

Montana Family Forest News

Issue No. 40—Spring 2013

A publication of the Montana Tree Farm System, MSU Extension Forestry, Forest Stewardship Foundation, Montana Forest Owners Association, and the Montana Forest Stewardship program.



What to do?

A mature stand of 200+ year ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir with an understory of 10-50 year old Douglas-fir faces wildfires, mountain pine beetle, spruce budworm and potentially Douglas-fir bark beetle. What do you do to best maintain a healthy resilient forest? Clearcut, overstory removal, understory removal, and if so what trees do you leave and what spacing? See inside cover for more.

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Dear Reader,

This newsletter highlights numerous articles that focus on information and resources that a forest landowner can use to better their knowledge and potentially implement on their own land. The concept is to provide articles that capture one's attention based on current issues and updates on various organizations on a state and national level. With articles ranging from estate planning to managing soil productivity we hope there is something for every forest landowner. Not to mention landowner spotlights that may encourage and help develop new ideas for your land.

Montana State University Extension Forestry has taken on the responsibility of producing the spring Montana Family Forest News in cooperation with the Montana DNRC, Tree Farm Program, Montana Forest Owners Association, Montana Forest Stewardship Foundation, Montana Forest Stewardship Steering Committee, Montana Logging Association, Montana Wood Products Association, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Natural Resources and Conservation Service and the many sponsors whose advertisements you will find on the pages of this newsletter. All are committed towards the conservation of healthy and functioning Montana Forests. We hope you enjoy this newsletter. Please send us your comments!

Warm regards,

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About the cover picture:

Where shade intolerant and shade tolerant species co-occur, as is the case of ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir, it is inevitable that trees will eventually overpopulate the site. For the northern and central Rocky Mountains the greatest limiting factor is typically water, and thus during a wet climatic phase regeneration is prolific and during a dry climatic phase trees are drought stressed. The length and magnitude of each phase is a major factor that determines how much regeneration occurs or how much stress the trees endure. This effect is enhanced or diminished by the growth phase of the forest – a relatively young forest with less tree canopy tends to be more resilient and an old forest with more tree canopy cover and thus more water demand tends to be more susceptible. Such older stands run a fair risk of failing to catastrophic disturbance due to high fuel buildups that promote severe wildfires or insect epidemics that develop in large stressed populations. Reducing this risk through management actions is not simple as the many potential solutions are still as debated among experts as they were a century ago. This leads to the question of “what would you do?” See the back cover for some opinions....

Peter Kolb



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Montana Tree Farm *Letter from the Chair*

Hello again Tree Farmers!

Approximately ten years ago I wrote an article as the new chair of the Montana Tree Farm System, and then a few months later I had to step down because I started the process of a completely different leadership role I will never forget. In May of 2003 I started getting ready to deploy to Iraq with 135 other Infantrymen from Montana. As I write this article I hope history doesn't repeat itself! However, if it does I will rise to the challenge again. These Volunteer Montana Infantrymen by the way were incredible volunteers who got so much done to establish a safe and secure Iraq allowing for free elections and a transfer of authority to Iraq's security forces. This team of professional citizen soldiers had a diverse background cultivated from their civilian lives. We relied on our diverse professionals to train Iraqi army, police, and other security forces, develop plans and hire local contractors to repair needed basic infrastructure, gather intelligence, provide security and destroy and detain anti-Iraqi forces. We were able to visualize our progress and track performance indicators and measures that proved our success.

Well here I am again ten years later looking at the progress and accomplishments of Tree Farm. Wow what a change! You've all completed two third party assessments which is a measure of success proving that Montana Tree Farmers are managing their lands in a sustainable manner meeting performance indicators set forth by the American Forest Foundation. This is not an easy task and was not done alone. It took a team! A family team on your part more than likely, and a team of hard working steering committee members that volunteered their time to get it done. I'd like to point out to those who were not there at the fall meeting in Troy that Gary Johnson was awarded the Life-time Achievement Award. Now that is a measure of success! Gary took charge after I left 10 years ago, and has been charging forward ever since!

There are a few new faces within the Montana Tree Farm Committee including Angela Mallon who has been a great asset to Tree Farm. She is now the Vice Chair. In addition, she's helped to relieve Gary of one of his many duties by chairing the certification subcommittee. This position assigns and tracks tree farm inspections and manages the database, plus a whole lot more! There are a few more great new members to the committee and we all appreciate their help as they all volunteer their time and effort.

Speaking of volunteering, Montana Tree Farm System is run by volunteers and does not require a fee because of these volunteers. Landowners volunteer to be members and are not charged any fees, and foresters assist with writing plans, visit tree farms and conduct a whole lot of support and do not receive payment. It's a lot ask to of volunteers to accomplish. So what do we get out of, or benefit from all this hard work? The following is what I hear folks saying:

1. Being part of a membership in a network of professionals and fellow landowners who share a commitment to sound, sustainable forestry.
2. Invitations to seminars, field days, and workshops that can help you learn how best to achieve the goals you've set for your Tree Farm.
3. An annual convention where you can meet, share experiences, and enjoy the fellowship of Tree Farmers from all over the state and nation.
4. A free first-year subscription to *Tree Farmer: The Practical Guide to Sustainable Forestry*. It's the only national magazine specially designed for forest landowners--full of articles with easy-to-use information, product reviews, and plans you can put to work right away on your Tree Farm.
5. Opportunities, training, and tools that will help you educate others about the benefits of excellent forestry--whether its schoolchildren visiting your Tree Farm, other landowners who want to know more about management, or lawmakers looking to regulate forestry or set your Tree Farm taxes.
6. An initial inspection of your Tree Farm by a professional forester to help you meet Tree Farm System standards. Then a re-inspection of your tree farm will be done every five years that provides professional suggestions and advice to help you meet your goals.

Most recently your committee wrote a letter of support to the Senate Natural Resources Committee for SB 345 on behalf of the members of the Montana Tree Farm. SB 345 was introduced by Senator Chas Vincent is a bill to revise laws related to liability for a forest or range fires; establishing a limitation on real and personal property damages for fire caused by negligent or unintentional acts or omissions. The idea for this bill was introduced at the Forest Landowner Legislative Workshop sponsored in part by Montana Tree Farm along with Montana Forest Owners Association, Montana Farm Bureau Federation, Montana Wood Products Association and Montana Logging Association. This Workshop was assembled by a team of hard working volunteers mostly Debra Foley and Joe Moran. Make sure you thank these two next time you see them for the success of this workshop.

Another big event taking place is one of Angela's projects, "The Montana Tree Farm Breakfast Meetings". I hope you have the opportunity to attend one of these sessions to share and discuss stewardship tricks and tips in order to enhance your property or tree farm. See our website for the details of the meetings at www.mttreefarm.org.

As we look forward to the future of Tree Farm I see many great opportunities. Many see market opportunities increasing in the form of increased log demand and therefore prices. So if you've been contemplating some management to reduce competing vegetation the value of your logs are going up! .



In addition, the American Tree Farm has decided to continue to offer free landowner membership in the Tree Farm System. In closing, consider this quote on volunteering from the leader who formed the First Volunteer Cavalry, and later the 26th president of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt - *“It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes short again and again because there is no effort without error and shortcomings, who knows the great devotion, who spends himself in a worthy cause, who at best knows in the end the high achievement of triumph and who at worst, if he fails while daring greatly, knows his place shall never be with those timid and cold souls who know neither victory nor defeat.”*

The Montana Tree Farm Steering Committee needs to have any form of volunteer assistance to ensure the program remains free of charge and continues to provide conservation assistance. If you have an idea, suggestion, time to assist us in preparing for the fall annual meeting, or whatever, please feel free to volunteer. Thanks to all those of you have volunteered!

For more information on the Montana Tree Farm please contact Mark Boardman, Montana Tree Farm Chair, at mboardman@mttreefarm.org, or 406-892-7014.



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Montana Tree Farmers Convene at Troy

By: Steve Arno

On a sunny Saturday late last September, sixty-four Tree Farmers and their guests converged on Troy in Montana's northwest corner for their annual meeting and field trip. It was well worth the long drive that many of us took to reach this handsomely forested area.

After gathering together, with coffee and sweet rolls at the impressive and spacious Senior Center, we were given "marching orders" by Tree Farm Vice Chair Mark Boardman, and sent out to the tour busses. The first stop was Tom and Alvira Jones' Tree Farm in the Iron Creek valley south of Troy. The Joneses purchased a quarter section of very productive forest land here in 1965. (Tom measured a maximum annual leader growth of 52 inches on larch.) On most of the property, trees originated following the 1910 fires.

When Tom retired in 1994, he began managing the forest very intensively. Since then they have harvested 1.25 million board feet while constantly improving the forest. Their goal is a vigorous fire-resistant forest featuring western larch, but with a representation of other species including spruce, white pine, lodgepole, ponderosa, grand fir, Douglas-fir, cedar, hemlock, and paper birch. They have done a lot of commercial and pre-commercial thinning including hand-piling and burning.

Tom discussed their weed control and alder control practices, and wildlife use of the property. Although they generally aim to keep the trees fairly well-spaced, they also leave some small thickets for hiding cover, and these are heavily used by deer in winter. He showed us bear damage to small larch trees, and the group discussed the variability of bear behavior from one area to the next. Tom showed us a small block-cut they made in a defective patch of timber, and described the prescribed burn he did there to clean up slash. They have planted seedlings, including rust-resistant white pine. He described how they have marketed products to a variety of mills. The Joneses have also placed the property in a conservation easement to perpetuate it as working forest.

Our second stop was another quarter-section Tree Farm, covering south-slopes and bench-lands across the Kootenai River from Troy. This property was homesteaded in 1913 and has remained in the Akin family ever since. Cliff Akin has carried out a variety of intensive practices to improve the family forest since moving to the property in the 1980s. His son Gerald, a professional forester, provides help and technical advice. Cliff had never used a chain saw or felled a tree until moving to the property, but he studied the art and practices of intensive forest management, and has himself logged over a million board feet. This has taken the form of individual tree selection and group selection. Primary goals are fuel reduction, wildlife habitat, and developing a vigorous multi-species forest, featuring western larch.

Our third stop was the Chapel Cedar Mill in Troy, which manager Doug Chapel mentioned the last surviving sawmill in Lincoln County. It has been in continuous operation since 1967. With 20 employees and soon to add 5 more, it is small but nimble—always keeping abreast of new market

opportunities. The mill emphasis is a range of cedar products including beauty bark, but it also processes other species. They purchase lumber from other mills and manufacture it into value-added products. Their products have been marketed in many parts of the world.

