



Minnesota Woodlands

www.MinnesotaForestry.org

The MFA works on behalf of family forest owners, through education and advocacy, to promote stewardship of woodlands.

Minnesota Forestry Association (MFA)

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MFA Regular Board Meetings

DNR Office
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Taxes!

Most MFA members have made their decision regarding state taxes, choosing between **SFIA**, the **2c classification**, **Green Acres** and the new **Rural Preserve Program**. For more information on all four of these state tax-saving programs, click on "Taxes" on MFA's website, www.MinnesotaForestry.org.

At this time of year, peoples' minds are on **Federal taxes**.

Geary Searfoss, a certified public accountant who specializes in woodland taxes, says there are three ways to hold timber property for tax purposes:

- As a business,
- As an investment,
- As a hobby.

From a tax standpoint, holding the property as a **business** is the most advantageous because all expenses are deductible against any and all other income. That is, if you were to hold your woodland as a business and had \$10,000 in expenses last year associated with the woodland but no income, the \$10,000 can be deducted against other income, such as earnings reported on W2 from a job. Of course, IRS will look closely at your deduction and you had better be prepared to show that you are actually operating your woodland as a business with a profit motive.

Those who classify their woodland as an **investment** can deduct expenses but only if they itemize deductions on a Schedule A.

Most small private woodland owners are **hobbyists**. As such, we do not have to convince the IRS we are in it to make a long term profit. We can deduct expenses but only up to the amount of income generated. This calculation is made on a year-by-year basis so the receipt of income this year will have no bearing on expenses next year. As with an investment, hobby expenses are itemized deductions.

Have Questions About Federal Taxes?

Click on "Taxes" on MFA's web site, www.MinnesotaForestry.org. Also, the Minnesota DNR has contracted with Geary Searfoss, a Winter, Wisconsin-based CPA, to provide free tax information to Minnesota's woodland owners.

Geary N. Searfoss, CPS
Phone: 715-266-0358
E-mail: GSCPA@CenturyTel.net
Web: GSCPA.biz



Geary Searfoss is both an accountant and woodland owner.

One Really Good Tax Break

The government does give private woodland owners one really good tax break: We can deduct up to \$10,000 of reforestation expenses on a yearly basis. To qualify for this deduction, we do not need to treat the activity as a business. We don't need to itemize either, as the amount can be deducted in the "Adjustments" section of the front page of Form 1040.

Eligible costs include all out of pocket expenses incurred in the planting of trees such as site preparation, seed or seedlings, labor (not your own – sorry!), tools, etc. The property being planted must be at least one acre and contain trees of "significant commercial quantities." Specifically excluded are planting of trees for shelter belts, ornamental trees, or Christmas trees.



2010
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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:

Electing officers for 2010:

President	John O'Reilly
Vice President	John Saxhaug
Treasurer	Dennis Thompson
Secretary	Curt Kreklau
Sergeant at Arms	David Lindroth

Finalizing agreement with the state Tree Farm Committee to provide complimentary copies of *Tree Farming for Better Forests* to MFA members through 2010.

Approving an agreement with attorney Kevin Walli to look out for Minnesota's private landowner interests during the 2010 legislative session. Kevin has performed this service for the last several years, including the sessions in which the Sustainable Forest Incentive Act (SFIA) and the new 2c property tax classification were adopted.

Finalizing plans for MFA's Spring Field Day and Annual Meeting. See the flyer enclosed.

Approving the Member Survey to be included with the newsletter. See results in this newsletter.

Need Maple Syrup Supplies?

Anderson's Maple Syrup, Cumberland, Wisconsin, has everything imaginable for the maple syrup producer. See www.AndersonsMapleSyrup.com or call 715-822-8512.

And the survey says...

To the nearly 200 MFA members who took the time to respond to our Member Survey, we say **"Thank You!"** Here is what you said:

Do you own woodland?

73% do own woodland, ranging in size from one acre to 6,400 acres (wow!)
23% own a farm/woodland combination with the woodland ranging from 15 to 1,700 acres
7% do not own woodland

Do you have a Stewardship Plan?

90% of MFA members who own woodland have a Stewardship Plan

Why do you own woodland?

