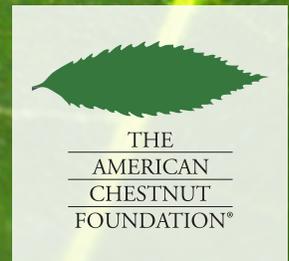


THE AMERICAN CHESTNUT FOUNDATION



2017 ANNUAL REPORT





OUR VISION is a robust eastern forest restored to its splendor.
OUR MISSION is to return the iconic American chestnut to its native range.

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The founding of The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF) in 1983, based upon the idea that the American chestnut could, after so many years of previous failed attempts, be restored to its key place in our eastern forests, was an act of great imagination and faith by a few individuals. Even if TACF could master the science, the ultimate challenge, there still remained the financial, organizational, and managerial challenges of breeding the tree and restoring it to the forests over its huge native range. Essentially, TACF was an organizational startup with a grand and compelling concept, but without a developed product.



After 34 long years of science and breeding, that product is finally coming closer to fruition. We are looking toward the next decade and envisioning how we will begin restoration, utilizing the efforts of our 16 chapters of dedicated volunteers, as well as collaborating and partnering with other organizations, as we have always done. We will need as much imagination and grit as we have possessed in the past. This is the task for our Board and committees – certainly not one for the faint of heart, but oh so exciting – to intellectually consider the different options for the best reintroduction of our favorite tree. It is discussions on these types of topics that you hear when you attend our meetings, particularly our fall national meetings, for example the recent one in Portland, Maine, or our next one in Huntsville, Alabama in October 2018.

From my many years of involvement with TACF, I see an organization that is financially stronger and more focused than it's ever been, with skilled leadership from our President and CEO, Lisa Thomson, a talented staff, and a Board that is immersed in the strategic details of our mission. It is with profound gratefulness to all of you that we present this annual report of this past year. We are so thankful for your participation in our journey.

Sincerely,

Michael D. Doochin
Chairman, Board of Directors

2017 Science Briefing

Jared Westbrook, TACF Director of Science



ACCELERATING SELECTION IN SEED ORCHARDS

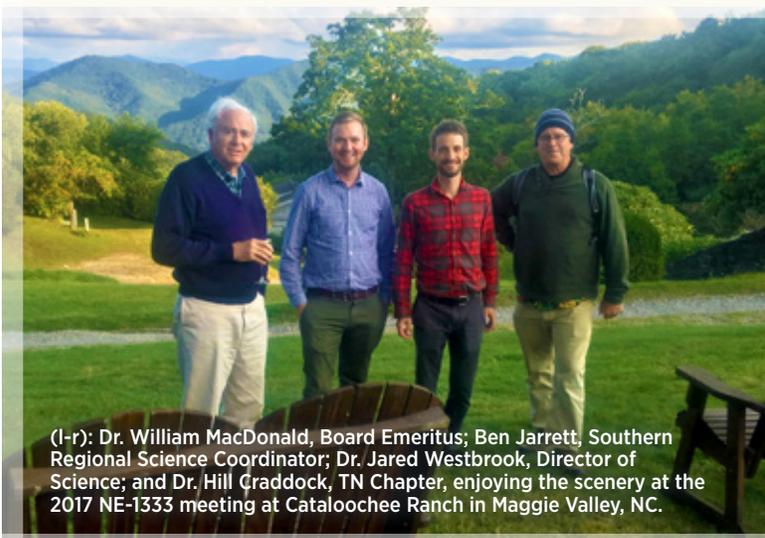
Currently, 10% of the American chestnut backcross trees that we have planted in seed orchards at TACF's Research Farms in Meadowview, VA remain after culling of trees with symptoms of susceptibility to chestnut blight. Our aim is to cull all but 1% of the most blight-resistant trees. As we continue to cull susceptible parent trees from seed orchards, the blight resistance of the seed from these orchards improves. In 2017, we conducted a pilot study to determine if we could screen seeding progeny to speed up evaluation of the genetic resistance of seed

orchard parents. We also obtained the first estimates of the accuracy of genomic selection, which entails DNA sequencing to predict the genetic resistance of seed orchard parents. In advance of completing selection in Meadowview seed orchards, we conducted controlled crosses between seed orchard parents with above-average resistance and planted the progeny in an orchard that will eventually produce the next generation of trees with improved blight resistance.