Back at the Troy Senior Center shortly after noon, the group enjoyed a delicious luncheon featuring Cornish game hens. While munching a dessert of carrot cake we were treated to an illustrated presentation entitled "Log Gone in Libby" by local teacher Jeff Gruber. It chronicles the rise, transformation, and demise of the timber industry in Libby, starting with the J. Neils Mill in the early 1900s, through purchase by Saint Regis Paper Company in 1957, by Champion in 1984, Plum Creek in 1993, and finally with the Stimson mill closure in 2002 due largely to the high cost of dealing with asbestos contamination.

After viewing this somber epic, moderator Mark Boardman kicked off the awards, announcements, and discussion forum. Four Tree Farm families received 25-year certificates and signs: Clifford Akin, Troy; Paul Uken, Columbia Falls; Paul Harper, Potomac; and Roy Wills, Bonner.

Two new Tree Farmers were in attendance: Craig Johnson, Troy; and Jan and Carol Hayes, Noxon. Sam Gilbert, Helena, a well-known Forest Stewardship advisors, was acknowledged as Conservation Educator of the Year. Doug Mote, Helena, who manages forests on Sieben Ranch properties and spoke at our past annual meeting in Lincoln, was awarded Tree Farm Logger of the Year. The Dennis Swift Award for service by Tree Farm Inspectors was given to Mike Justus, Scott Hicswa, and Eric Norris. Mike Justus was awarded "Inspector of the Year."

The Flanagan family of Fortine—represented by brothers Pat, Mike, and Darris was awarded Tree Farmer of the Year, acknowledging more than 35 years of Tree Farming accomplishments. Their property was featured in our 2001 annual meeting, including their restoration of Grave Creek. The Flanagans received a beautiful, big hand-carved plaque recognizing their award.

Gary Johnson, Montana Tree Farm treasurer and frequent representative for us to the national Tree Farm organization, was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award acknowledged on an antique cross-cut saw decorated with a hand-painted mural. Mark and Gary brought us up-to-date on issues and problems affecting Tree Farmers. Finally, winning bidders in the silent auction were announced, and before departing for home, buyers retrieved their quarry which included some fine woodcrafts.

Special thanks to our sponsors: Northwest Management, Plum Creek Timber Co., F.H. Stoltze Land & Lumber Co., Pyramid Mountain Lumber, Sun Mountain Lumber, Wilbur-Ellis, Stihl, Inc., MSU Ext. Forestry, MT Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation, MFOA., Thompson River Lumber, Triple W Equipment, Tricon Timber, Forest Stewardship Foundation, MLA Services, Inc., MT Wood Products Assn., Roseburg Forest Products, Ottman Forestry Consultant, Inc. and RY Timber.

National Public Affairs Committee

By: Gary Johnson

At the very end of last year, Congress agreed on a compromise that avoided the fiscal cliff so often mentioned in the nightly news. How did the final agreement affect woodland owners and how did some of the issues that we had been working on fare? While not perfect, the final deal does provide relief for woodland owners.

A quick review of those issues of importance to family forest owners:

Estate Tax: Forest landowners can breathe a little easier as the estate tax levels are now permanently set at a \$5 million exemption (\$10 million for couples) with a 40 percent tax rate. Although the tax rate is above the 35% we had been working to maintain, I believe it is a reasonable compromise.

Farm Bill: The agreement extended the current Farm Bill provisions for another year, until September 30, 2013. Although an extension is somewhat disappointing, forest owners will continue to have access to incentives through the existing conservation programs. We intend to continue working to maintain improvements that were included in the 2012 Farm Bill proposed by the Senate and the House Agriculture Committee in any legislation considered for 2013.

Capital Gains Tax: Capital gains taxes are always an issue when forest owners sell their timber. Under the fiscal cliff agreement, capital gains tax rates will remain at 15 % for individuals with an annual income less than \$400,000 (\$450,000 for couples).

Conservation Easement Tax Incentives: A conservation easement provides woodland owners with an opportunity to protect their land from development. The fiscal cliff agreement extended the easement tax incentives through 2012 and 2013 – the tax incentive had expired in 2011.

We must keep in mind that the final fiscal cliff agreement dealt with many more issues than forestry and although a 2012 Farm Bill did not pass, many of the tax issues important to family forest owners fared relatively well.

What is ahead for 2013?

Invasive Species: We will continue to work to improve and provide adequate funding for federal, state and local efforts to prevent introduction of invasive forest pests and for detection and eradication programs and research.

Full Five-Year Farm Bill: Both the House and Senate Bills include all the provisions we proposed from strengthening forest product markets for woodland owners to opening conservation programs for woodland owners. We intend to continue working to ensure that the provisions currently in the Farm Bill proposals will be included in the final Farm Bill agreement.

Forest Products Fairness Act: The Biobased Markets Program created in the Farm Bill was designed “to increase the purchase and use of biobased products.”

Unfortunately, the USDA has chosen to exclude most forest products in implementing the Program stating that Congress intended the program for “new” products. Such exclusion creates a disadvantage for family woodland owners in marketing their products.

We are working to fix the USDA Biobased Markets Program so American forest products are not left out of any biobased markets through passage of the Forest Products Fairness Act.

There are important issues that matter to woodland owners and we can make a difference. We need your help and I again encourage you to get involved by joining the Family Forest Action network.

Please visit www.familyforestaction.org and sign up.

Have a great summer.



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Land of the Free....for Now!**Leadership and Certification Update**

By: Angela Mallon, Montana Tree Farm Vice Chair and State Certification Coordinator

Just around the corner from Philadelphia's City Tavern, where America's founding fathers imbibed after signing the Declaration of Independence, leaders from Tree Farm chapters from around the country gathered from February 19 to the 21, 2013. There could have been no more ideal setting than the home of artifacts from our country's earliest history and fundamental ideals to reexamine the foundation and vision of the American Tree Farm System.

The National Leadership Conference is held every year as an opportunity for state Tree Farm steering committee members, state administrators, and inspectors to gather and learn tools and share ideas for implementing the program more effectively in their states and regions.

As American Forest Foundation President and CEO Tom Martin reminded us in his opening remarks, ATFS's primary vision is to be the preeminent membership organization for private forest landowners in the US. As Montana's Tree Farm members already know, the benefits of being a member are multiple. Some landowners are interested in maintaining their access to markets and sales premiums through certification. Others enjoy the technical assistance they receive in the form of Tree Farm Inspector service or informal opportunities to share tips and tricks with other members. More intangible, but no less important, is the chance to be represented through Tree Farm's advocacy at the state and national level.

The common denominator for state chapters and the national organization alike is figuring out how to pay for providing these services to landowners. Advocacy costs money. The certification program costs money. Hosting national, regional, and local networking events costs money. For this reason, in 2012 the national office piloted their *Landowner Engagement Strategy*, a "multi-faceted initiative designed to strengthen support of the volunteer and landowner network, communicate the value of participation in ATFS, and ensure ATFS's financial sustainability in the future." The central proposition of this strategy was to develop a multi-tiered membership program, wherein Tree Farmers could choose one of four levels of membership and pay an associated yearly membership fee.

In 2012, the membership program was piloted in the states of Missouri, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Oregon. At this year's National Leadership Conference, ATFS announced that they have decided NOT to implement this structure, based on the results of the pilot. Only a very small proportion of current members surveyed in the pilot states said they would choose to remain members if enrolled in fee-based program; even fewer said they would pay to be members at the highest, "certified" level. For now, the national recommendation is that the program will remain free and open to anyone who wants to join. However, the question

of how to continue funding the program is still a hot topic of discussion.

Both national and your state committee would welcome your ideas on how to continue paying for the important services Tree Farm provides.

At NLC I also had a chance to share some of our Tree Farm activities in Montana, during a regional breakout session with other western states. Several of our neighboring states were especially interested in the March breakfast meetings we host thanks to an education grant from ATFS (see announcement in this issue). At least two other states in the West would like to replicate this program after hearing more about it. I also benefited from hearing about innovative new approaches to engage landowners. Colorado for example, uses email to distribute bulletins with breaking news on new forest products markets, educational opportunities, and cost share programs. Email is a fast and efficient way to communicate important, time sensitive information to our membership. One of my goals as vice chair is to develop an email list to use for sending out important notices. Please send me an email at amallon@mt.gov if you would like to be included on this list!

One other especially important topic discussed at the National Leadership Conference was that of certification. Some members see certification as only marginally (or not at all!) beneficial. Other members view certification as the number one benefit of membership in the program. However, as I learned in a seminar on the 3rd day of the conference, more markets around the world are demanding certified wood. Contrary to popular perception, wood buyers are starting to pay a premium for certified wood, although this premium is often maxed in the cost structure of purchasers' bids and volatility of wood fiber prices. Increasingly it seems a day when certified wood is the only marketable wood is appearing on the not too distant horizon.

And speaking of certification, Montana Tree Farm has officially begun the 2013 re-inspection cycle. We are conducting inspections on 80 Montana Tree Farms in 2013. If you are contacted by your inspector because you have been selected for a review of your management plan and property visit, please do your best to schedule an appointment in a timely manner. Mid- to late spring – after mud season but before fire season – is a perfect time for a property visit and management plan review. Take advantage of this opportunity for free advice and technical assistance and to reassess your family forest's progress and potential. Re-inspections are a treat for the inspectors as well as landowners – with nearly 80 eligible inspectors scattered around the state, they can barely keep from fighting amongst themselves to visit your property!

The greatest value of the Tree Farm program, in my opinion, is the opportunity to learn and share with other landowners and forestry professionals. I hope to see you soon at a breakfast meeting (free!), hear from you over the phone or email (free!), or best of all, in my office (also free!).

Montana Forest Council – (MFC)*Submitted by: Jim Kranz*

The Montana Forest Council (MFC) is an umbrella organization that promotes sustainable forestry and good forest stewardship in Montana. The MFC also serves as the Implementation Committee for the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI®) in Montana.

The MFC was established in 1991 and was originally named the Montana Private Forest Council. The organization's original goals included the development of Montana's BMPs and SMZ rules, the development of a logger's training program and the promotion of several stewardship extension efforts.

In 1995 the organization's name was changed to the Montana Forest Council and it took on the role as the official implementation committee for the Sustainable Forestry Initiative program in Montana. SFI is a United States & Canada forest certification program and is the largest single forest certification standard in the world. Approximately 200 million acres are certified to the SFI standards. In 1998 the MFC signed a Memorandum of Understanding which formalized its compliance with the requirements for an SFI Implementation Committee. More information on the SFI program can be found on its website at www.sfiprogram.org. Today, the MFC continues as Montana's Implementation Committee and is an active promoter of sustainable forest stewardship activities in Montana.

MFC has a diverse membership. SFI participants include Plum Creek Timber Company, Stimson Lumber Company, Pyramid Mountain Lumber Company, F.H. Stoltze Land & Lumber Company, Boise, Inc. and The Nature Conservancy of Montana. Other members include Montana Extension Forestry, Montana DNRC, the Montana Logging Association, the Montana Wood Products Association, the Montana Tree Farm Program, logging representatives and other interested agencies and organizations.