Members could check more than one reason for owning woodland. Here are the main reasons:

80% Enjoy planting trees and managing the woods
70% My legacy for my family and others
70% Enjoy the outdoors
65% Hunting
60% Wildlife
45% Income from timber production
40% Live here
22% Investment: hope to sell at a profit some day

Other comments:

A century farm
A place to relax; Quiet peaceful living;
Quiet retreat
Recreation
Also manage for aesthetics – For example, I leave a few red maples for all fall color
Away from the city
Christmas trees
Conservation
Enjoying the woods!
Firewood for heat
Fishing and gardening
Horse farm
Maple syrup
Motor sports
Sentimental
Skiing/hiking trails
Stewardship of God's land
Trapping
Watershed protection

Taxes

45% are enrolled in SFIA
17% have the 2c classification
20% have Green Acres or other

Tree Farm

40% are enrolled in Tree Farm
25% are not enrolled but are interested

When I (we) no longer own the land, it will

60% Stay in the family
10% Be sold
25% Undecided

Occupation

45% are working
55% are retired
35% are working or did work in the field of forestry

Woodland Advisor

15% are Woodland Advisor graduates
35% have taken classes
35% have not taken any Woodland Advisor classes

MFA's Mission. *Of two paths described*

70% said MFA should "Encourage the retention and sustainable management of family forest lands"
30% said MFA should "Serve private woodland owners"
There were many comments indicating the two paths are very similar and not mutually exclusive.

The Newsletter

40% said "Very Useful"
56% said "Useful"
4% said "Not Useful"

Of supplemental materials sent with the newsletter

30% said "Very Useful"
55% said "Useful"
10% said "Not very useful"
A typical comment was, "Some are useful; some less so"

Minnesota Forest Scene, the newsletter of the U of M Forestry Department

85% said "Very Interested" or "Somewhat Interested"

Field Day Events

50% have attended one or more and found them to be Very Enjoyable or Enjoyable
47% have not attended a field day event
A typical comment was, "Still working so time is short"

Computer

80% have a computer; 20% do not
56% have visited MFA's web site and, of those, 90% found it Very Useful or Useful

Visit Other Web Sites

Two dozen web sites were mentioned with MyMinnesotaWoods.org being mentioned most often

Would you consider running for the MFA Board?

12 people said yes, they would consider it. Thank you! Your names will be passed on to the nominating committee.

Like to receive periodic updates via e-mail?

Half of those who responded to this question (74) said yes and half said no.

Other comments:

- "Am presently local chapter president. I enjoy classes and talking to others with similar interests." Robert Asproth, Mahtowa, MN
- "Great program." Jeff Sell, St. Cloud, MN
- "Great work! MFA keeps me informed on what's happening in forestry!"
- "Great work on SFIA but am concerned State will not fund it due to budget cuts." David Schulstad, St. Francis, MN
- "Hopefully MFA is an advocate for me and other forest owners particularly at the State government level." Clair Fetzer, Bemidji, MN
- "I am blessed to have a son who loves the woods and is working with the Rice County Forestry Service to continue what his father started!" Barbara Edstrom, Umatilla, FL
- "Interesting to hear about Tree Farmer and possible connections." Norton/Noyce, Warba, MN
- "Keep up the great work!" (A similar comment was included by more than a dozen members.)
- "MFA does a very good job in Minnesota. I like the workshops with Extension (U of M). Barb Spears does a nice job." Michael Greenheck, St. Paul, MN
- "Minnesota forestry-related organizations and agencies need to provide/seek long-term advice to owners regarding managing for pest problems which in spite of all the press are unlikely to be controlled. Examples include Ash Borer, Long Horned Asian Borer, etc." David W. Davis, St. Paul, MN
- "More age/gender diversity would strengthen the Board's perspective."
- "Please graph/disclose results of survey to membership, please." Jeff Angel, Lindstrom, MN
- "Small farms 10 acres to 100 acres cannot use the lumber or trees for farm income. This should change!" Donald Scott Sr., Osakis, MN
- "Thanks for the hard work by the Board!"
- "The organization needs to ensure that the membership understands how their dues are being used. I don't recall any info on the financial status of MFA or how many members we have." Larry Taylor, Bovey, MN. *Editor's note: Good suggestion. The board is due to approve the 2010 budget at its next meeting. It will then be summarized in the Board Actions section of the next newsletter.*
- "While MFA is oldest advocate for private woodland owners, it remains plateaued in infancy, as compared with Wisconsin and national. Is it serving the need as a result?"

