



AI used to create forest management plan

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DUNCANNON, Pa. (WHTM) - Duncannon is using artificial intelligence to make sure its forests remain healthy and productive. The technology coupled with hands-on work and measurements is used to create a forest management plan. The Duncannon Borough Watershed is a 1,600-acre property key to generating money in the local community. It's also the first enrollee in the Nature Conservancy's Working Woodlands program "In 300 spots, we measured every tree for a tenth of an acre," said Josh Parrish, the director of the Working Woodlands program at the Nature Conservancy. Understanding what you have is important in moving forward. So, the Nature Conservancy is doing just that by working with a company that uses artificial intelligence. "Silvia Terra takes that and puts it together with algorithms they have and look at things like heat maps of forests, LIDAR, radar, satellite imagery, and they layer that all together and they come up with a tree list," said Parrish. The goal is to create a management plan so the forests are healthy and profitable. "The watershed is the source of the borough's drinking water," said Lisa Landis of the Duncannon Borough Council. The information lets the borough prioritize areas that are ready to be harvested and control areas that are not. "We hope that we're blazing a trail ahead on how to sustain and maintain these green spaces," said Landis. "Here, you'll see a low-quality black birch," said Parrish. "That would be an example of tree you'd want to cut to improve the growing space for the residual trees." The borough, conservancy and multiple local groups are also working to develop ten to fifteen miles of trails at the watershed. "You can see in here there's invasive vines coming in," said Parrish. "That we have to keep an eye on." Other areas along the Kittatinny Ridge are also involved in the Working Woodlands program. The spots protect watersheds that flow into the Susquehanna River and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay.

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