



Minnesota Woodlands

MFA: an organization of, by and for Minnesota's private woodland owners and friends.

www.MinnesotaForestry.org

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Welcome News for Minnesota's Woodland Owners!

By Bruce ZumBablen, *chair, MFA Government Affairs Committee*



*Don Baoun,
Minnesota State
Conservationist
with USDA's
Natural Resource
Conservation
Service.*

In a sea of pessimistic news affecting forestry programs comes refreshing news from Minnesota's new USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) State Conservationist, Don Baoun. At a recent meeting of the Minnesota Forest Resources Council (MFRC), he discussed his personal interests in supporting and helping woodland owners with their forest management. He used the occasion to announce a pilot program that would allocate up to \$1 million for forestry cost-sharing practices starting Oct. 1, 2011. (The MFRC is composed of 17 members representing various forestry interests appointed to provide policy and program recommendations to the governor and legislature.)

The money would come from Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) funds that provide cost-sharing for a number of agricultural and forestry practices. Previously, woodland owners' applications for cost-sharing practices, such as tree planting, had to compete with applications for agricultural practices, such as establishing grass waterways, through an annual ranking process. The timing of the ranking was often too late for woodland owners to make plans to implement a practice (e.g. ordering trees to plant without knowing if their practice would be approved for cost-sharing).

The pilot program will enable forestry practices to be ranked and approved separately on a monthly basis. This should greatly help woodland owners in making plans to implement the practices. As a public agency, the NRCS is not immune to having its own share of budget problems; the Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) program will no longer be funded under the NRCS. But, some may continue to operate through other funding as 501 c 3 non-profit organizations.

Recognizing that public agencies like the DNR or Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) may find it difficult to provide technical assistance to woodland owners in the future, he mentioned that cost-share funds also may be used to fund technical assistance on NRCS cost-sharing practices by Technical Service Providers (TSP). TSP's are individuals, such as consultant foresters, who have applied to become TSP's and undergo training to address NRCS requirements.

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MFA's first Family Spring Field Day was held on Saturday, May 21st. A special guest, who thrilled both the kids and the adults, was Smokey the Bear. See more photos and information on Page 4 and on MFA's web site, www.MinnesotaForestry.org.

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MFA Board Actions

The MFA board meets every month. During January, April, July and October, the meeting is face-to-face at the Cambridge DNR Forestry office. During all other months, the meeting is held via conference call. All MFA members are welcome to sit in on the face-to-face meetings. See a list of meeting dates and board members elsewhere in this newsletter.

Recent board actions include:

Concluding discussion of the revised Life Membership category. MFA will begin offering this category again, after having withdrawn it more than 25 years ago. The Life Membership dues will be \$1,000. Of the proceeds, 20% will be used for current expenses and 80% will be put into MFA's St. Paul Foundation account. This is really an endowment account since, once funds are put into the account, the MFA board has no control over how they are invested or how much is distributed back to MFA each year (the distribution has averaged about 4% of the fund balance). Thus, new Life members are assured that their contribution will benefit MFA and its members far into the future.



Bill Becker

Meeting with Bill Becker, executive director of the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council, the group that controls distribution of funds collected under the constitutional amendment that increased our sales tax by 3/8ths of 1%. The council is responsible for recommending to the legislature ways to distribute about \$80 million each year. MFA is concerned because the council's philosophy has been to spend all the money on acquisition of land and permanent easements. Nothing has been allocated to caring for existing lands, either public or private. Mr. Becker was very helpful in suggesting ways that MFA might influence the council to include existing lands in their priorities.



Lyle Keller

Appointing Lyle Keller, Peterson, Minnesota, to the MFA Board of Directors. Lyle will be replacing Curt Kreklau, Alexandria, who resigned recently for personal reasons.

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He also mentioned other cost-sharing programs such as the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and the Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP) that have their own program requirements. **To find out more about EQIP and these other programs, contact your local SWCD, NRCS, or DNR Forestry office.**

In his closing comments, he expressed grave concerns over Minnesota legislative proposals to shut down the DNR tree nurseries that provide much of the planting stock for private lands. And, he is greatly concerned over the threat from invasive species wondering if the battle is already lost. With just one year into his new job, Don Baloun is showing he will be a real friend to Minnesota's woodland owners.