MFC meets three to four times annually to discuss the current status and developing trends in the arena of sustainable forestry. The Council then coordinates to develop and facilitate educational workshops and outreach material to promote sustainable forestry in Montana. By working with Extension Forestry, the Montana Logging Association and others this coordination provides for efficiencies regarding subject matter and offerings. Spring workshops for landowners and loggers are examples of this coordination. Recent publications include "Biodiversity Guide for Montana Forest and Woodlot Owners" and "Protecting Special Sites".

MFC values the participation of the Montana Tree Farm Program and its dedication to the principles of sustainable forest management. For more information on the Montana Forest Council please contact Jim Kranz, MFC Chair, at Jim.Kranz@plumcreek.com or Julia Altemus, MFC Coordinator, at Julia@montanaforests.com.

Save the Date! 2013 Montana Tree Farm Conclave

Saturday, October 12th—upper Bitterroot Valley

We will be revisiting the fires of 2000

See the Montana Tree Farm website, www.mttreefarm.org and Fall 2013 Montana Tree Farm Newsletter for registration information. For questions please contact Conclave

Organizer Angela Mallon (406)542-4221.

Hope to see you there!



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July 25-27, 2012 Minneapolis, Minnesota



Mark your calendars - early-bird registration opens January 31, 2013!

<http://www.treefarmssystem.org/2013-national-tree-farmer-convention>

This year the annual National Tree Farmer Convention -- the largest national gathering of woodland owners in America -- will take place in Minneapolis, one of the nation's most attractive summer vacation spots. A vibrant urban center with a hometown vibe, Minneapolis is a prairie mecca full of cultural attractions and tree-lined, walkable riverfront parks. It teams with fresh, new, local regional cuisine, and was recently named one of America's top food cities by Food and Wine Magazine. Rising out of the heart of the North American continent's "Big Woods," it's also the epicenter of some of the most developed and creative thinking about how to enhance both the financial revenue and personal pleasure that is so often a part of the "family-owned woodlands" life.

It's here that Tree Farmers, foresters, forest health experts and volunteers throughout the country will meet to keep up-to-date on the best ways to care for their woodlands. The convention will feature classroom-style concurrent sessions taught by the nation's forestry experts, opportunities to learn from fellow Tree Farmers, and on-the-ground learning at a local field day site. This year we have lined up an unbeatable array of expert presentations focused on landowner education. Topics will cover on-the-ground management, tax issues, planning for family succession, best practices for managing wildlife, and market information.

A GREAT DESTINATION

Our 20th anniversary gathering will take place at the historic Depot Marriott Renaissance Hotel, named "Best Family Friendly Hotel" by CitySearch. Built in 1899, The Depot was originally a Gilded Age train station, and is now on the National Register of Historic Places. In addition to a state-of-the-art meeting facility, The Depot also houses a waterpark with an oversized whirlpool, splash fountain and waterslide. With lifeguards on duty, it's a perfect family vacation attraction.

The Depot is located in the heart of the City's cultural and restaurant district, and close to walking paths beside the Mississippi River. The combination of natural beauty, pleasant temperature, cultural amenities and great food compelled the famous "Lonely Planet Travel Guide" to list Minneapolis as one of the "Top Ten Travel Destinations for 2013."

Field Day

In our reconnaissance visit, one of the immediate stand-outs of the 20th convention is the Field Day visit to the Medvecky Tree Farm, about an hour north of Minneapolis. Called "The Big Woods" by Dave Medvecky, the property is "a living and a lifestyle for us, and I'm out in the woods, everyday." Both Dave and his wife Bev have lived on the land for over thirty years, and have been selectively logging it, "but it doesn't look like it's been logged," says Dave. It still provides habitat for a wealth of birdlife and animals, but also, because of Dave's insightful management, produces loggable trees.

Dave has a deep knowledge of his trees and he is finding an outlet as he collaborates with some of the region's best and most interesting wood-workers. Dave understands how the different densities of wood is even reflected in its ashes -- and there is a local potter working with Dave experimenting with how different ashes affect his pottery glazes. These folks will be on hand all day, providing a fascinating look at how their artistry takes the forest to another level of beauty, as well as a higher-value, artisanal economic revenue source for Minnesota.

Classic Programs

Our twentieth convention will also feature enduring but fresh programs for Tree Farmers of all ages:

- Youth Program for ages 7-15
- An Awards Banquet where 2013 National Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year will be announced, sponsored by STIHL, Inc.
- Return of the ever-popular Silent Auction, featuring items hand-made by fellow Tree Farmers, and much more
- Field Day at the Medvecky's "Big Woods" Tree Farm
- Local tours showcasing highlights of Minnesota forestry innovation

Whether your woodland is a special retreat, a working Tree Farm, a financial investment, a family heirloom, or all of the above, we've designed this 20th Convention to provide practical take-home information to improve your property in measureable -- and immeasurable -- ways.

We look forward to seeing you in Minneapolis!

Visit <http://www.treefarmssystem.org/2013-national-tree-farmer-convention> to learn more.

Registration will be open January 31, 2013.



BIG SKY NIPF-ty NOTES

Supporting non-industrial private forest owners (family forests) in their rightful and responsible use, management and enjoyment of their forest lands.

Paid for by the Montana Forest Owners Association
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MONTANA 63rd LEGISLATURE NEWS

Proposed Bills making progress in the current Montana Legislature affecting family forest owners:

SB 345. The Senate Natural Resources Committee heard and passed SB345 on to the House, which appropriately revises laws related to liability for forest and range fires. This Bill was introduced to address a lawsuit filed in California that had a devastating impact on timberland owners, timber purchasers and timber harvesters. Many thanks to Senator Chas Vincent of Libby for his efforts in support of this Bill on behalf of Montana private forest owners.

SB 201. The Senate Natural Resources Committee also heard and passed to the House a Bill for an Act “generally revising laws related to wildland fire; finding that catastrophic wildland fire has the potential to jeopardize Montanans’ constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment; requiring the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation to advocate for authority to engage in forest management to reduce fire risk and intensity on federally managed land located within the wildland-urban interface; authorizing the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation and the Attorney General to intervene in certain litigation or appeals.”

SB 217. Another Senate Natural Resources Committee Bill has been sent over to the House for “An Act revising laws related to watersheds and catastrophic fires; finding that watersheds and the drinking water supplies of many Montana communities are at risk from catastrophic fires in federally managed watersheds; directing the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation to analyze forest land for potential zones of infestation and advocate for authority to conduct watershed restoration and protection services on federal land; authorizing the Attorney General to intervene in litigation of federal forest management projects...”

For more information on Montana Legislation, go to www.leg.mt.gov.

2013 FOREST LANDOWNER WORKSHOP A SUCCESS

MFOA’s January 15 Workshop in Helena was well received and productive, thanks to our co-sponsors: Montana Farm Bureau, Montana Tree Farm, Montana Logging Ass’n, and Montana Wood Products Ass’n. There were over 60 total attendees at the Workshop, along with approximately 23 Legislators attending. Important forest landowner issues were presented and discussed. Several legislators who stayed until the end of the Workshop expressed an interest in these issues summarized below.

2013 Forest Landowner Legislative Workshop

Summary of Priority Issues and Solutions

Rank	Issues:	Solutions
1	Liability	Violator should be the only person liable, unless gross negligence or intentional harm
1	Liability	Same as above, limit liability to other than acts of god. Limit to same as federal government (usfs)
1	Liability	Legislation to limit liability
1	Liability	Limit liability Fire Fix trespass law

2	Prop Tax Assessment and valuation	State Forestry appeal board. Need knowledgeable people on this issue
2	Taxation and valuation	Educate forest landowners on process.
2	Trespass issue	Legislation in Trespass law, not smz law
2	Rec use liability	Limit public recreation liability limits for landowners
3	Fees	
3	Taxation Advisory committee	Need to notice public meetings
3	Taxation	Committee needs some responsibility to report back to the legislative taxation committee.
3	Taxation	Criteria for committee membership to ensure appointees accurately represent seats
3	Taxation and appraisal	DOR needs to follow intent of legislation (tax legislation) Advisory committee appointments Determining of appraisal methods data sources.
4	Non point - water quality permitting issue	Solved on the federal level, or if need be handle on a state level

**2013 Forest Landowner Legislative Workshop
Summary of Educational Services**

Educational / Service Need	Rank	Met
Stewardship program	1	1
Importance of Forest Stewardship Workshops	1	2
Public Perception of forest management	1	3
Market for logs and pulp	1	5
forest stewardship workshops and mini college	2	2
Rights and Responsibility of forest landownership	2	4
Contractual/legal knowledge	2	4
Community Forest	2	5
Insect and disease	3	2
Forest Insect and disease education	3	3
Feedback Evaluation System for Service providers (like "trip advisor" where folks can rank or comment on service providers	3	5
Forest landowner orientation class ("new" forest owners)	3	5
Maintaining infrastructure and markets	4	3
Weeds	4	3
Liability issue knowledge and legal issues in Montana Codes	4	5
Market Opportunities	4	5
Wildlife Habitat	5	2
Service Forester Availability	5	3
Cost Share Opportunities	5	4
MLA	6	2
BMP/SMZ understanding	6	2
Forest Stewardship series	7	2

Rank: importance to landowners "Met" - how well this need is being addressed. 1-good, 5-is not met

MFOA is a non-profit organization directed by a voluntary board of family forest owners. MFOA provides policy issues development, giving a "voice" to Montana family forest owners in the policy-making arena. Visit our website at: www.forestmontana.com

Montana Forest Stewardship Steering Committee

Letter from the Chair

The Montana Forest Stewardship Steering Committee (MFSSC) underwent an extensive review in 2012 to determine what changes, if any, might be implemented to make the Committee more effective going forward. The members concluded that the Committee had the capacity to maintain its support for the MSU Extension Forestry Forest Stewardship Workshops and the FWP Forest Legacy program, while expanding its horizons to encompass additional stewardship challenges and opportunities. Toward this increased horizon, the MFSSC is extending a special outreach to other organizations supporting forest stewardship in hopes of acting as a forum for organizations and interested parties to discuss and implement stewardship goals. The Committee, created by and acting as advisor to the State Forester, is in a unique position to provide access for organizations to the State Forester and his DNRC organization.

Our intention at MFSSC is to identify stewardship issues that are important to many of us and to exert our best efforts to support those issues to success through work with the State Forester and partner organizations. This is in addition to our on-going duties concerning the stewardship workshops and Forest Legacy program.

We extend an open invitation to every individual and organization supporting stewardship to attend our quarterly meetings and to request our assistance and support in our mutual quest for increased effective stewardship.

By Michael Christianson, MFSSC Chair

Estate Planning for Landowners

Marsha Goetting, Ph.D., CFP®, CFCS

If you, your spouse, or both of you were to die today, what would happen to the forest land that you have worked a lifetime to accumulate?