PROGRESS ON SELECTION AND PLANTING IN MEADOWVIEW SEED ORCHARDS

Since 2002, TACF has planted 57,300 advanced generation backcross trees in Meadowview seed orchards. In 2017, 2,705 trees with symptoms of blight susceptibility were removed. Another 1,050 trees were planted. Currently there are 6,564 trees remaining after artificial inoculation and culling of susceptible trees. Planting of Meadowview seed orchards is 96% complete

and only 2,100 trees have yet to be planted. Approximately 1,800 of the remaining trees were inoculated with the fungus that causes chestnut blight for the first time. We expect to remove 80% of the newly planted and inoculated trees based on canker assessments, leaving a total of 4,700 trees from which to make the final selections of approximately 600 trees.



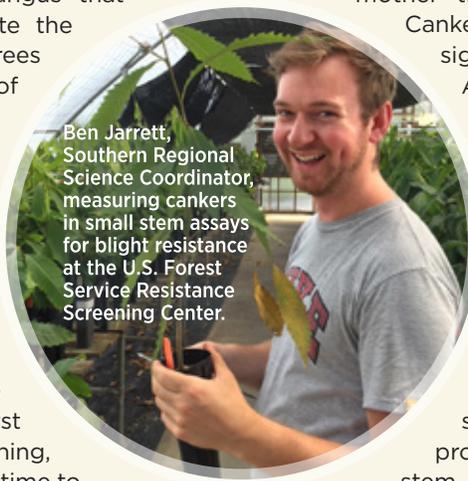
(l-r): Dr. William MacDonald, Board Emeritus; Ben Jarrett, Southern Regional Science Coordinator; Dr. Jared Westbrook, Director of Science; and Dr. Hill Craddock, TN Chapter, enjoying the scenery at the 2017 NE-1333 meeting at Cataloochee Ranch in Maggie Valley, NC.



Brandon Yanez of TACF's Meadowview staff planting progeny of crosses between parents in Meadowview seed orchards with above-average blight resistance.

SPEEDING UP PROGENY TESTING WITH SMALL STEM ASSAYS

To accurately identify and select the most blight-resistant parent trees in seed orchards TACF has been planting progeny of the remaining trees in randomized trials. We inoculate the progeny with the fungus that causes chestnut blight and estimate the genetic resistance of the parent trees from the average canker severity of their progeny. Since 2009, we have been planting progeny tests in orchards and waiting until the third growing season to inoculate the progeny. This year, TACF collaborated with the USFS Resistance Screening center in Asheville to determine if genetic differences in blight resistance are detectable when the progeny are inoculated as seedlings in their first growing season. This method of screening, called small stem assays, reduces the time to estimate the genetic resistance the parent trees from three years to one year. We also may screen more progeny than what is feasible in orchards, increasing the accuracy of the estimates of the parents' resistance.



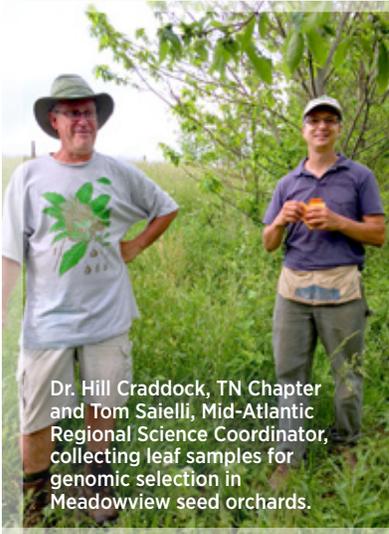
Ben Jarrett, Southern Regional Science Coordinator, measuring cankers in small stem assays for blight resistance at the U.S. Forest Service Resistance Screening Center.

To develop proof-of-concept for small stem assays, over 60 volunteers and 3 staff planted, randomized, and inoculated 2,840 backcross seedling progeny from 68 mother trees in Meadowview seed orchards. Cankers on resistant Chinese chestnut were significantly shorter than on susceptible American chestnut indicating that genetic differences in blight resistance are detectable at the seedling stage. Heritable differences in canker length were also detected among the backcross families. Among 13 families previously screened for blight resistance in orchards, family rankings in blight resistance were strongly correlated between small stem assay and orchard tests. These promising results demonstrate that small stem assays may be used to accelerate progeny testing in subsequent years.