Now What?

Bruce ZumBahlen



(Note, this report is current as of the end of the regular legislative session but before any special session. Look for updated information, as it becomes available, on MFA's web site, www.MinnesotaForestry.org)

The day before the start of MFA's 2011 Annual Meeting on May 20th, the MN Legislature passed HF 42, the Omnibus Tax Bill, eliminating the Sustainable Forest Incentive Act (SFIA), a major setback to family-owned woodlands. Another bill, HF 1010, the Omnibus Environment, Energy and Natural Resources Finance passed shortly after, making drastic budget cuts to the DNR and requiring the closure of the General Andrews Tree Nursery, a major blow to private and publicly managed forests.

These bills along with other major funding bills were sitting on the desk of the Governor by the time of MFA's annual meeting. Would he sign them into law?

MFA's Government Relations Chair, Bruce ZumBahlen, described this legislative session as being one of the most frustrating and discouraging legislative sessions in his experience. MFA testified in opposition to these bills at hearings and led the effort of sending letters to the legislators under-signed by a range of like-minded organizations in opposition to these acts. Despite our best efforts it was to no avail.

But, you can relax, for now anyhow. The Governor vetoed the bills along with other major funding bills. Thus, there is no state budget at this time, save the Agriculture funding bill. Plans are now underway to prepare for a government shut-down in the event the Governor and the Legislative leadership cannot reach agreement on solving a projected \$1.8 billion budget deficit in a special session before July 1st.

Had the bills been allowed to become law, the DNR Forestry Division was looking at a 25% cut to its budget, greatly reducing its ability to serve woodland owners. Further,

its one remaining DNR tree nursery at Badoura would have been saddled with so many restrictions, that it would set it up for failure. The Governor, in his veto message to the Speaker of the House on HF 1010, specifically cited this and stated "the language related to the State Forest Nursery program is problematic and needs to come out of the bill."

The Governor did not address the SFIA in his veto message on HF 42, but clearly he is supportive of the program having included funding for it in his original budget proposal. But, what does this all mean to the 1,700 some woodland owners enrolled in the SFIA and another 420 applicants? Well, if there is no budget agreement come July 1st, the statutory dates for acting on SFIA applications and verification notices being sent to current SFIA enrollees would be hard to meet. And, if there is no agreement by October 1st, no payments would go out to SFIA enrollees. Sooner or later, the state will have a budget. But, a resolution to the budget deficit could affect many programs, including the SFIA. MFA will continue to do what it can with the Governor and legislators to minimize impacts to the SFIA.

A couple bright spots: woodland owners who applied for classification under the 2c Managed Forest property classification by May 1st of this year should not be affected. Their property taxes will be assessed at a lower 0.65 of 1% rate the following tax year. And, for those with woodlands as part of their agriculture homestead, will now be able to have the same benefits under the Green Acres program that were available prior to 2008.

Lenz Family Forest: Member Profile

See photos of the Lenz family on our web site, www.MinnesotaForestry.org

"I have a great idea," Jerry Lenz, who in 1971 was a young math professor at St. John's University, announced to his wife, Mary Lou. "Let's sell our house here in St. Joseph and move to a quaint log home on some land near Avon, about 20 miles from St. Cloud."

Jerry later said that an 1860s log home can lose its quaintness fairly quickly. Nonetheless, Jerry and Mary Lou lived there raising four daughters until they moved to their retirement home in St. Cloud in 2005.

The original piece of land was 11 acres to which another 70 acres were added a short time later. The land "wasn't good enough to be marginal farmland," Jerry said. It was, however, plenty good enough to grow trees.

Each spring was tree planting time for the Lenz family. "Eventually, we planted everything that was plantable," Jerry said. "Our daughters loved the land but they lost

most of their enthusiasm at tree planting time."