Will your forest management plan continue to function as an effective tool for your survivors and provide for them in an equitable manner without disruption? Will your timber or land or both have to be sold because your heirs can't agree on how it should be managed?

Or, worse yet, if you left your timberland equally to your children in a will or trust, would one child "force" sale of your property because he wants his share in dollars rather than sharing the land with the other siblings?

If you, or your spouse, are one of the 7 out of 10 Montanans who die without a will, learn where your property passes under Montana law by going to the interactive MSU Extension website www.montana.edu/dyingwithoutawill

Landowners can now focus on the "nitty gritty" aspects of family estate planning without worrying that federal estate planning tax laws will change yearly ... at least for now. The American

Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012 (ATRA) made permanent the federal gift and estate transfer taxes. However, the annual adjustment for inflation will change the specific amount that can pass without a federal estate tax. In 2013 the amount that can be transferred without a federal estate tax is \$5,250,000 per person (\$10,500,000 for a married couple).

The tax rate has increased from 35 percent to 40 percent on estates with assets exceeding the exemption threshold of \$5,250,000. The annual gift tax exclusion (the annual amount that person can give to another person tax free) has increased from \$13,000 to \$14,000 because of the inflation adjustment that occurs in \$1,000 increments. Effective January 1, 2013 married couples can gift \$28,000 to as many people as they want.

Landowners need to decide about the final disposition of their hard-earned assets and then execute the appropriate legal documents to ensure their final wishes are carried out. Montana law provides a variety of estate planning tools that allow for the transfer of property to beneficiaries whom you designate without the asset going through the probate process:

- payable on death beneficiary (PODs) designations on financial accounts such as checking and savings, and certificates of deposit.
- transfer on death (TODs) registrations on stocks, bonds and mutual funds.
- beneficiary designations on life insurance, annuities, and retirement polices,
- beneficiary deeds naming grantee beneficiaries to receive for your real property.

Wills and trusts are additional legal documents for achieving your estate planning goals of assuring that your property passes to the persons or charitable organizations you want.

MSU Extension has a series of 34 MontGuides that explain a variety of estate planning tools. They may be downloaded from the Web by clicking on estate planning publications at www.montana.edu/estateplanning. MSU Extension also has a series of webinars in the estate planning area at the same site. Just click on Webinars.

The fact sheets are also available without charge from local Montana State University Extension County offices. Single printed copies are also free from MSU Extension Distribution Center, PO Box 172040, Bozeman, MT 59717, www.msuetension.org/store



Spotlight on a Forest Steward: Linda and Carl Haywood of Thompson Falls

(Thanks to Linda and Carl Haywood for submitting this article)

Submitted by: Cindy Bertek

Carl realized his childhood dream in 1968, when he arrived in Montana to work for the State Foresters Office in wildfire and timber management and eventually as a service forester. In 1953, after being inspired by the movie, "Red Skies Over Montana", as a fifth grader he decided he wanted to be a "forest ranger", live in Montana and battle forest fires. His professional path led him to many parts of the United States, but his goal was always to return to Montana and Sanders County. A goal that was finally realized in 2003, nearly 35 years from the time he left.

Carl and his wife, Linda, settled on a 20-acre tract near Thompson Falls. The property had good timber potential, but due to neglect there were many areas in need of thinning and pruning. Adding to the neglected state of the forest, the previous owner had clear-cut and graded a large area in preparation for a stock car racetrack. When those plans fell through the barren ground was left to reclaim itself—in knapweed.

Shortly after arriving at their new home, a tremendous fire broke out only a few miles from their home in the Cherry Creek drainage. Carl's background in fire suppression told him they needed to think about fire prevention and take preventative measures for the future.



Cherry Creek Fire—Smoke in background of Haywood home, 2003.

Clearing, thinning and pruning were high on the list. Carl continued working for an engineering contractor, a job that kept him away from home for extended periods. Linda was left to manage the forestlands, a task she was ill prepared to handle. Her first project was to oversee a small timber sale letting the contractor know which trees to take and which to leave. The next project was to manage a fire suppression project having a contractor clear a 5-acre area around the house. She made it through these projects and still had a standing forest, Linda decided it was time to learn more about the forest and managing their timber.

She was just learning the names of trees on the property when an ad appeared in the local paper announcing a Forest Stewardship Workshop. That was July 2005. So she signed up.

That same year, Linda bought a John Deere Gator and equipped it with spraying equipment to rid the property of the knapweed infestation. For the past several years, they have managed to slow the spread of the knapweed. Carl retired in 2010, and has been taking an active role in overseeing the pruning of younger trees to stimulate height growth and eventual wood quality. For a comparison, check out the following photos taken nearly thirteen years apart.



*Three trees in center
2000*



*Three trees in center
2013*

The small tree in the foreground was barely a foot tall in 2000. The brush piles visible in the 2013 photo will be burned this coming burn season. Carl says the trees put on nearly 4 feet of growth since 2010 when they were first pruned.

The Haywood's have one rarely seen tree on their property—a "honey tree". This old, hollow larch was host to a honeybee colony for perhaps decades. At some point a previous owner cut a small "door" to provide access to the honeycomb inside. The block of wood was held in place by a nail. As time passed, use of the honey tree was abandoned and continuing growth of the old tree eventually grew to partially seal the cuts.



In the fall of 2005, after attending the Forest Stewardship Workshop and completing a forest management plan, Linda was invited to become a member of the MFSSC. Carl joined her later after he retired. They will be completing their second and last term with MFSSC later this year. Linda holds a bachelor's degree in geology and worked for 20 years in state government overseeing the development of mining properties. MFSSC members are required to join one of the MFSSC subcommittees so Linda opted for the Forest Legacy subcommittee feeling her experience was better suited to land acquisition.

The Forest Legacy Program is a Federal program that works in partnership with States to protect privately owned forest lands from conversion to non-forest uses. Each spring FWP calls for projects to be submitted for review and consideration for funding. Montana competes nationally against other States for the Federal grant funds to pay for a portion of the value of a conservation easement or fee purchase.



One of the main provisions to receive the grant is the recipient must execute a forest management plan and is required to maintain a healthy forest.

The Haywood's continue working on the health of their forest. When timber prices rebound, they plan more commercial thinning. They are actively pursuing efforts to control the knapweed and cheat grass and are ever watchful for indications of potentially damaging insect problems. They have a little bit of heaven here at the end of the rainbow and hope to keep it that way.

Note from MSU Extension Forestry: Five Forest Stewardship workshops are offered annually, see the calendar at www.msuextension.org/forestry All family forest owners are encouraged to attend as well as Tree Farmers and second/third generation Forest Stewards and repeat attendees.

The Next Generation of Family Forest Landowners and Natural Resource Professionals

Submitted by: Martin Twer



The future decisions of how our natural resources will be managed will be made by the youth of today.

For over 25 years, the Montana Natural Resources Youth Camp (<http://www.mnryc.org>)

has provided youth an opportunity to study in an outdoor classroom the scientific principles, economic realities, historical heritage, and social perspectives of today, to help these future leaders in their quest to gain a natural resources perspective that is informed and progressive.



Campers spend one week (July 14-19, 2013) in the rustic setting of the Lubrecht Experimental Forest (about 30 miles east of Missoula along US Highway 200) learning about Montana's natural resources. The accommoda-

tions are comfortable, the food is great, and the instruction and friendships are the best! The camp is open to all youth ages 14-18. The full cost of the camp to students is \$200 which includes meals, supplies, and lodging. Campers are encouraged to contact their local Conservation District for sponsorship which usually offer significant scholarships to our camp.

Campers learn about wildlife, forests, streams, soils, geology, range management, and recreation, taught largely by professionals that volunteer from a variety of natural resources based agencies and industries. They spend a

half-day rafting the Alberton Gorge of the Clark Fork River. In between the field sessions, specialty evening programs, guest speakers, hands-on learning-through-discovery, and campfires, provide for a lasting summer camp experience.

Student teams also compete in a Land-Use-Game where they manage a 3,800 acre ranch for 20 years. As in real life, teams must make hard choices between profits and conservation ethics, especially if they face poor commodity prices. Most students enjoy the competition and have the typical reaction of "Wow, I never knew that making a living by managing land was so hard."

Contact:

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Managing for Forest Soil Productivity?

By: Peter Kolb – MSU Extension Forestry Specialist

Maintaining soil productivity is a concept often used to promote minimizing forest harvesting activity, especially those that cause significant soil scarification. Alternatively management activities that increase soil surface woody debris and organic layers are considered important to increase soil function and health. Whereas these paradigms seem to make sense when compared to using or creating a rich organic potting soil for house plants, or adding compost to our garden to improve vegetable and fruit production, do these same principles apply to the naturally occurring soils in our forests?

A soil in simplest form is the medium that provides plants with an anchor to support above ground growth, as well as providing a source for water and the nutrients needed to support the physiological processes of energy production (photosynthesis) and growth (cell development and cell division - or respiration). To that end a bowl full of marbles could function as a soil, though has poor water holding capacity because of limited surface area (water is only held as a thin film on the surface of every marble) and has poor nutrient qualities as glass, which is basically pure silicon dioxide (SiO_2) does not contain or hold onto the essential elements (Nitrogen, Phosphorus, Potassium, Sulfur, Calcium, Iron, Zinc, etc. that usually occur as positively charged molecules - also known as "cations"), that plants need to build the enzymes and proteins needed for growth. The origin of all plant nutrients with the exception of Nitrogen, is from the decomposing geologic substrate that forms the origin of each particular soil, and thus can vary greatly from site to site. Soils derived from quartz and certain granites are typically extremely nutrient deficient whereas soils derived from basalt have a high essential nutrient component. Nutrients are released from parent rock materials at a rate determined by temperature, water availability and acidity that pries loose the positively charged cations from their rock matrix. Alternatively, a bowl full of marbles cannot be easily compacted, a process that squeezes soil particles together so tight that water and air movement, as well as root penetration is limited, nor does glass have any kind of chemical charge (either positive or negative and hence is neutral with a pH of 7). Because of these properties of limited surface area and nutrient deficiency, plant growth would be very difficult in such a medium. A real life example would be the deep soils entirely comprised of volcanic ash surrounding Mt. St. Helens after its eruption. Volcanic ash is almost pure glass and contains very few nutrients, though created as a matrix of billions of highly porous microscopic particles it can hold water very well. Studies of both naturally establishing and planted vegetation showed that unless the plants had the ability to fix their own nitrogen, or were artificially fertilized, they could not survive on the ash.

