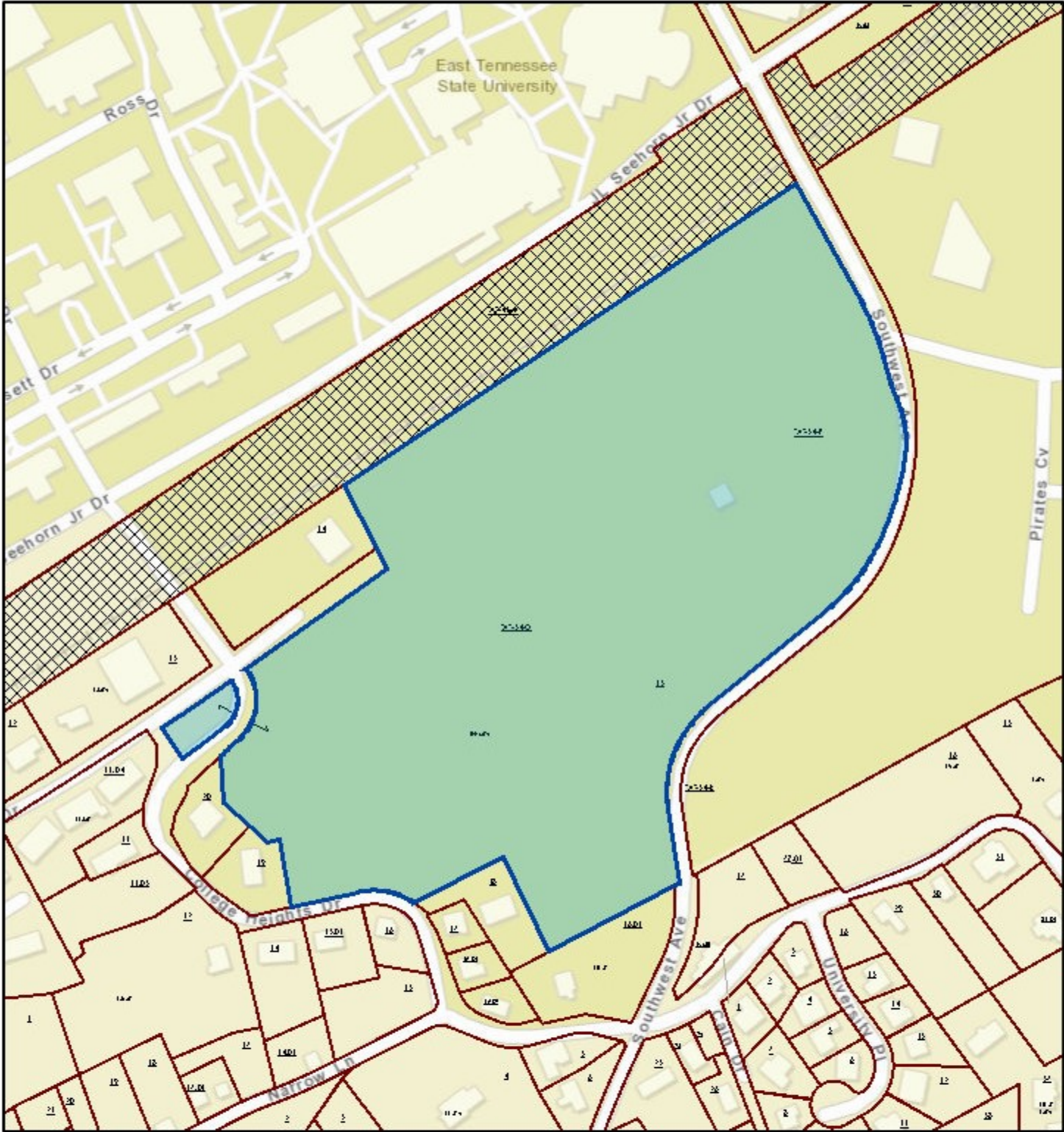
Therefore, we now establish, as a master plan priority, a protected old-growth forest in the woodland property of ETSU, to preserve this exceptional resource and to assure that it continues as a wild and natural area. The tract on the campus of East Tennessee State University, in Johnson City, Washington County, Tennessee, designated "Washington County - Parcel: 0540 A 015.00," shall remain unlogged and preserved. This forest will be open to visitation by all ages.

_____	_____
(Signature of ETSU representative)	(Signature of OGFN representative)
_____	_____
(Date)	(Date)
_____	_____
(Printed name of ETSU representative)	(Printed name of OGFN representative)
_____	_____
(Title of ETSU representative)	(Title of OGFN representative)

Appendix B: Proposed text for the ETSU Master Plan

The area known as University Woods provides outstanding educational, aesthetic, and recreational value to the university. The woods also provide ecological, environmental, and human health benefits, and the area serves as a regional heritage site. For these reasons, this area shall remain unlogged for all time, allowing old-growth characteristics to develop naturally.

Appendix C: "Washington County - Parcel: 054O A 015.00"



Appendix D: University Woods, Proposed Protected Area, Showing the Locations of Some of the Most Notable Old Trees

ETSU University Woods: Proposed Protected Area