PLANTING THE NEXT GENERATION AFTER BREEDING BEST X BEST

In 2015 and 2016, 16 controlled pollinations were conducted among 19 seed orchard parents with above average blight resistance. In 2017, 328 progeny from these crosses were planted at Meadowview Research Farms. In 3 - 5 years we will inoculate these trees with the chestnut blight fungus to estimate the average level of blight resistance of seed from Meadowview seed

orchards after selection is complete. The progeny of best x best crosses will eventually become parents for the next generation of backcross trees. To improve resistance among their progeny, we plan on culling the trees with most severe cankers so that only the most blight-resistant trees will intercross.



Dr. Hill Craddock, TN Chapter and Tom Saielli, Mid-Atlantic Regional Science Coordinator, collecting leaf samples for genomic selection in Meadowview seed orchards.



Steve Hoy of the Pennsylvania Chapter, culling inferior trees from Meadowview seed orchards.



American chestnut backcross seedlings included in small stem assays for blight resistance at the U.S. Forest Service Resistance Screening Center in Asheville, NC.

ACCELERATING SELECTION WITH GENOMIC SELECTION

Even with accelerated progeny testing with the small stem assay, it is not feasible to screen progeny from all 4,700 trees that remain in Meadowview seed orchards. Final selection of the 1% most resistant trees is being accelerated with genomic selection. The principle of genomic selection is to develop a prediction model to rank trees' disease resistance based on DNA sequencing. The genomic prediction model is developed by estimating correlations between a genome-wide sample of DNA variants and disease resistance in a training population. The training population consists of mother trees whose progeny have been screened for blight resistance, and whose resistance is known. The blight resistance of mother trees whose progeny have not been screened is predicted by genotyping the same DNA variants as were genotyped in the training population and summing the effect of the DNA variants on blight resistance.

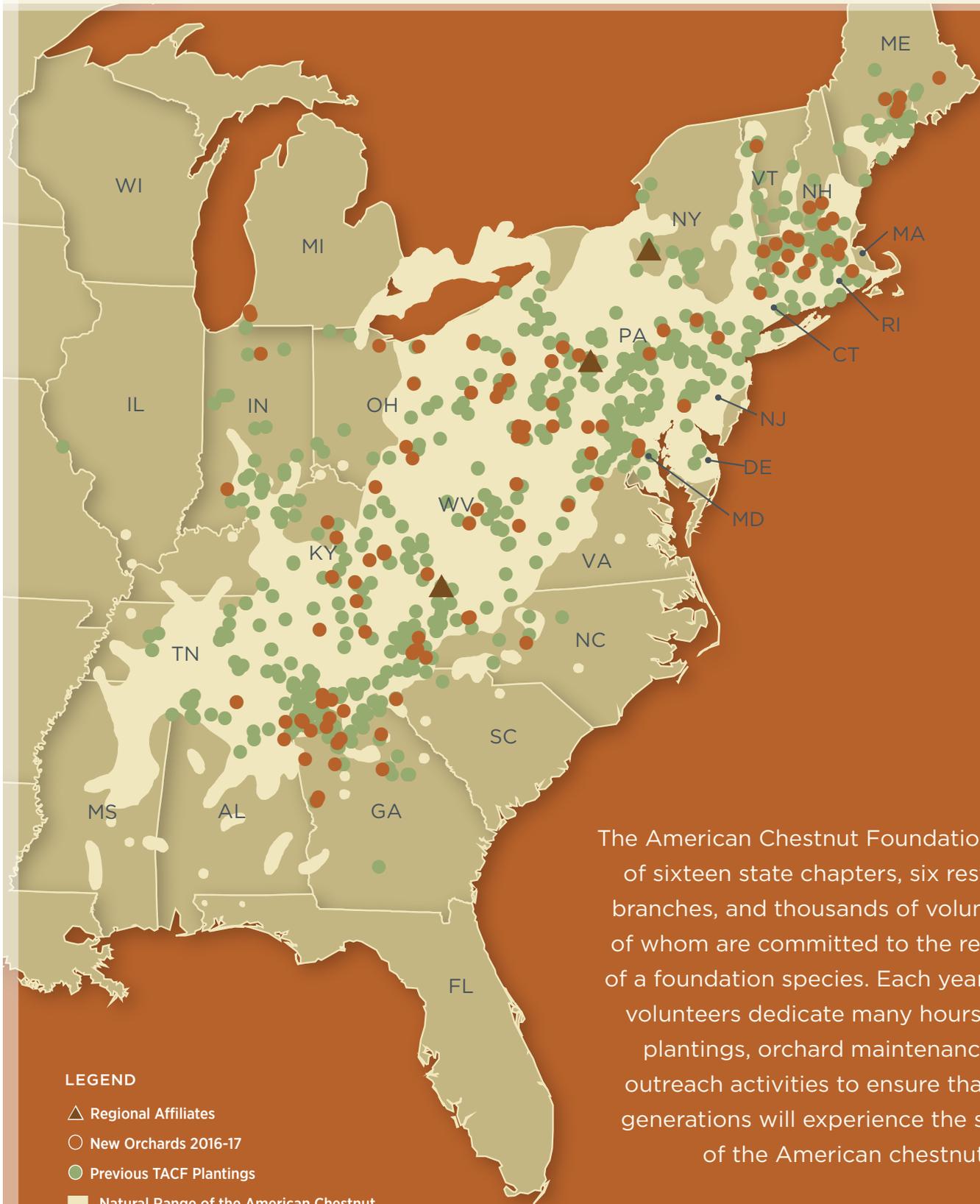
To develop proof-of-concept for genomic selection, 47 mother trees from Meadowview seed orchards whose progeny have been screened for blight resistance were genotyped and over 20,000 DNA variants were detected. Correlations were estimated between the DNA variants and average canker lengths of the progeny in 9/10ths of the population. For the remaining 1/10th of the population, the average canker lengths were predicted from the DNA variants. This cross-validation procedure was repeated 10 times to obtain predicted canker lengths for all 47 mother trees. Prediction accuracy was