So what does this have to do with Montana soils? All soils in a young or original state are simply fractured rock

particles, and depending on their geologic origin and degree of weathering may offer a nutrient poor plant medium such as marbles or volcanic ash. The only way to improve the characteristics of a bowl of glass marbles for supporting plants would be to allow the marbles to break down into smaller particles, which might improve their water holding capacity and release the few mineral nutrients sandwiched between the majority SiO_2 ingredient, or add something that increases the surface area for water and nutrient content. This is where the role of well composted organic matter becomes important. Composting refers to the process where raw organic matter breaks down into its molecular components which consists of the larger more stable molecules primarily made up of (C) carbon, (O) oxygen and (H) hydrogen also known as carbohydrates, of which cellulose is the most common along with the more complex structured lignins. Protein molecules or their component amino acids are also constructed of C, O and H but also contain (N) nitrogen, and break down into much smaller structures that are easily absorbed by water and transported. They also comprise a small fraction, usually less than 10% of herbaceous vegetation and less than 5% of woody vegetation. As vegetation breaks down what is left behind is 99.9% carbohydrate such as cellulose and lignin, with the nutrient rich proteins quickly being eaten by microfauna (such as beetles, millipedes, worms, fungi and bacteria) and further reduced into some water soluble molecule such as nitrate or ammonia that is high in Nitrogen. Nitrogen, although 78% of the air we breathe is the nutrient needed by plants in greatest quantity and aside from water is usually the greatest limiting plant growth component. In pristine environments such as most of Montana the biggest sources of nitrogen are from symbiotic nitrogen fixing plants, and nonsymbiotic bacteria. Compost is thus valuable to soils as two stages: 1) during break-down when most of the essential protein derived nutrients such as Nitrogen and smaller quantities of Phosphorus and Potassium are released, and 2) as a soil amendment of humus, which is a slightly acid sponge of cellulose and lignin molecules that has great water holding capacity, can glue soil particles together, and that can weakly hold onto the nutrient rich protein soup created from the decay of other plants and animals.

Thus organic matter in the forest soil is good. But not so fast, because woody debris is not the typical organic matter put into compost for your garden. Good compost, much like good soup, requires good ingredients, and good ingredients can be determined by what is called the Carbon/Nitrogen ratio. In this case, the lower the ratio, the better the soup. Trees have different carbon nitrogen ratios for their different parts, which also relates back to their function. Growing cells need nutrients and have a higher protein component, thus leaves, twigs, fine roots and the cambium layer just under the bark have a reasonable nutrient ratio whereas the wood, that is no longer growing and only functions as a water or sugar transport mechanism has a very poor one. Consider that for conifers the carbon to nitrogen ratio is between 60-100 for needles and 270-700 for wood.

Phosphorus is even scarcer with C/P ratios ranging 200-2600 for needles, 400-13,000 for woody debris, 200-2600 for broadleaf shrubs, grasses and mosses (Manzoni et al. 2010). This makes sense when one considers that wood lasts so long because it has no nutritional value versus leaves. Young leaves that are actively growing are even more palatable. The broadleaf shrubs and forbs that deer and elk prefer to eat also typically have a higher sugar and protein content than the ones they do not like to eat. Broadleaf litter has 10 to 100 times more nitrogen and 10 times more phosphorus than conifer litter and 100 to 1000 times more nitrogen and phosphorus than woody litter. This is analogous to feeding your livestock alfalfa (high protein content) versus straw (no protein content). Decomposing organisms have C/N ratios closer to 8-22 for wood, 5-24 in litter and 7-10 in soil organic matter and in general soil microbes and soil organic matter have 1000 to 10,000 times higher nitrogen and phosphorus levels per unit of biomass than above-ground litter. (Manzoni et al. 2010).

So how does this relate to managing for forest soil productivity? Wood is a very nutrient poor substrate, which in turn produces a very nutrient poor compost. Its redeeming qualities are that it provides microhabitat for important soil creatures ranging from mice that get recycled by owls into better compost to the non-symbiotic nitrogen fixing bacteria previously mentioned, and that it can help retain moisture on the typically water limited soils of Montana. However, the latter two only happen once wood has decomposed into an advanced stage of crumbly rotted humus material and this can take a very long time on most Montana forest vegetation types. Many studies have been conducted looking into the impacts of tree harvesting that removes only stems, whole trees, and different levels of woody debris retention on soil nutrient dynamics (Miller and Seastedt 2005). Likewise studies have been conducted that examined the severity of the harvest – for example clearcutting versus thinning, on soil nutrient retention (Kranabetter and Sanborn 2003), and the impacts of nitrogen fixing plants and microbes (Jurgensen et al 1990, Binkley and Husted 1982). The results always tend to be highly variable though several trends do commonly occur. First, with the exception of Nitrogen, soil nutrient levels are strongly tied to the rate at which nutrients are released from the geologic parent material. Those rates can be enhanced or slowed by changing the soil temperature and moisture profile, which a tree harvest does by allowing more sunlight and thus increased soil temperature as well as snow and rain into a site, though these factors will vary considerably by site. Vegetation typically holds onto some nutrients of the site but the upper soil horizons are the primary nutrient bank. A soil with poor nutrient loading (sand) may therefore show some impacts of nutrient depletion if all vegetation is removed over a longer period of time, whereas as soil with high nutrient loading shows a significant buffering effect. Too many nutrients and they are flushed out of the system with rain and snow into streams.

The most organically limited nutrient, Nitrogen, is added by nonsymbiotic (free living) bacteria that grow best on decomposed moist wood at an estimated rate of around 2-1000 grams per hectare per year, with lower rates associated to dry sites (ponderosa pine, lodgepole pine, Douglas-fir) and the high rates associated with wet sites (spruce, cedar, hemlock). Alternatively, species of plants that have a symbiotic relationship with nitrogen fixing bacteria, of which there are more than 40 species common to Montana including alder, ceanothus, bitterbrush, buffaloberry, lupine and vetch families typically add nitrogen to soil at the rate varying from 100 to 10,000 grams per hectare per year. These plants all grow best in disturbed forest openings with adequate light, as do most forbs, shrubs and grasses. Finally, the valuable soil organic matter component needs to be examined. Forests typically do not have a very deep organic soil, though develop a 1-3 inch thick humus layer on top of the soil. Herblands and grass lands alternatively develop a significant organic soil horizon of 3-10 inches depth. This highly valued “top” soil is the result of fine root turnover into the soil from the forbs and grasses, that when combined with nitrogen fixing plants develops what are considered some of the most productive soils for growing plants, vegetable and trees. Forests that remain covered with trees for centuries do not develop such soils, and some of the most nutrient depleted soils in the world are those in perpetual forest such as tropical forest soils. Thus the body of evidence indicates that the best way to maintain and promote healthy productive soils, is by ensuring forests cycle between periods with trees and periods where the soil surface is dominated by forbs and shrubs including nitrogen fixing species. Such periods, brought on by disturbances such as logging or wildfire and lasting from 5 – 30+ years, may be invaluable by increasing true soil organic matter through greater fine root turnover and nitrogen deposition, and acting to recharge the soil for the next forest overstory period. Managing residual woody debris remains an important component, though perhaps more important for wildlife species and soil water retention as long as it reaches an advanced stage of decomposition. Too much woody debris has been shown to detrimentally suppress the growth of valuable shrub and forb species. After all, why do landscapers use wood chips as an effective grass and forb suppressant?

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Montana Master Forest Steward Program - An Advanced Curriculum for Forest Landowners

By: Martin Twer

One of the primary and most consistently offered forest-landowner oriented educational programs has been the Montana Forest Stewardship Program. The goal of this program is to help landowners assess their forests, develop short and long term objectives for their lands, and write a plan that reflects their personal objectives and resource potential for their land.

The initial Forest Stewardship Program is complemented by the multiple-workshop Montana Master Forest Steward Program (MMFSP). To gain the status of "Master Forest Steward," landowners are required to complete seven core courses and three elective courses for a total of ten courses.

Landowners who complete this program will be recognized with a certificate. Each course provides participants an opportunity to find out about a new subject, study a familiar topic in more depth, interact with and learn hands-on from professionals as well as fellow landowners, and complete a subject-specific supplement to their existing Forest Stewardship Plan. While most of the classes are one-day, some are offered as two days, either back-to-back or with a week in between to allow landowners to conduct an inventory of their land regarding a specific topic, and return a week later to discuss their findings and hear about possible management considerations.

In 2013 MSU Extension Forestry is planning to offer the following workshops:

- Forest Operations Safety
- Identification and Management of Insects & Diseases in Forest Ecosystems
- Noxious Weed Control in Forests
- Residential Heating with Wood
- GPS Applications in Forestry
- Using Google Earth to Map your Forest
- Alternative Forest Harvesting Practices (Advanced Silviculture)

Since we are still in the process of scheduling our workshops for 2013 please visit our online educational calendar <http://www.msueextension.org/forestry/calendar.htm> for the most current information.

From an educational perspective we think it is important but not essential that the landowners who enter the Master Forest Steward Program workshop series have completed the initial Forest Stewardship Workshop. The additional information and knowledge offered by the Master Stewardship Program helps adjust management plans to meet new landowner expectations and changes to their forests as well as the opportunity to pursue more in-depth training on specific topics.

For more information on this program see online at <http://www.msueextension.org/forestry/mmfsp.htm> or contact Martin Twer (MSU Extension Forestry BioEnergy Associate Specialist) by phone 406-243-2775 or email matin.twer@cfc.umt.edu.

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PLT - Early Childhood Educator Workshop in Missoula

By: *Christina Opegard and Cindy Bertek*

In 2010 Project Learning Tree (PLT) introduced an early childhood guide, *Environmental Experiences for Early Childhood* for educators that was designed especially for children ages 3 to 6. Over the past three years four workshops have been offered in early childhood and over 100 participants have attended. On February 2, 2013 the first early childhood educator workshop was offered in Missoula. The workshop was opened to early education students, public and private preschool teachers, Head Start teachers, private child care providers, and kindergarten teachers.

Participants were introduced to the guide and various PLT materials and grant programs. The workshop began with an ice breaker activity where each participant had a tag on their back with the name of a particular product that was made or came from parts of a tree. They had to ask others questions to try to determine what product they were which included berries, furniture, egg cartons, and food items that contained additives derived from trees i.e. gumdrops.



Next we went outside and visited some local trees and learned about how they grow, what they need to grow, and differences between trees by looking at their shapes, bark and leaves. We looked at shapes, smelled

tree needles (juniper is pungent!), and listened to the sounds around us as we took our walk.



Inside we discussed and demonstrated activities. At one table we made nature vests out of paper bags and paper cut-outs of leaves and other items found in nature. At another table we did paintings using conifer branches and needles as brushes. Discovery table activities give educators a working knowledge of the selected activities as well as tools to successfully integrate the activities in the guide to their present curriculum and promoting new ideas.

The workshop introduced topics to the educators and created understanding about the program, its use, and potential impacts on children's environmental awareness and understanding. Providing content knowledge in several different ways to prepare the educators to use the PLT materials with the children by providing samples of teaching strategies and activities that will help children become aware of the environment around them.