If you would like to add comments on any subject, the place to do it is on the Discussion Board which you can reach through the MFA website, www.MinnesotaForestry.org.

Member Profile: Jim Columbus

Not all MFA members own hundreds of acres of woodland. Some have a city-size lot with a few trees. Others, like Jim and Sally Columbus, have an acre or two. The common thread for all is the enjoyment they get from learning and talking about our forests and woodlands.

Jim and Sally Columbus live in Grand Rapids. Their house sits on an acre and a half wooded lot adjoining five or six acres of neighbors' woods located on a small lake. Walking down a trail to a fire pit on the shore of the lake, Jim said, "I tell my neighbors that this is the nicest spot in Itasca County and we shouldn't be telling everyone about it."

Jim's interest in forestry goes back to the early 70s when he worked with his father- and brother-in-law harvesting logs from three to five acre parcels. "We worked with two old tractors and an old truck to haul logs which, depending on the species, we sold for firewood, for railroad ties or to Blandin Paper. It was part-time work that kept us in good shape. I particularly enjoyed the fresh air and solitude of the woods."

In 2002 Jim signed up for a Woodland Advisor training program that was to be held in Grand Rapids. This was the last time Woodland Advisor training was conducted in a series of five Friday evening – Saturday sessions in February and March. Currently, Woodland Advisor training is now conducted in a series of individual classes with attendees accumulating credits toward a degree.

One of the benefits of the old five-session approach was the camaraderie that developed among classmates. Besides Jim Columbus, members of that class who still see and work together on various projects include former MFA president John Bathke, former MFA board member Bob Sonnenberg, current MFA board member Jim Hunder and current MFA president John O'Reilly.

Big Contribution

A couple of years ago, Jim and his neighbors were able to make a \$1,500 contribution to the Gillette Children's Hospital through the Log a Load for Kids program. Jim observed that the big-tooth aspen on their adjoining properties was mature and, if not harvested, would begin to fall down. He talked with his neighbors, Rich Swan and Bertha and Tom Hamilton who agreed to the harvest.

In all, Jim and his neighbors took down 70 aspen trees that amounted to 32 cords. Six cords were saved for firewood and the rest was purchased by Blandin Paper. Rather than dividing up the check, the neighbors agreed to donate the proceeds to Log a Load for Kids.

Jim, who has worked for the City of Grand Rapids for the past 13 years, is able to put some of his interest in trees to good use on the job. Among many other duties, Jim is the city's tree inspector. Thanks to his Woodland Advisor training, he can answer some questions and knows where to go for answers to others. He says some of the people he looks to for help include Julie Miedtke at U of M Extension, Keith Matson, retired forester, and Mike and Jana Albers, DNR forest health specialists.

Jim says, "As time goes on, I appreciate more the succession of the forest and how things tie together."



Top: Jim Columbus at what he calls "The nicest spot in Itasca County", the neighborhood fire pit on the shore of Horseshoe Lake.

Middle: Jim says, "The new Pacific Summit wood stove takes care of most of our winter heating needs. We used to burn six cords over the winter but this new stove is efficient enough that we'll burn only about four cords." (www.PacificEnergy.net)

Bottom: Jim has worked for the City of Grand Rapids for 13 years. Among his many duties is driving this huge grader.

Northwoods Forestry Coop Field Day

Held on Kent Montgomery's land near Brainerd, September 19, 2009



Left: Bob Krause, Little Falls, discusses the tree he is about to fell.

Bottom: Pat Lanin, Brainerd, demonstrates a power winch.

Top right: Logs ready for sawing.

Bottom right: Gary Bradford, Aitkin and coop president, discusses the coop's Peterson Sawmill.



The Wisconsin Woodland Leadership Institute Succumbs to Funding Cuts

John DuPlissis, Forestry Outreach Specialist, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, announced recently that the Wisconsin Woodland Leadership Institute will not be conducted in 2010 due to funding cuts. Founded by DuPlissis in 2001, the Institute has been conducted each year in three weekend sessions. The purpose has been to motivate, educate and equip woodland owners to become leaders in their local communities on issues related to forestry.