"Survival rate for the seedlings was nearly 100% except for those two drought years in the late 1980s. At that time, we picked out a few of our new seedlings to care for with buckets of water carried from the house. All of those seedlings survived while all the rest died."

In 2005, Jerry and Mary Lou sold the land to their daughter and son-in-law, Sue and Mike Guggenberger. Sue and Mike lived in the old log home for a year or so while they built a new house. Now the original home stands empty, awaiting a restoration plan.

Among his many retirement projects, Jerry is researching and writing the history of MFA from its founding in 1876 to the present. When finished, the work will document our claim that MFA is Minnesota's oldest conservation-related organization.

Family

Spring Field Days 2011



Sarah Greenheck, St. Paul.



The food was scrumptious and the silent auction a big success, all thanks to these ladies: Judi Hunder, Amy Kane and Jennifer Johnson.



Pat Lanin, Brainerd, handling Log-Rite products.



The Silent Auction was the biggest ever. One of the items offered was a Toro lawnmower.



Special guest, Minnesota's State Forester, Dave Epperly with Judith Tolander, Duluth and Brian Huberty, Hastings.



Event co-chairs, Jim Hunder and Barb Spears.



Dave Anderson, Classic Outdoor Sales, handling Central Boiler wood stoves.



Will Vagle, Elko, enjoyed the special events for kids.



Gary Hayden, Rochester and Mark Nammacher, Minneapolis.



Friday's Bus Tour, led by DNR forester Art Widerstrom, included stops at a timber stand improvement project, a pine thinning and a wood chip facility. Photo by John Wallin.

2011 Tree Farmers of the Year

Minnesota's Tree Farmers of the Year were recognized in an awards ceremony held in conjunction with MFA's Family Spring Field Days Banquet.



Mike & Dianne Beaufeaux, Hinckley, were recognized as Minnesota's Tree Farmers of the Year. Here Tom Witkowski presents them with two plaques plus a Stihl chainsaw. The Beaufeauxs will go on to regional competition and, if successful at that level, to national competition to be held in conjunction with the National Tree Farm Convention set for Albuquerque in July. Good Luck, Beaufeauxes! Photo by John Wallin.



Melvin and Sheila Rosholt were recognized as Tree Farmers of the Year for the northern region. The Rosholts live in Duluth while their tree farm is near Warba, which is south of Grand Rapids.



Tom Witkowski presents Richard Heil with his plaque as Tree Farmer of the Year for the southern region. Richard lives on his land near Millville, which is south of Rochester.

Man-made stage for amorous ruffed grouse?

Last year, Bill Marchel, who lives in Fort Ripley outside of Brainerd, made an artificial drumming log for ruffed grouse. How did he do it? Did it work? Here is his report:



Bill Marchel used a trail camera to catch this ruffed grouse using his artificial drumming log.



Bill Marchel

Last year, I created an artificial ruffed grouse drumming log and placed it on my property. My hope was the faux log would be to the liking of an amorous male grouse and become a stage from which he would launch his odd, thumping love notes.

I'm happy to report a male grouse has adopted my artificial log as his spot in which to attempt to woo a female!

During spring, male ruffed grouse perform one of nature's most fascinating courtship rites. The urge to procreate brings amorous male birds to a fallen tree – a stage so to speak – where they perform their thump, thump, thump breeding call with uncommon reliability. The drumming sound is made as the bird strikes the air with its wings vigorously enough to create a brief vacuum, causing in effect, a miniature sonic boom. A single drum can best be imitated by slapping your chest with an open hand.

The majority of the 70 acres I own is lowland, covered mostly by sedge meadows, alder and willow. Here and there grow tamaracks. There are a few balsam fir and spruce. The small spots of high ground I have are inhabited by bur oak.

Not prime habitat for ruffed grouse.

My property is home to several grouse though, in part because I have planted a variety of fruit bearing trees and shrubs. During most of the past winter, six or seven grouse fed on crab apples and high-bush cranberries – feasts purposely planted for the birds.