PLT workshops are offered around the state by trained Facilitators, some are offered to focus groups such as schools and environmental education groups and others are open for anyone with an interest in getting their hands on some great teaching materials.

Note from MSU Extension Forestry: Since 2008 when PLT was revitalized in MT, 415 educators, who reach upwards of over 1000 youth per year, have been trained in the use of PLT materials. For more information about PLT go to www.plt.org and visit our calendar throughout the year to find scheduled workshops.

The SUMO Science Club Walk in the Forest

By: *Cindy Bertek, Forest Stewardship Coordinator
& MT PLT Coordinator*

On a cool wet rainy day on the 1st of December, in the Bitterroot, twelve Daly Elementary 5th grade students, their three amazing fearless super leaders and teachers, one courageous father, and I went for a walk in the woods up Blodgett Canyon. These students are volunteer members of the renowned club known affectionately as the SUMO Science Club or "Students Understanding Massive Amounts of Science" (never mind that the acronym doesn't quite fit). The adventure began at the trailhead in the morning hours (which one of the valiant teachers, my daughter, managed to have me make three wrong turns and a few excursions to find). The students donned the fluorescent orange vests of the Forest Steward. They were awed and amazed at the weight of the vests and in curiosity began exploring the equipment in all the pockets.

The hike began and after a few hundred yards up the trail we stopped at the smokejumper memorial where the SUMO kids helped me enter coordinates to a nearby geocache into my GPS unit. (Note: **they** taught **me**.) A few SUMO's went the off in one direction with the majority working their way to the discovery of the geocache using their GPS units. One SUMO exchanged an elephant looking thing for spider from the cache. At that location the SUMOs discovered six species of conifer seedlings growing in a previously burned area. They also noted some mistletoe in the tall Douglas fir trees.

Up the trail the SUMOs hiked over rocks, snow and ice until they found a dense stand of six foot tall lodgepole pines. Around a boulder and down the slope, we crawled through the trees to stand in a small opening with a big ceonothus bush (the seeds are viable over 300 years). Here we discussed what trees need in order to grow and what the stand might look like over the years if it was thinned or not thinned. The SUMO's had a competition for poker chips (representing water, sunlight, nutrients, and (oh no!) beetles.

Further up, the SUMOs measured a huge ginormous ponderosa pine using clinometers and a loggers tape. Then, the SUMO's slipped and stumbled back down the trail where they ended their adventure by boring a few trees to inspect the growth and age then roasting some soggy but yummy

smares over a nice warm campfire. I stand corrected, "The s'mores where NOT soggy! Only the kids where!"

This walk was planned using PLT lessons and "Walk in the Forest" For more information on planning your own walk in the forest check out: <http://www.forestfoundation.org> or search online for "forest foundation walk in the forest".

Potomac School goes for a "Walk in the Woods"

By Amy Helena, DNRC



2012 "Walk in the Woods" location

Last October, 51 fourth through eight graders from Potomac Elementary went for a "Walk in the Woods". The Montana Society of American Foresters sponsored the event, which was held during the Fest Products Appreciation Week.

The purpose of "Walk in the Woods" was to go to a rural community that still relies on active forest management and teach children the importance of sound timber management, the forests around them and the forestry

professionals that implement the activities. Many of the kids in these communities are tied to the industry by their families. However few of them actually know what it is their family member does when they leave the house in the morning. Foresters and loggers tend to not promote what they do very well; in general they are doers not talkers.

The kids arrived on the DNRC state trust lands in the morning. They were split into groups with a mix of 4th-8th graders in each group. Each group spent 30 minutes at one of six stations. Stations included: **Surveying** section corner and bearing tree identification and meaning **Forest Insects and Disease** identification and impacts, **Forester** what a forester does and the tools they use **Tree and Native plant ID** species in our areas and historic conditions **Logging Equipment and Logger Sports** different machines used in forest management, historic logging methods including hands on cross cut saw demonstrations and **Wildfire** firefighting equipment and how forest conditions affect fire behavior.

For an October day the weather started out great, the kids were happy, running to the different stations and asking great questions. By mid-morning it started raining and the wind began to howl. All the students and chaperones were troopers until the top broke out of a tree in an adjacent stand impacted by mountain pine beetle. It was time to make a break for the bus! After the wind died down and the rain subsided, trash bag raincoats were constructed and the last of the stations were visited. The day ended with snacks and Society of American frisbees distributed to each student.

Event organizers were happy with how it turned out. As we all know educational opportunities such as this would not be successful without the help of volunteers and actively engaged science teachers. "Walk in the Woods" was lucky enough to have both.

The 2013 "Walk in the Woods" is in the planning process. Event organizers are actively seeking out science teachers in the northwestern corner of the state that would like to have their elementary students participate. If anyone knows of a teacher who may be interested contact Amy Helena (406) 542-4331.

Annual Forestry Mini-College Offers Comprehensive Series of Forestry Related Short-courses

By: Martin Twer

MSU Extension Forestry will be hosting the annual Forestry Mini-College on the campus of The University of Montana on November 2nd.

Forestry Mini-College is a one-day educational event for family forest landowners, forestry professionals and everyone interested in forestry, featuring a series of short classes on a variety of forestry topics and current issues.

Professionals from a variety of natural resources based agencies and industries as well as researchers from Montana State University and The University of Montana will present twelve concurrent sessions for participants to choose topics of greatest interest.

Full-length recordings of archived sessions as well as more information is available on the MSU Extension Forestry website <http://www.msuextension.org/forestry/fmc.htm> or by contacting Martin Twer, MSU Extension Forestry BioEnergy Associate Specialist, martin.twer@cfc.umt.edu, (406) 243-2775.

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MSU Extension Forestry Listservs

Submitted by: Martin Twer

MSU Extension Forestry has been working on some electronic methods to improve our ability to inform landowners and other interested forestry related groups about upcoming educational events in a timely and efficient manner.

To do this required the development of a set of listservs to which interested individuals can subscribe (opt-in) or unsubscribe (opt-out).

The new service is available from the MSU Extension Forestry website <http://www.msueextension.org/forestry/listserv.htm>

Currently the following listservs are available:

- FORESTRY - Forest/Woodlot Management (including Forest Stewardship Program, Master Forest Steward Program, and Forestry MiniCollege)
- MNRYC - Montana Natural Resources Youth Camp

- MT-PLT - Montana Project Learning Tree®
- WINDBREAKS - Backyard Trees and Windbreaks

We strongly encourage anyone interested in any of these topics and related information to take the time and make an effort to subscribe/opt-in to one or more of these services.

MSU Extension Forestry will soon retire currently used email lists and solely use these listservs to disseminate general information and programming updates.

If you have problems with or questions regarding the Subscribe or Unsubscribe procedures or general functionality, please feel free to contact Martin Twer (MSU Extension Forestry BioEnergy Associate Specialist) by phone 406-243-2775 or email martin.twer@cfc.umt.edu.

Forestry Workshops and Seminars in 2013

Forest Stewardship Workshops for family forest owners are taught by natural resource professionals as advisors. Landowners develop their own Forest Stewardship Plan. Participants learn how their forests function, inventory their property's resources, set goals and priorities for their forests, analyze resource trade-offs and understand environmental impacts of stewardship decisions, and develop their own Stewardship Plan.

WORKSHOPS	LOCATION	DATE
Forest Stewardship Workshop	Whitehall	May 9-10 & 17
Forest Stewardship Workshop	Thompson Falls	June 13-14 & 21
Forest Stewardship Workshop	Troy	July 18-19 & 26
Forest Stewardship Workshop	Mammoth	August 15-16 & 23
Forest Stewardship Workshop	Roundup	September 12-13 & 20
Master Forest Steward-Advanced Classes	Various Locations	See on-line calendar
Windbreaks and Shelterbelts	Baker, Sidney, Circle	May 21, 22, 23
MT Natural Resources Youth Camp (Ages 14-18 year olds)	Lubrecht Experimental Forest	July 14-19
Project Learning Tree <i>Environmental Educations materials for educators, including grant opportunities.</i>	Various Locations	See on-line calendar
Mini-College	University of Montana	November 2
MLA Workshops	Various Locations	See online calendar

Workshops and seminar updates are posted on our website at www.msueextension.org/forestry/calendar.htm

**Fourth Annual Forest Landowner Conference and
Annual MT Society of American Foresters Conference
Combine for Joint 2013 Conference!**

By: Bob Logan

The Fourth Annual Forest Landowner Conference will join with the Annual Montana Society of American Foresters Conference this year on April 19th at the Helena Colonial Red Lion Inn. This will be the first time the two conferences have been combined and the expectation is that the audiences that typically attend each conference will benefit from a co-conference format that will join family forest landowners, professional foresters, loggers, and others interested in Montana's forest at a single venue. Conference sponsors are excited to support a gathering of people that hold such a strong interest becoming better educated regarding the stewardship of Montana's forest resources. The conference will provide an outstanding opportunity to share good ideas and learn more about the challenges and opportunities associated with forest management in Montana.

The conference is primarily sponsored and organized by the Montana Forest Stewardship Foundation (MSFS), Northwest Management, Inc. (NMI), and the Montana Society of American Foresters. Additional financial support is provided by a variety of organizations. Speakers at the conference are well recognized experts in their field and come from industry, academic institutions, state and federal agencies, trade associations, and the natural resource consulting field. MT Governor Steve Bullock has been scheduled to begin the conference as the keynote speaker. "We're really excited about this year's conference," said Ed Levert, chair of the MSFS. "We've got a great group of speakers discussing some critical and timely topics. There are also some fun surprises thrown into the mix. I really think this will be our best conference yet."

"The Montana Society of American Foresters is excited as well," said Bob Logan with the Montana Society of American Foresters. "The agenda is outstanding and has something to offer everyone."

The theme for the 2013 conference is "Managing Montana Forests for Resiliency." As most forest landowners and foresters are aware, there are many challenges to maintaining healthy and productive forests for future generations. Science based information provides the necessary foundation for making the best long-term decisions. Topics at the conference will include Conservation Easement, Soils, Silviculture, Wildlife Management, Social Issues, and the status of Montana's Wood Products Industry and Log Markets.

The luncheon will include a fascinating presentation on Montana's grizzly bears. During the day there will be silent auctions items to bid. Anyone interested in forest stewardship is welcome to attend. The registration cost is \$35 per person and includes lunch. For more information or to register for the workshop go on-line to www.consulting-foresters.com and click on the Events Tab or call 406-442-7555 for a brochure.

**Montana Forest Stewardship
Foundation**

Letter from the Chair



If you were a graduate of a Montana Forest Stewardship Workshop prior to 2008 you are probably familiar with our non-profit Foundation. Formed by a group of some of the first graduates of the 1993 workshop program, the Foundation was formed to "educate and inform landowners, natural resource professionals and the general public about the science and ecology of forest lands, the many values derived from forested lands and the principles of sustainable forest land development". That need has not changed since then and the non-profit Foundation remains dedicated to this mission.

