

Take a Walk in the Forest Saturday May 16

Be part of a national program for informing friends and neighbors about good forest stewardship

The third Saturday in May each year is designated as National Walk in the Woods Day™ by the American Forest Foundation. In 2020, that will be Saturday May 16. The American Forest Foundation invites its network of family forest owners and Tree Farmers recognized by the American Tree Farm System to offer tours of their managed forests, or simply take their own families and friends for a walk in the woods.

The goals of National Walk in the Woods Day include: inform the public of the many benefits of trees and forests, increase public awareness of the dynamic nature of the forest, and inform the public that private family forestland owners have multiple and diverse objectives and that their investment in forest management results in benefits that we all enjoy.

The American Forest Foundation has teamed up with the Society of American Foresters to make it easy to be sure that your walk in the woods is enjoyable and educational. The two groups have jointly published a free *Walk in the Forest, a Guide for Promoting Forests and Forest Management* including a number of engaging activities for walkers of all ages and interests. The guide also contains tips for pre-walk planning and suggestions for post-walk follow-up activities. There is a section in the guide just dedicated to working with students and educators.

There are many landowner benefits to promoting a walk in your woods. By sharing their woodland with other people, landowners are able to explain the important forestry benefits of clean water, wood products and wildlife. Landowners also are able to share their woodland improvements and show their commitment to sustaining America's forests.

Before taking your walk, there are a few boxes you will want to check off. Start with when do you want to schedule your walk? Once you have decided on a day, next is who will be walking with you? Will it be family? Friends? Maybe you are considering taking a larger group or kids from a local school or homeschool group? The guide reminds forest owners, "if you can't plan a walk for National Walk in the Woods Day™, consider another spring date to tie in with Arbor Day or Earth Day."

Now what to do? Perhaps take your group on your favorite trail? Do you have any recent accomplishments such as tree planting or restored wetlands to show off? Or are there any unique qualities to your land?

Develop a plan. Where will you meet everyone? Do you have maps or other handouts with basic information about your property? Don't be afraid to contact the foresters who help manage your property. They are a great source of information.

Next let's talk about safety. Make sure there are no low-hanging limbs. Check for anything that might be blocking your pathway. Take a walk before inviting others, just to double check that the trail is clear.

Now it is the day of the walk! Welcome people as they arrive and show them safe places to park. Maybe ask questions about natural resources and sustainable forest management to get people thinking? Answer questions people may have, allow them to take pictures, and try to start a discussion with your group.

After the walk, think about how did it go? Was there much discussion? Were you able to start a dialog with your group about forests? What did your group think of the walk? Were they engaged and interested?

Let's get out and take a walk! And remember to send photos of your walk to the NY Tree Farm Program office to share with other forest owners.

Resources:

Download the *Walk in the Forest, a Guide for Promoting Forests and Forest Management* at

https://eekwi.org/teacher/pdf/WIF_manual.pdf

NY Tree Farm Program office – nytreefarm@gmail.com

Photo caption

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