Each spring a male ruffed grouse occupies a drumming log located in one corner of the land. It's one of the few drumming sites available on the entire 70 acres.

To remedy that, last year I built and placed an artificial drumming log.

I assembled my man-made drumming log of wire and outdoor carpet by rolling up a six foot length of 2-inch by

4-inch welded wire fencing and fastening the carpet to the wire using cable ties – my first attempt at building a lover's lane for grouse.

Over the years I've observed numerous ruffed grouse drumming logs. Grouse prefer to drum from a downed tree that has its roots sticking up. A grouse will almost always choose his spot on the log about two feet from the root mass.

To satisfy this preference I affixed some extra wire to one end of the "faux log" and attached sticks and grass to simulate a natural root structure.

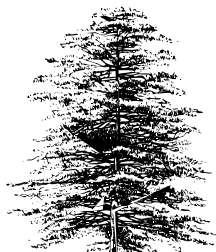
I placed the artificial drumming log among the willows where there were no other probable drumming sites. The entire undertaking was more of an experiment for me; first, to see if a grouse would use the faux log, and second, to determine if a grouse could be enticed to drum in the wet, lowland area if it had a suitable stage. If a grouse used my platform as its drumming spot, could the practice of placing imitation drumming sites in areas lacking natural location be used to boost local ruffed grouse population?

"A shortage of drumming sites is not likely to be a ruffed grouse population limiting factor," said Ted Dick, DNR grouse coordinator. "Brood rearing habitat, winter cover, and food sources must also be present. But artificial drumming logs could have a place if there is a shortage of natural logs."

Dick suggested a landowner might establish an artificial drumming log if they wanted to entice grouse to a specific location.

In any case, whether my experiment will heighten the local ruffed grouse population or not, I feel a certain amount of satisfaction knowing my trial was successful.

Next winter, when below-zero cold has me homebound, my plan is to create more artificial drumming logs. *To be continued...*



Meet a Tree **Black Walnut**

Black walnut, also called eastern black walnut and American walnut, is one of the most coveted native hardwoods. The fine, straight-grained wood is used for fine furniture of all kinds, interior paneling, specialty products, and gunstocks. The distinctive tasting nuts are in demand for baked goods and ice cream but, people must be quick to harvest them before the squirrels.

Black walnut typically grows as scattered individual trees or in small groups throughout the central and eastern parts of the United States. It is seldom abundant and usually found scattered among other trees. Pure stands are rare, small, and usually located on the forest edge. Walnut is common on limestone soils and grows especially well on deep loams and on good agricultural soils. Mature black walnut trees on good sites may reach 100 to 120 feet in height and 30 to 40 inches in diameter.

Depending on latitude, black walnut flowers generally begin to appear about mid-April in the south and progressively later until early June in the northern part of its growing range. The large edible nut ripens in September or October and drops shortly after the leaves fall. Good seed crops are produced irregularly, perhaps twice in five years. Open-grown trees may produce some seeds as early as five years old; however, large seed crops do not occur until trees are at least 20 years old and will continue for another 100 years. Young seedlings do not tolerate shade and regeneration normally develops from seeds that squirrels bury and fail to recover. Normal winter temperatures usually cause seeds to break dormancy the following spring, but germination may be delayed until the second year.

Black walnut may not always be a friendly neighbor. Substances found in its leaves, bark, nut husks, and roots can be toxic to some tree species. While some species are apparently immune to the toxins, others including paper birch, red pine, white pine, and apple are sensitive to it and tomatoes are especially susceptible.

Black walnuts can produce income throughout their life, first with an annual harvest of nuts and then through sale of the timber. Jim Brooks, consulting forester from Lake City, says the DNR is paying around \$5 per bushel for black walnuts. Most non-veneer quality mature black walnut trees, with about 150 board feet, are worth \$125 to \$150. But, big, veneer quality trees can bring huge dollars. Jim knows of one tree that sold for \$20,000!

Did you know – Ground walnut shells were used in World War II to clean airplane pistons? This “nut shell” blaster idea was then carried into the auto industry where manufacturers used shells to de-burr precision gears.