What we try to do is fill in the educational gaps that are not currently being covered by other organizations or agencies like MSU Extension Forestry. In the past this meant raising money from grants and other sources to support forest landowner education, especially the forest stewardship workshops. Today, grant money is hard to come by, so we have had to roll up our sleeves and begin doing things ourselves.

Our small group of volunteers publish the semi-annual The Forest Steward's Journal, which many of you currently receive. Since 2010 we co-sponsored with the Montana Association of Land Trusts conservation easement workshops in Libby, Kalispell, Lewistown, Dillon and Red Lodge. In 2011 we were also able to help sponsor a Forest Stewardship workshop in Condon with a \$2500 donation.

We will try to make a similar donation this year as we believe the Stewardship Workshop program is the foundation for forest landowner education.

On April 19th we will be co-sponsoring the fourth annual Montana Forest Landowner Conference with Northwest Management Inc. and the Montana Society of American Foresters. The Society of American Foresters elected to use this event as the basis for their annual state meeting. Every year we have seen this event grow in participants and sponsorships. We have no doubt that this will be our biggest event so far.

The theme of the conference will be "Maintaining Montana's Forests for Resiliency". One of our breakout sessions will be on conservation easements featuring forest landowners who are actively managing their property. A field trip will offered on April 20th to view varying wildfire fuel reduction projects in the Helena area. For further information contact Gary Ellingson at (406) 442-7555 or e-mail him at nwmanagemt@nmi2.com.

For information on becoming a member or volunteer for our Foundation you may email me at televert@kvis.net or send a letter to the Forest Stewardship Foundation, PO Box 1056; Libby, MT 59923-1056.

Ed Levert, Chair



Cost for the Conference is \$35 per person. Includes lunch.

A block of rooms has been reserved at the Red Lion Colonial Hotel. Call (406) 443-2100 for reservations. Mention that you are attending the **Montana Forest Conference** to receive the \$86 flat rate for a standard room.

Continuing education credits available for SAF Certified Foresters and MLA Accredited Logging Professionals.

REGISTRATION DEADLINE:

April 15th

- The Montana Forest Stewardship Foundation
- Northwest Management, Inc.
- Montana Society of American Foresters

Invite you to attend the

2013 Montana Forest Landowner & Montana Society of American Foresters Joint Conference:

Managing Montana Forests for Resiliency Friday, April 19

Red Lion Colonial Hotel/ Helena

Schedule

7:30-8:15AM / Registration

8:15-8:30AM / Welcoming Remarks

- **Ed Levert**, Montana Forest Stewardship Foundation
- **Bob Logar**, Montana Society of American Foresters
- **Gary Ellingson**, Northwest Management, Inc.

8:30-9:30AM / Morning Keynote Speaker

- Gordy Sanders, Moderator, Pyramid Mountain Lumber
- **Montana Governor Steve Bullock** - *Montana Forests*

9:30-10:00AM / Break with refreshments (View Silent Auction items)

10:00AM -12:00NOON / Morning Breakout Sessions (Choose one)

- A. Conservation Easements:** Gary Ellingson, Moderator
- **Glenn Marx**, Montana Association of Land Trusts with Panel - *Forest Land Management on Conservation Easements*
 - **Mark Schiltz**, Montana Land Reliance
 - **Brad Bauer**, The Nature Conservancy
 - **Bette Lowery**, Forest Landowner
 - **Tom Jones**, Forest Landowner

B. Managing for Resilient Soils: Bob Logar, Moderator

- **Jay Brooker**, NRCS, Resource Soil Scientist - *Utilizing the Web Soil Survey*
- **Peter Kolb**, MSU Extension Forester. - *How to really keep soils productive—challenging common paradigms*

C. Silvicultural Approaches to Ecological Resiliency:

- Bev Yelczyn, Moderator
- **Carl Fiedler**, Retired Professor, College of Forestry & Conservation, UM - *Dodging Bullets and Shooting Back—Silvicultural Strategies*
- **John Goodburn**, Associate Professor, Department of Forest Management, CFC, UM - *Adapting Silvicultural Systems for Resiliency*

12:00NOON - 1:30 PM/ Luncheon Buffet with Speaker

John Goodburn, Moderator

- **Jamie Jonkel**, Wildlife Conflict Specialist, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks - *Grizzly Bear Management and Monitoring*
- *Forestry Scholarship Association Presentation*

1:30 - 3:30 PM / Afternoon Breakout Sessions (Choose one)

A. Resilient Landscapes for Wildlife

Species Management: Bev Yelczyn, Moderator

- **Rick Northrup**, Wildlife Habitat Bureau Chief, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks - *Forest Management on Montana's Wildlife Management Areas*
- **Carly Lewis**, Wildlife Technician, USFS - *Wolverine/Fisher Monitoring in the Seeley-Swan*

B. Managing Forests for Social Resiliency:

Gary Ellingson, Moderator

- **Vincent Corrao**, President, Northwest Management, Inc. - *The "Anchor Forest" Concept: Managing across landscapes & ownerships*
- **Jim Burchfield**, Dean of the College of Forestry & Conservation, UM - *Issues of Managing Forests for Social Resiliency*

C. Economic Resilience of Forests: Scott Kuehn, Moderator

- **Todd Morgan**, Bureau of Business & Economic Research, UM - *Status of Montana Forest Product Markets and Infrastructure*
- **Arnie Didier**, Forest Business Network - *Forest Products Economic Resiliency*

3:30 - 4:00 PM / Break (Close Silent Auction)

4:00 - 5:00 PM / Closing Session:

Gary Ellingson and Bob Logar, Moderators

- **Dave Walters**, Vice-President, Society of American Foresters - *SAF's Brand Framework*
- **Closing Comments**

SPECIAL THANKS TO THIS YEAR'S CONFERENCE SUPPORTERS:

- F.H. Stoltze Land & Lumber
- Forest Business Network
- Idaho Forest Group
- Lincoln County Conservation District
- Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation
- Montana Logging Association
- Montana Wood Products Association
- Plum Creek
- Sun Mountain Lumber
- Tricon Timber
- U.S. Forest Service
- Wilbur Ellis



This Conference made possible through a grant from the USA Forest Service. The institution is a beneficiary of opportunity provider.

Conference Registration Form

COST: \$35.00 per person

QUESTIONS?

nwmnagemt@nmi2.com (406) 442-7555

REGISTER ONLINE:

Go to www.consulting-foresters.com then click on the **Events** tab at the top of the page. Payments may be made by credit card.

TO REGISTER BY MAIL:

Complete the adjacent form, place in envelope and mail along with payment to:

2013 Montana Forest Landowner Conference
c/o Northwest Management, Inc.
1417 Orange Avenue, Helena MT 59601

PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: *The Montana Forest Stewardship Foundation*

Please print NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP: _____

EMAIL: _____

IMPORTANT! Please indicate which breakout sessions you plan to attend:

Morning Breakout Session (Choose only one) A. B. C.

Afternoon Breakout Session (Choose one) A. B. C.

MISSOULA COUNTY LAND STEWARDSHIP AWARD NOMINATION

Submitted by: Gordy Sanders, Land Lindbergh, & Hank Goetz



O.W. (Bill) Potter has lived his entire 95 years on the property located at the confluence of the Clearwater River with the Big Blackfoot River. Bill and Betty own approximately 4,000 acres of timber and range

land and Bill is a partner in the E/L Guest Ranch, one of the oldest family-operated guest ranches in Montana. The Potter property has historically served as the land base for the E/L and has been managed primarily to support and enhance guest activities in addition to providing periodic income from the timber resource.

The irrigated hay fields, pastures and meadowland support approximately 90 head of horses that are owned by the E/L. Much of the property was logged in 1885 and the logs floated down the Blackfoot to a mill on the Clark Fork River near the present town of Bonner. As a result, much of the timberland is second growth ponderosa pine with intermingled small stands of old growth timber that escaped the early logging. Over the years Bill harvested logs that were used to construct guest cabins or milled into lumber on site. A series of riding trails traverse the property and extend outward to surrounding private and public lands.

As one would expect, Bill has not been as physically involved in the daily management of the ranch these past 10 years as he had been for the previous four decades. However he continues to supervise the management of the property to ensure that it meets his goals of long-term sustainability and support of E/L activities. As a result this nomination is based primarily on the work Bill and Betty did in the 1970s through the end of the century.

Bill basically manages two groups of resources: those associated with the agricultural operations and those associated with the forest land. He is very aware of the relationship and interdependence of the various resources and manages them in a sensitively holistic manner.

As an example of water management on his agricultural lands, Bill entered into a long term agreement with the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the Big Blackfoot Chapter of Trout Unlimited to limit the amount of water that he drew from the Clearwater River for flood irrigation. In exchange he received assistance to replace a power roll irrigation system that took water from the Blackfoot with a pivot. The project resulted in a more efficient irrigation system for Bill and ensured that fish have sufficient water in the Clearwater during periods of low flow. On a more personal level, Betty spends many hours annually during ditch drawdown moving trapped fish back to the river.

Bill has a multi-faceted noxious weed control program that includes spraying, both ground and helicopter; biological control; seeding of disturbed areas; and hand pulling.

A very common sight for travelers along the Sunset Hill Road is Betty hard at work in the spring and early summer pulling knapweed and oxeye daisies from the hayfields. The relatively small number of weeds on the property is testimony to Bill and Betty's years of persistent hard work.

Although Bill manages the natural resources associated with the agricultural operations in a very efficient and sustainable manner, his creative and innovative talents really shine in timber land management. Without doubt, he practices the most intensive forestry management in the Blackfoot and began concentrating on his timber resource in the early 1970's. His approach has been to "take the worst and leave the best." Or as he puts it: "I'll sell the hamburger first because I can always sell the steaks." His consistent approach over the years has been to take the dead, dying, deformed and diseased trees, leaving behind the best formed and healthy trees to grow and mature. He and his crew have hand-thinned hundreds of acres. He has invented numerous attachments for agricultural tractors to help in the removal and processing of small trees.

He uses the income received from the merchantable timber to improve stands that are unmerchantable and to purchase specialized pieces of logging equipment (feller-buncher, loader, full tree chipper) to more efficiently and economically manage his forest. He has established a permanent system of tree processing landings and skid trails so that he can harvest trees as needed on a periodic basis. Traditionally he did all the logging in the late fall and winter months to minimize soil damage and to use "snow roads" that precluded construction of more permanent roads.

The fruits of Bill and Betty's stewardship are evident in his timbered acres, which are among the very healthiest and productive in the valley – bar none.

Wildlife considerations have always played a prominent role in Bill's holistic approach to management. Historically they have accepted deer and elk utilizing their winter feeding grounds and hay meadows. Bill and Betty realize that wildlife are an integral part of the Blackfoot and have an intrinsic value to them personally and to their summer guests.

