

The Future of Forest Stewardship Workshop & National Guild Gathering

A Forest Stewards Guild 30th Anniversary Event
September 15-17th, 2026, Freeport, Maine

*Please note, we are working as fast as we can to confirm all agenda details,
but this draft is subject to change*

Agenda

Goals:

- Build a collective vision for the future of forest stewardship in the United States with ecological integrity as the north star.
- Share the spark that ignited the Guild 30 years ago and reinforce the power of our community.

Outcomes:

- Increased knowledge
- Stronger networks and connections
- Draft near-term actions and long-term objectives for the practice and promotion of stewardship that forges a healthy future for people and forests.

Working Sessions will be organized into three concurrent tracks: **Ecological Forestry**, **Stewardship for All**, and **Stress and Disturbance**. Participants will be able to choose one of three tracks during each session. Participants are welcome to switch tracks for each session. Each track in each session (here referred to as a unit) will have a different structure tuned to the needs of that specific unit.



Pre-Meeting – Monday September 14th

5:00 Welcome reception & registration 5-7pm at [Mast Brewing](#), [Freeport Tap Room](#)

Day 1 – Tuesday September 15th

8:00 Registration at [Wolfe's Neck Center for Agriculture & the Environment](#)

9:00 Reconnection – gather with friends new and old
Guild introduction circles

10:00 Welcome – Zander Evans

A Perspective on the Future of Forest Stewardship –
New Mexico State Forester, Laura McCarthy,

10:30 Working Session 1

- Ecological Forestry (unit EF1): **Indigenous stewardship & ecological forestry**
An open conversation focused on concrete examples how Indigenous stewardship and traditional ecological knowledge has been incorporated into ecological forestry and stewardship on non-tribal lands.
- Stewardship for All (unit SA1): **Stewardship for Land Conservation**
Stewardship is the next phase for land conservation and land trusts. Flash presentations will demonstrate how land trusts are stewarding conservation lands. Participants will identify challenges from their region and then share approaches to fostering stewardship with land trusts and other conservation owners.
Facilitator: Erika Rowland
- Stress and Disturbance (unit SD1): **Forest Health Update**
Experts will share flash presentations on forest health concerns including HWA, buckthorn, Beech Leaf Disease, Eastern Spruce Budworm, and Mountain Pine Beetle, followed by conversation about responses.

12:00 Lunch (catered lunch at Wolfe's Neck Center)

1:00 Working Session 2

- Ecological Forestry (EF2): **Science and Policy for Ecological Integrity**
This session will draw on the pre-workshop webinar and discuss possibilities and problems with defining and measuring ecological integrity. Participants will work towards practical and policy opportunities to establish ecological integrity as the north star for management. We will draw on examples from Forest Stewardship Council standards, New England Forestry Foundations Exemplary Forestry



Standards and the Guild's biomass harvesting guidelines.
Facilitator: SJ Brown

- **Stewardship for All (SF2): Engaging Landowners in Stewardship**
Engaging private landowners is essential to expand stewardship. Participants will discuss lessons learned through programs such as Women Owning Woodlands, Fire Adapted Communities, and Forestry for the Birds.
Facilitator: Mike Lynch & Sarah Hagan
- **Stress and Disturbance (SD2): Sustaining Ash Partnership Network**
This session provides participants an opportunity to learn about the Sustaining Ash Partnership Network (SAP-Ne). Facilitators will guide work towards extension and adoption of SAP-Ne.
Facilitator: Rachel Swanwick

2:30 Break

3:00 Working Session 3

- **Ecological Forestry (EF3) Markets to Support Ecological Forestry**
Whether timber, carbon, water, or recreation, markets are essential to forest stewardship. Restoration or maintenance of ecological integrity requires mechanisms to pay for work in the woods. This unit will start with flash presentations of successful markets. Participants will share challenges and solutions.
Facilitator: Mike Lynch
- **Stewardship for All (SF3): Welcoming All Stewards**
The Guild recognizes and celebrates the wide range of differences that characterize our members. Diverse forests are more productive, more resilient, and more adaptable. Similarly, our community is healthier when we include a wide range of people and perspectives. Participants will share best practices for welcoming and supporting all stewardship and expanding our membership.
Facilitator: Sarah Hagan
- **Stress and Disturbance (SD3): Beneficial Fire**
Beneficial fire includes cultural burning, prescribed fire, and managed wildfire. Collectively these tools are essential for resilient ecosystems and communities. While fire is a more common topic in the South and West, it is increasingly recognized for its important role in northern forests. Participants will explore both practical and policy mechanisms for expanding beneficial fire.
Facilitator: Esmé Cadiente



- 4:30 Day 1 wrap up and report out
- 5:00 Working sessions adjourn
- 6:00 Dinner at Harraseeket (included in registration)

Day 2 – Wednesday September 16th

8:00 Gather at field trip launch locations

Half day field trips choices:

- New England Forestry Foundation [Bliss Woods Preserve](#)
- Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust's [Crytal Spring Farm](#)
- [Wolfe's Neck Woods](#) State Park

12:30 Return for lunch

1:30 Working Session 4

- Ecological Forestry (EF3): **Stewarding Old Forests in a Changing Climate**
The Guild's Position Statement on [Stewardship of Old Forests and Trees](#) and work of Guild members across the country provides a foundation for advancing tools, techniques and policy for the future for this crucial part of our landscapes. Join the effort to advance our collective work for old forests.
Facilitator: Kristen Pelz
- Stewardship for All (SA4): **Workforce Development**
Attracting, training, and supporting the next generation of stewards is as crucial for forests as ensuring vibrant regeneration. Flash presentations will highlight successful strategies for engaging students, creating apprenticeships, and supporting early career stewards. Participants will focus on action opportunities for workforce development.
Facilitator: Matt Piccarello
- Stress and Disturbance (SD4): **Extreme Weather**
The increasing severity and frequency of floods, ice storms, and hurricanes challenges stewardship. Participants will share experiences from across the country and identify both common mitigation and response strategies as well as forest-type specific approaches.

3:00 Break

3:30 Working session action items



The final session will focus on opportunities for action at the individual member and Guild organizational level.

- Ecological Forestry: Advancing stewardship and ecological forestry
- Stewardship for All: Outreach and engagement actions
- Stress and Disturbance: Action items by region

4:30 Convene & close

5:00 Adjourn working sessions

6:00 Catered dinner at Wolfe's Neck Center

Day 3 – Thursday September 17th

Two options for full day field trips (bag lunch provided)

North

- [Holt Research Forest](#) (*pending*)
- The Nature Conservancy's [Mill Pond Preserve](#) (*pending*)

South

- Maine Audubon's [Gilsland Farm](#)
- US Forest Service's [Massabesic Experimental Forest](#)

6:00 Dinner on your own: Choose your own adventure with friends in Portland!

