



Next South Mountain Lecture to Focus on American Chestnut Restoration

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HARRISBURG, Pa., March 28, 2011/PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- The decline and restoration of the American chestnut tree will be the topic of the next lecture in the South Mountain Speakers Series on Thursday, April 7 at the Penn National Community in Fayetteville, Franklin County.

Dave Armstrong of the American Chestnut Foundation will offer a free lecture, "Restoring the Chestnut," beginning at 7 p.m. at the Trellis Terrace, 3720 Clubhouse Drive.

Armstrong will discuss the history of the American chestnut; the early 20th century blight that led to its demise; and restoration efforts with an emphasis on the Michaux State Forest and South Mountain area.

"This topic is certainly timely so close to Arbor Day, and in light of the many challenges now facing our forests from a warming climate and invasive pests," Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Deputy Secretary Cindy Dunn said. "This series is designed to look at the past to see if any lessons learned can apply to our modern-day environmental challenges."

American chestnut trees were once an important part of Pennsylvania's forests. In the early 1900s, a foreign fungus called chestnut blight swept through eastern forests, and by the 1950s, more than four billion American chestnut trees were gone.

Because the blight does not kill the roots, some trees survive long enough to produce nuts or pollen. Some of these remaining American chestnut trees have been crossed with blight-resistant Chinese chestnut trees as part of restoration efforts.

Over the years, foresters at Michaux State Forest have assisted the American Chestnut Foundation in locating bearing trees and harvesting thousands of seeds from remaining chestnuts on South Mountain. These nuts have contributed to chestnut research and plantings throughout the region. Recently, the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation, along with students and faculty from Penn State Mont Alto, established an orchard near South Mountain. The Mont Alto Campus also hosts a chestnut demonstration planting where visitors can view a number of different chestnut species and crosses.

After the lecture, a panel including Armstrong; Tracey Coulter, forest program specialist, PA DCNR Bureau of Forestry; and Beth Brantley, instructor of Forest Technology, Penn State Mont Alto, will discuss contemporary forestry issues and respond to questions from the audience.

This is the second year for the South Mountain Speakers Series, envisioned as a revival of the talks given by Joseph Rothrock in the late 19th century as part of his work to preserve and restore Pennsylvania's forests and natural landscape. Rothrock, a Pennsylvania native, was a pioneer in forest management in the United States and is often referred to as the state's "Father of Forestry."

This event is sponsored by Penn State Mont Alto, Penn National Community, Appalachian Trail Conservancy and the South Mountain Partnership. The South Mountain Partnership is a group of private citizens, businesses, not-for-profit organizations and government representatives in Adams,

Cumberland, Franklin and York counties, working together to protect and enhance the landscape. The South Mountain Partnership was sparked by DCNR's Conservation Landscape Initiative—an effort to engage communities, local partners, state agencies and funding opportunities to conserve the high-quality natural and cultural resources while enhancing the region's economic viability. The series will continue with "Conserving Treasured Landscapes in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed," to be held May 12 starting at 6 p.m. at the Adams County Agricultural and Natural Resources Center in Gettysburg.

For more information, visit southmountaincli.blogspot.com or call the Appalachian Trail Conservancy at 717-258-5771.

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