In harvesting operations they routinely leave unique large trees as "wildlife trees." Over the years they have identified wildlife corridors and hiding areas used by the deer and elk and have left dense young trees to provide cover for the animals. Winter logging proved to be a real benefit to the deer as they were able to feed on the moss and lichens in the crowns of the felled trees even as Bill came with the tractor to drag them to the landing. We believe Bill and Betty's stewardship culminated in 1998 when they, along with the help of other family members, donated a perpetual conservation easement on the ranch to The Nature Conservancy of Montana.

The easement recognized decades of stewardship, and ensured that the 4,000 acres will be perpetually managed for

sustainable agriculture, responsible timber, management, wildlife, appropriate recreational use and permanent open space.

Bill's greatest contributions came in the creative and innovative techniques and machinery he developed and used to harvest and process small trees using standard farm equipment. He began his forestry equipment development by trying to mow down young trees for pasture using a large cable and crawler tractor. When he realized that all he did was create a bigger mess, he tried to remove the trees one stem at a time with conventional logging chokers. After a few drags he not so affectionately named the chokers "hairy, kinky, and curly". This experience led to the development of a small grapple that attached to the three point hitch of a conventional farm tractor. The unit allowed him to back up to a pile of small trees, pick them up with the grapple, lift them off the ground and carry them to a landing for either processing or disposal. The grapple went through several iterations and was further refined by a commercial manufacturer in Bozeman who marketed the grapple throughout the country. Bill's equipment and logging techniques allowed ranchers, farmers, and other landowners with small equipment to efficiently manage their woodlots using equipment they already owned.

Bill's innovative techniques were not limited to his forested land. He replaced canvas dams in his flood irrigation ditch system with prefabricated lightweight concrete head gates – a technique that greatly increased irrigating efficiency. In the hills above the ranch he constructed small dams that were fed by ditches connected to permanent and ephemeral creeks. He captured water during spring runoff that was stored and later gravity fed to sprinkler lines in pastures on the ranch below. The widely spaced wire on his fences also enabled easier passage by deer and elk.

Although Bill and Betty have had to face the familiar agricultural difficulties of poor crops, adverse weather, high equipment costs, noxious weeds and such, his most difficult challenges have come in the stewardship of the timberlands. Bill's forestry stewardship was seriously tested in the late 1970s and early 1980s by a severe mountain pine beetle infestation in his sapling and pole-sized ponderosa pine stands. Now he not only had to deal with small trees, but trees that were dead and infected with the blue-stain fungus for which there was no market. Bill turned to various public and private partners for help. He increased harvesting efficiency by purchasing a mechanical feller-buncher to cut and stack the trees (the first such unit in western Montana).

He also purchased a small commercial rubber-tired skidder to move large trees longer distances.

He worked with the University of Montana's Lubrecht Forest, the U.S. Forest Service, Champion International, Pyramid Mountain Lumber, and Stone Container to develop markets for small, blue stained ponderosa pine trees. Finally he purchased a full tree chipper and conducted joint experiments with Stone Container to

determine if it was feasible to produce hog fuel and paper grade pulp chips in the woods. Before the advent of stringent air quality standards, he burned logging slash in large pits at the landing. In the enclosed pit the slash burned very hot, and minimized the amount of particles dispersed into the atmosphere. In summary, Bill addressed the challenges of cyclical beetle infestation with innovation and determination, and has succeeded in removing --most of the beetle killed dead and dying trees from his forestland.

Although reticent by nature, Bill loved to demonstrate his small-logging equipment logging techniques. He hosted dozens of demonstrations and field trips on his ranch for students, professional foresters, loggers, tree farm owners, conservation district members, and the general public. On all these occasions he asked folks to evaluate his approach and suggest how his equipment and system could be improved. With grants from the Forest Service and assistance from the Lubrecht Forest and the State of Montana, he conducted demonstrations at numerous sites throughout Montana. He helped establish numerous forestry thinning research plots on his land and on the Lubrecht Forest in studies conducted at the School of Forestry, University of Montana. Some of those studies are still active on his land 25 years after establishment, and may well result in Bill's most important contribution to future forest management in western Montana. His innovative efforts have been the subject of many articles in local newspapers and industry-related magazines. He continues to advocate his basic philosophy that forest and land stewardship is a long-term process, and not a short-term, profit maximizing endeavor.

In addition to his inherent land ethic, a major key to Bill's success as a land steward is his willingness to reach out to individuals and organizations that can help him achieve his land management goals. He has a unique ability to anticipate potential management problems and natural resource issues – both biological and social – and to address them before they become major obstacles. Space does not permit a full listing and descriptions of all the partners Bill worked with over his life time on the ranch, but a few examples follow.

In previous sections we have referred to the Potters' partnerships with private individuals and companies. The University of Montana, various federal and state agencies, and conservation organizations.

Four major conservation achievements stand out in Bill and Betty's lifetime of dedicated stewardship. In our opinion, their conservation easement with The Nature Conservancy that promotes long-term forest stewardship, continues sustainable agricultural practices, provides an annual harvest of forest products in perpetuity, And preserves 4,000 acres of open space is of utmost significance. Their active participation in the Blackfoot River Program and the Walk-In Hunting Area has provided recreational opportunities for the public for the past 35 years.

It must give Bill a great sense of satisfaction to drive by the old Stimson mill in Bonner with its log yard full of mountain pine beetle killed material waiting to be turned into pulp chips – a process he helped pioneer 25 years ago. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Bill and Betty have established an exceptional example of land stewardship, not only for succeeding generations of the Potter family, but for the general public as well.

If our nomination is successful, please be advised that under the present personal circumstances, Bill and Betty will not be able to attend any type of award ceremony. However, Bill's granddaughter, Juanita Vero, has agreed to stand-in on their behalf.



Probably the first mechanical logging-arch ever made – designed and built by Bill Potter and shown during 2005 annual Tree Farm conference visit to their ranch

Editors Note: Since this article was submitted O.W. “Bill” Potter Jr. has passed away at 95 years old of natural causes at his home in Greenough on Friday, Feb. 22, 2013. Bill is survived by his wife, Betty; son, William S. “Spike” Potter; daughter, Mary Potter Vero (Louis); granddaughter, Juanita Vero; grandson, Emmanuel “Boise” Vero (Debbie); and great-granddaughters, Sylvia and Nena.

True to his pioneering heritage, Bill was buried on the ranch in a simple but sturdy pine box constructed of wood from trees harvested out of his own timber stand that they milled and stored away decades ago. At Bill's request, there will be no funeral service. However, the E Bar L Guest Ranch plans to hold a memorial gathering sometime this summer.



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*A majority of STIHL products are built in the United States from domestic and foreign parts and components. "Number one selling brand" is based on syndicated Irwin Broh Research as well as independent consumer research of 2009-2012 U.S. sales and market share data for the gasoline-powered handheld outdoor power equipment category combined sales to consumers and commercial landscapers.

Montana Forest Insect and Disease Conditions, 2012*By: Amy Gannon*

The "Montana Forest Insect and Disease Conditions and Program Highlights" has just been completed for 2012. This report is a county-by-county summary of insect, disease, and abiotic damage to forests throughout the state. Much of the data is derived from the USFS aerial detection survey and is supplemented by field observations made by state and federal forest specialists. In 2012, approximately 24.3 million acres of Montana forests were surveyed from the air.

Mountain pine beetle continued to cause extensive mortality in high elevation 5-needle pines, although fewer acres of damage were reported in 2012 than in previous years. In lower elevations, mountain pine beetle caused mortality on approximately 150,000 acres of ponderosa pine and 490,000 acres of lodgepole pine. The outbreak is most evident in the Bitterroot Valley, Lewis and Clark National Forest, Deerlodge National Forest, and in the Big Hole. A total of 660,000 acres were impacted by mountain pine beetle in 2012.

Western spruce budworm defoliated nearly 1.5 million acres of primarily Douglas-fir forests throughout the state. Western spruce budworm has been active east of the Continental Divide for several years and is more recently building in the western forests. Mature trees can withstand subsequent years of heavy defoliation but understory trees are readily killed. Douglas-fir beetle can mass attack and kill trees that are severely stressed by heavy western spruce budworm feeding. This subsequent mortality has been observed in many areas in Montana impacted by western spruce budworm.

Mountain pine beetle and western spruce budworm are the most commonly witnessed forest insects, but are by no means the only ones shaping Montana forests. For example, root diseases are often overlooked but continue to cause damage or mortality on over 8 million acres. A multitude of other insects and diseases alter forest conditions as well.

The full report will be posted on the MT DRNC- Forest Pest Management Program website at: <http://dnrc.mt.gov/forestry/assistance/pests>. Identification and management resources are also available on this site.

NRCS Incentive Program Update*By: Chris Town*

The Natural Resources Conservation Service is a federal agency that assists farmers, ranchers, and forestland owners with technical advice and financial funding to complete conservation measures including wildfire hazard mitigation, pre-commercial thinning, tree establishment, and weed control.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is NRCS's primary tool for financial assistance. In fiscal year 2013, Montana NRCS received \$13 million; down \$10 million from the previous year. Despite the reduced funding, forestry continues to be a conservation priority for the state. Future funding levels are dependent on passage of a new farm bill. NRCS accepts EQIP applications throughout the year; however June 1, 2013, is the cut-off date to submit an application for funding in 2014, the NEXT calendar year. A critical element for funding consideration is to have a management plan for your property. In the case of forestland, that plan can be produced with the help of any forester, as long as the plan follows the template that has been accepted by NRCS and the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Tree Farm Program and Forest Stewardship Program.

You can find your local Montana NRCS field office at www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov, or a call to Lori Valadez at (406) 587-6969. Your local field office can help you learn more and get started with the application process.



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Solution 1: Thinning that removes some overstory trees and heavily thins the understory. Larger acreages (40+ acres) may make some revenue, smaller acreages will break even or have to pay for treatment.

Solution 2: Mature Douglas-fir was removed and mild thinning of understory was conducted. Generated revenue for landowner though careful logging was required. This stand survived a wildfire that could not sustain a crownfire when it burned into this stand under the cooler conditions of nighttime.



Solution 3: Removal of 75% of overstory and understory leaving dominant crown trees, followed by planting/natural regeneration of ponderosa pine. Generates initial revenue to landowner but requires reinvestment into land for woody debris treatment, planting and potential weed control. Best overstory trees based on potential longevity and stability should be left. In this case some Douglas-fir were left that will likely fail in next 10 years – would be best to leave ponderosa pines with good crowns as seen in background.

Mountain pine beetle epidemic ravaged lodgepole pine first and then moved into ponderosa pine. Douglas-fir remains. Any forest that is a monoculture runs the risk of catastrophic failure, thus managing to retain species diversity also helps prevent total forest loss.