Photos: Dave Hanson, University of Minnesota

For more information, check the Walnut Council's web site, www.WalnutCouncil.org.



Featured speaker was Master Naturalist Cheryl Culbreth who is passionate about controlling buckthorn and garlic mustard.

Field Day at the Petersons'

John & Mary Peterson hosted a field day on April 27th at their Delano farm. The Petersons care for 25 acres of a “Big Woods” type forest on the farm which has been in their family since 1899. The topic of the field day was “Buckthorn and Garlic Mustard Control – A Hands-On Approach”. The day began with presentations in the wood shop (heated with Buckthorn) and finished with control practices in the woods.

The Petersons have a lot of experience in battling both of these invasive plants. After John & Mary saw the devastating effects of Buckthorn and Garlic Mustard at a field day event in 2008, they went to work. After three years, the buckthorn is nearly eliminated and the Garlic Mustard is under control. Over 800 hours has been spent on the effort. The big news this spring was seeing a huge drop in the Garlic Mustard seed bank as evidenced by germinating plants.

Thanks to invasive species, a landowner's work is never done!

Upcoming Events

Find more events, and more information on these events, at the MFA website, www.MinnesotaForestry.org or by calling MFA at 218-326-6486.

June

Tuesday, June 14

- **Harvesting Birch Bark** (Grand Rapids). Event sponsored by the Minnesota Women's Woodland Network. For more information or to register, contact Julie Miedtke at miedt001@umn.edu or 218-327-7365.

Wednesday, June 29

- **12:30pm Forest Management Field Tour** (Boulder Creek Environmental Learning Center, Duluth). Don't miss this opportunity to see modern logging equipment and sustainable forestry in action and to ask questions of professional loggers and foresters. To register, email John Geissler at JDGeissl@d.umn.edu or call 218-721-3731.

September

Friday & Saturday, September 16 & 17

- **9am each day North Star Expo** (Itasca County Fairgrounds, Grand Rapids). This event, with both indoor and outdoor exhibits and events, is for loggers and private woodland owners who enjoy seeing the "big machines" in action. The event opens at 9am each day. On Friday there will be a social hour at 5pm and BBQ with door prizes at 6pm.

• Supercharge Your Trees!

This all day session will be repeated three times on the dates below. In each event you will learn about intermediate stand treatments that you, as a woodland owner, can accomplish with a pruning shear, a chain saw or with the assistance of a professional timber harvester. These treatments can contribute to the future health, vitality, and productivity of your woodland, no matter its size! This event is FREE but limited to 25 registrants. Register online at www.MLEP.org/TrainingOnlineReg.htm. For more information contact Kathleen Preece via email at Katy@PaulBunyan.net or via phone at 218-759-7730.

Thursday, July 7

- **Sonnenberg Farm, New York Mills**

Wednesday, August 31

- **Aitkin, MN**

Friday, October 7

- **Brimson, MN**
(located north of Two Harbors)

2012 PLANNING AHEAD FOR 2012

Friday & Saturday, March 9 & 10, 2012

- **Million Acre Conference** (Duluth Entertainment & Convention Center)

Friday & Saturday, May 18 & 19, 2012

- **MFA's Annual Meeting and Family Spring Field Days** (Forest History Center, Grand Rapids)

For MFA members, the two best online sources of woodland information are the MFA web site, www.MinnesotaForestry.org and www.MyMinnesotaWoods.UMN.edu.

Here's what's new at MyMinnesotaWoods:



- Supercharge your woods: Intermediate treatments workshops
- Northern Minnesota phenology report
- The difference between seed zones and plant hardiness zones
- Tick-borne illnesses on the rise
- Woodland Stewardship book winner
- Other items you may have missed
- Upcoming events, news links, poem of the month, and more.

Have a question about your woodland? Post it on the Discussion Board. You may be surprised at how many good responses you get!

For the live version, with much more info on each topic, visit MyMinnesotaWoods.org

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