



OLD-GROWTH FOREST NETWORK

"Connecting people with nature by creating a national network of protected, mature, native forests"

September 14, 2024

St. Peter's in the Woods Episcopal Church Sanctuary Forest to be Inducted into The Old-Growth Forest Network

St. Peter's in the Woods Episcopal Church Sanctuary Forest in Fairfax Station, Virginia, will be inducted into the Old-Growth Forest Network on September 14, 2024 at 10 a.m. Brian Kane, Mid-Atlantic Manager of the Old-Growth Forest Network will convey the distinction to Stacey Remick, (Creation Care Ministry) and Rev. Susan Hartzell and Vestry. The forest is the first Community Forest in Fairfax County to be inducted into the Network, and the third Community Forest in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The church is part of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, a chapter of the Center for Spirituality in Nature (SING) and a member of Faith Action for Climate Solutions (FACS) and serves as an approved project site for the Fairfax Virginia Master Naturalist chapter.

The five-acre forest which is part of the church's certified Northern Virginia Bird Alliance (formerly Audubon Society of Northern Virginia) wildlife sanctuary campus, consists largely of oak species, tulip poplar, and American beech and most of the hardwood trees are between 70 and 100 years of age. A meditation trail of two-tenths of a mile traverses the old forest. The Creation Care Ministry team of the church oversees and manages the forest, which is regularly monitored for bird activity, and there is active management of the meditation trail. The trail is aligned with an old farm road for a farm that once occupied this part of Fairfax Station. St. Peter's in the Woods is part of a Resource Protection Area (RPA) that helps protect the Occoquan and Chesapeake Bay watersheds.

This forest is on the ancestral lands of the Manahoac tribe.

"Our woods and meditation trail offer a place of rest and beauty in God's good creation," said the Rev. Susan Hartzell, Rector of St. Peter's in the Woods. "This designation affirms the work of our Creation Care Ministry and the gift that our mature forest offers to countless birds and woodland creatures, not to mention humans seeking a tranquil place for walking, meditation and prayer. We look forward to sharing our woods and opportunities for education with the larger community in the months to come."

The Old-Growth Forest Network (OGFN) connects people with nature by creating a national network of protected, mature, publicly accessible, native forests. OGFN aims to preserve at least one forest in every county in the United States that can sustain a forest. OGFN works to identify forests for the Network, ensure their protection from logging, and inform people of the forest locations.

In 2023, the Old-Growth Forest Network inducted Hemlock Overlook Regional Park in Clifton, Virginia as a Network Forest. The distinction is for forests nationwide that meet a series of environmental criteria that



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includes old-age trees. Hemlock Overlook contains Eastern hemlock nearly two hundred years old, as well as many old hardwoods that are over 120 years of age. Currently there are [12 Network Forests](#) in Virginia.

The 14-year old national Network currently has over 250 forests across 38 states. OGFN also recognizes exceptional forest advocates, educates about the extraordinary ecological benefits of old-growth forests, and speaks out regarding immediate threats to specific ancient forests. Learn more at <http://www.oldgrowthforest.net>.

Brian Kane noted, “Northern Virginia’s soils support rich forests and a wide diversity of tree species within them. We are grateful for the example set by St. Peter’s to recognize and protect a maturing stand of trees that is highly valued by the community. St. Peter’s is an inspiring example to protect mature forests, preserve significant wildlife habitat, store large amounts of carbon, and filter stormwater to protect the tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay.”

Kane added, “We could not grow the Old-Growth Forest Network without the efforts of our volunteer county coordinators, who help us to identify old-growth forest in their communities. We welcome new nominations and volunteers in the Washington, D.C area to help us continue our impactful work.”

Interested volunteers are welcome to contact OGFN through the website: www.oldgrowthforest.net.

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