estimated from the strength of the correlation between predicted and observed family average canker length. The genomic prediction accuracy was 0.55 on a 0 to 1 scale, which is slightly less than the accuracy of progeny testing (0.6 - 0.8). The genomic predictive abilities were encouragingly high despite the small training populations used to develop the prediction models.

Genomic predictive abilities are expected to increase by genotyping more progeny tested trees. TACF is collaborating with Professor Jason Holliday at Virginia Tech to develop more accurate genomic prediction models. In 2017, 384 mother trees whose progeny have been screened for resistance to chestnut blight were genotyped. Genomic prediction accuracy of blight resistance is expected to increase because population used to develop the prediction model is larger and 10x more DNA variants (200,000) were generated as compared with the proof-of-concept experiment. In addition, 2,000 trees that remain in the Meadowview seed orchards after initial culling for blight-susceptibility, but have not been progeny tested, are currently being genotyped for genomic selection. Additional culling of inferior trees will commence when more accurate genomic prediction models for blight resistance are available in 2018.

Thank you for your support of TACF's mission to restore the iconic American chestnut tree to its native range. After 28 years and four generations of backcross breeding at TACF's Meadowview Research Farms, we are close to completing the original breeding plan and finishing selection in seed orchards.

2017 Regional Accomplishments



The American Chestnut Foundation consists of sixteen state chapters, six restoration branches, and thousands of volunteers, all of whom are committed to the restoration of a foundation species. Each year, regional volunteers dedicate many hours to new plantings, orchard maintenance, and outreach activities to ensure that future generations will experience the splendor of the American chestnut.

THE AMERICAN CHESTNUT FOUNDATION



NEW ENGLAND REGION

State Chapters: Connecticut, Massachusetts/Rhode Island, Maine, Vermont/New Hampshire

Regional Stats:

- Approximately 15,800 chestnuts planted
- 62 outreach activities, serving nearly 4,200 individuals
- Approximately 360 volunteers
- 138 new members enrolled

Notable Accomplishments:

The Vermont/New Hampshire Chapter initiated and completed the first phase of its Strategic Plan; completed the first block of its TACF seed orchard in Hillsborough, NH; initiated negotiations on developing the second TACF seed orchard in Essex Junction, VT; cooperated with the Vermont Tech Center to assist with chestnut de-burring and seedling growth; harvested 3,687 B₃F₂ seeds from four lines; and inoculated one breeding orchard at Shieling State Forest in NH.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

State Chapters: Indiana, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania/New Jersey

Regional Stats:

- Approximately 19,220 chestnuts planted
- 72 outreach activities, serving nearly 19,670 individuals
- Approximately 840 volunteers
- 323 new members enrolled

Notable Accomplishments:

The Ohio Chapter runs a small grants program for education and outreach purposes. Other positive outcomes with this program include creating new partnerships and engaging new members.

