



For Immediate Release
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Black Rock Forest Announces New Executive Director, *Isabel Ashton, PhD*: Current Executive Director, William Schuster Steps Down After 30 Years

Black Rock Forest's current Executive Director, William Schuster, PhD, announced last fall that he would be stepping down as director in late 2022 after 30 years of dedicated service. Isabel Ashton, Program Manager at the Katahdin Woods & Waters National Monument in Maine was appointed by the Board of Directors to succeed Bill effective November 10, 2022.



In response to Bill's announcement that he would be stepping down, the Board formed a search committee and engaged the firm Isaacson, Miller to assist in finding an exceptional executive to guide Black Rock Forest into the future. Bill will stay on for a year in the role of Senior Ecologist to continue his research-in-progress and to work on the Wildlife Connectivity Project. Bill is delighted that Isabel will lead BRF into its next chapter, "Isabel is an outstanding leader to take over this organization that I have come to love so much. She will bring deep ecological understanding, broad experience, commitment, and passion to the position, ensuring a bright future for Black Rock Forest."

Isabel is coming to BRF from the National Park Service where she worked as an ecologist for more than 14 years. Most recently, she has been overseeing the development of science and resource management on 87,500 acres of forest in the Katahdin Woods & Waters National Monument. Isabel's research has focused on adaptive management and how to use long-term monitoring data to understand the effects of climate change, fire, and invasive species. Much of her work has focused on building partnerships and diverse teams to leverage science and conserve national park lands for future generations.

She has spent most of her career in federal service, dating back to her early work as an AmeriCorps Environmental Educator in 1998 where she got her start in conservation at Black Rock Forest. Isabel is a native of Brooklyn, New York and has a BA in Environmental Biology from Columbia University. She holds a PhD in Ecology and Evolution from Stony Brook University.

Under Bill Schuster's leadership Black Rock Forest has grown into a biological field station of national significance, featuring an award-winning "green" campus supporting an average of 13,000 student-visitor days in the Forest each year as well as some 50 – 100,000 annual public visitors. 700 scientific papers have resulted from work at Black Rock Forest since it was founded in 1927 with the great majority produced since Black Rock Forest Consortium was formed in 1989.

Isabel shared, "I am delighted to be returning to the Hudson Valley and joining the staff at Black Rock Forest. I look forward to reconnecting with old colleagues and friends and to meeting and working with new people. I am particularly excited by the challenge of building on Bill's leadership and guiding Black Rock Forest into the next era." Isabel will be relocating to Cornwall with her spouse and two school-aged

children. In her spare time, she enjoys cooking and spending time outdoors with her family. The Black Rock Forest team is looking forward to welcoming her onboard!

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