The New York Chapter recruited 50 new members interested in the comeback of the American chestnut tree.



MID-ATLANTIC REGION

State Chapters: Kentucky, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia

Regional Stats:

- Approximately 8,900 chestnuts planted
- 72 outreach activities, serving approximately 6,820 individuals
- Approximately 550 volunteers
- 136 new members enrolled

Notable Accomplishments:

● The Maryland Chapter developed and printed a bi-fold brochure to hand out at various activities and events that contains information about the chapter's work and the need for volunteers. The chapter also harvested and sent thousands of chestnut seeds out to be used for mine land reclamation, progeny tests, school planting programs, and research. Several chapter members presented on American chestnut trees and the work of TACF to various groups, such as master gardeners, garden clubs, county forestry boards, and nature centers. At such events, they gave out brochures, seeds and/or seedlings, and presented tangible, educational artifacts from the tree.

● The West Virginia Chapter coordinated the American Chestnut Exhibit at the National Boy Scout Jamboree in Glen Jean, WV, which hosts thousands of visitors each year. Special thanks to Sam Muncy, WV Chapter Treasurer, who managed TACF's booth at the Jamboree. Throughout the year, chapter members gave talks about the American chestnut tree to a number of groups, organizations, and schools.

SOUTHERN REGION

State Chapters: Alabama, Carolinas, Georgia, Tennessee

Regional Stats:

- Approximately 9,210 chestnuts planted
- 112 outreach activities, serving approximately 5,350 individuals
- Approximately 500 volunteers
- 155 new members enrolled

Notable Accomplishments:

● Steve Barilovits III, Carolinas Chapter and TACF board member, developed the Science & Technology Roadmap to define the different major pathways to restore the American chestnut.

● The Georgia Chapter collected pollen, seeds, and generated seedlings of pure American chestnuts for planting in gene conservation orchards. The chapter also bred and tested F₁s and B₁s for *Phytophthora* resistance; initiated small stem assays; grew hundreds of B₃F₂/B₄F₂ seedlings; published several papers that focused on the GA-TACF breeding program; continued their work with Dr. Scott Merkle at the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources, University of Georgia in the development of chestnut cloning techniques; initiated a collaboration with the Lumpkin Coalition, an environmental non-profit group based in Dahlonega, GA; and made significant progress in updating GA-TACF records in *dentata*Base, TACF's online database.

Thank You

TO ALL OUR VOLUNTEERS AND SUPPORTERS

The American Chestnut Foundation deeply appreciates the hard work of its chapter volunteers and committed supporters. Our mission is long-range, and your contributions allow this conservation success story to continue. We are truly grateful for your help in restoring this iconic species.

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A Legacy Tree

THE PROMISE OF A HUNDRED FUTURE FORESTS

In 2018, The American Chestnut Foundation will establish a new Legacy Tree orchard at the Glenn C. Price Research Farm in Meadowview, VA. This new orchard reflects advances in the breeding program to produce blight-resistant American chestnuts. The legacy tree orchard will be composed of a progeny of controlled crosses between BC_3F_2 parents that have been identified as having among the highest blight resistance in the population. The progeny of these blight-resistant parents will be planted away from other susceptible trees. In 5 - 10 years, when the trees in this new Legacy Tree orchard flower, they will intercross with each other to produce seed with improved blight resistance as compared with the previous generation.

Legacy Trees are approximately 15/16 American chestnut and 1/16 Chinese chestnut. Each tree is sponsored by an individual(s) - either in their own name, the name of a company or organization, or in honor of a friend or relative. The sponsorship is acknowledged by an individual plaque placed by the named tree.

The Foundation's Legacy Tree sponsors have made a significant contribution to help fund the scientific research of this foundation species. The seeds produced in the orchard contain the greatest level of American chestnut characteristics and the most blight-resistance to date.

Legacy Trees are truly a living legacy of TACF's scientists, staff, state chapters, and volunteers. This orchard is only the beginning of the Foundation's restoration efforts. Scientific rigor, diligent support, and ongoing patience will bring our breeding strategy to fruition over the next 100 years.

OUR LEGACY TREE SPONSORS

21st Century Parks Inc. in honor of George Gibbs, Louisville, KY

The Family of the Rev. and Mrs. Hugh W. Agricola, Jr.

Allegheny Foundation

Anonymous, in honor of Maine Chapter of TACF

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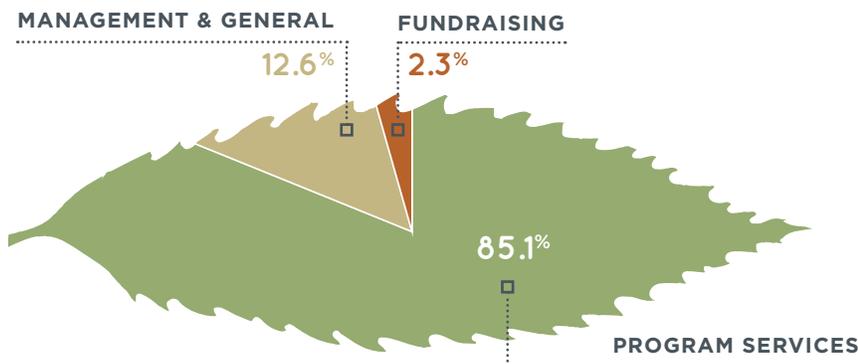
In Memory of Norman H. Williams, (1913-2000) New Milford, PA

Alan and Marilyn Youel

Stephen and Suzan Zoukis in honor of Cashiers Village

2017 Financial Overview

PUBLIC SUPPORT AND OTHER REVENUES		% of Income
Contributions	\$2,715,877	79.4%
Membership	404,007	11.8%
Federal Grants	58,357	1.7%
Investment Income	143,553	4.2%
Merchandise Sales	12,758	0.4%
Realized losses on investments	20,054	0.6%
Other Income	29,772	0.9%
Gain on sale of assets	35,000	1.0%
TOTAL REVENUE	\$3,419,378	
EXPENSES		% of expense
Program Services		
External Research	\$312,122	12.4%
National Office Operations	418,119	16.6%
Marketing & Communications	132,714	5.3%
Regional Science	596,790	23.7%
Education & Outreach	3,832	0.2%
Chapter & Membership	219,245	8.7%
Research Farm Operations	421,017	16.7%
Forestry & Mine Land	34,197	1.4%
TOTAL PROGRAM SERVICES	\$2,138,036	85.1%
Supporting Services		
Management & General	\$316,964	12.6%
Fundraising	\$58,795	2.3%
TOTAL SUPPORTING SERVICES	\$375,759	14.9%
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$2,513,795	



TACF IS EXTREMELY PROUD OF ITS 2017
4-Star Rating
 FROM CHARITY NAVIGATOR.

The American Chestnut Foundation



CONTACT US

chestnut@acf.org ~ acf.org
facebook.com/americanchestnut
twitter.com/chestnut1904

TACF National Office
50 N. Merrimon Avenue, Suite 115
Asheville, NC 28804
(828) 281-0047

Meadowview Research Farms
29010 Hawthorne Drive
Meadowview, VA 24361-3349
(276) 944-4631

Mid-Atlantic Regional Office
Virginia Department of Forestry
Central Office
900 Natural Resources Drive
Charlottesville, VA 22903
(828) 281-0047

New England Regional Office
Northern Research Station Forest Service,
U.S. Department of Agriculture
705 Spear Street
South Burlington, VT 05403
(802) 999-8706

North Central Regional Office
Pennsylvania State University
206 Forest Resources Lab
University Park, PA 16802
(814) 863-7192

Southern Regional Office
50 N. Merrimon Avenue, Suite 115
Asheville, NC 28804
(434) 906-9312

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50 N. Merrimon Avenue, Suite 115
Asheville, NC 28804
(828) 281-0047

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