Beginning in 2005, Minnesota residents were invited to apply and 20 were admitted to the Institute and successfully completed the work. They are:

John O'Reilly, Hinckley
 Chad Dayton, St. Paul
 John Saxhaug, Minneapolis
 Jim and Judy Hunder, Plymouth
 Chris Baudhuin, Winona
 Curt Kreklau, Alexandria
 Jim Ballenthin, Backus
 Anne Oldakowski, Wadena
 Chuck Erickson, Battle Lake
 John Rose, Linderwood

Paul Hoppe, Ogilvie
 Bill Ulvi, Duluth
 Ken Nichols, Oronoco
 Ken Quass, Pine River
 Gary Brunkow, Edina
 Germain Davison, Hokah
 Neal Chapman, Roseville
 Brian Huberty, Hastings
 James Bursey, Minneapolis
 Arlene Roehl, Long Lake

All of the Minnesota participants were enthusiastic about their experience and many of them have gone on to leadership positions with MFA and other organizations. Mike Reichenbach, Extension Educator, University of Minnesota Extension, served as a mentor for many of the Minnesota participants and helped teach elements of the Institute.

DuPlissis is hopeful that funding can be obtained in the future and the Institute re-established.



Top: John DuPlissis

Above: A small but very memorable graduation ceremony was held each year at Aldo Leopold's shack. Shown here are the 2009 Minnesota graduates Brian Huberty, James Bursey, Arlene Roehl, Neal Chapman plus Mike Reichenbach.

Field Day at Allen Billstrom's, Mora

October 10, 2009



Steve Nelson, consulting forester.

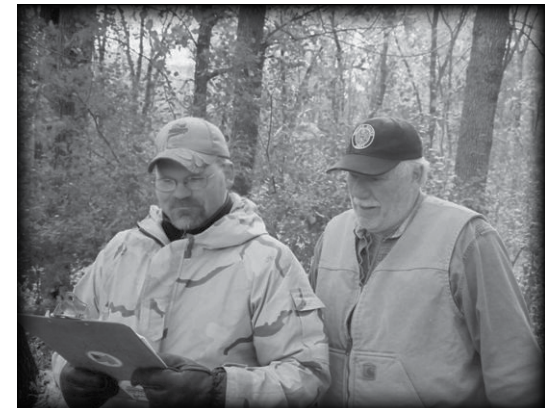


Above: Dana Raines, Onanegozie Resource Conservation & Development Coordinator, explaining woody biomass in a cut over hybrid poplar stand.

Left: Bitternut Hickory nut.



DNR foresters Mike Dahl and Bobby Gajewski discussing timber stand improvement in a red pine stand.



Above: Chisago County SWCD forester Jason Rehn and landowner Allen Billstrom.

Left: Foresters Mike Dahl, Bobby Gajewski and Steve Nelson discussing options in a mixed hardwood stand.

The Family Forest – 50 Years from Now

This story about “*The Family Forest in 2060*” was developed by participants of the 2009 Woodland Leadership Institute. The process challenged the participants to think about their forest, family forest ownership and their views of forest ownership within the context of an unknown future. While all participants did not agree on what the future would be like, they all agreed that the following story is plausible and that learning occurred during the process.

As a part of this process the authors looked through a variety of technical and non-technical forestry publications from the late 1950's to help them understand the changes that have occurred over the last fifty years and to try and understand what might be possible 50 years from now. Each of the

topics presented in this story can be debated and challenged. A deeper understanding of current forest management, incentive programs, and policies regarding private land can be gained through debate and discussion of the propositions stated in this article.

Minnesota authors: James Bursey, Neal Chapman, Brian Huberty, Arlene Roehl; and *Wisconsin authors:* Brian Gray, Diane Mroczenski, James Mroczenski, Chuck Pogorelcnik, Kevin Ramsey, Gary Rieniets, Edmund Shields, Tom Thompson Jr. The process was coordinated by Mike Reichenbach, Extension Educator, University of Minnesota Extension and by John DuPlissis, Forestry Outreach Specialist, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point.

The year is 2060, private forest land is owned by a combination of families, limited liability companies and individuals. The families and individuals are independent, come from a variety of disciplines, are physically active and are on average 40 years old. This was the result of successful efforts in the early part of the century to plan for the transfer of forestland from one generation to the next. In many cases the transfer of land skipped one generation. The land, the goals for its management, and the personal sense of place were passed from grandparents to grandchildren.

In the Midwest, **the climate is both warmer and dryer than in 2010**. Changes in forest composition from aspen cover types and northern boreal forests to a northern hardwood and pine dominated forest are evident. In part, the transition in forest cover types has been accelerated by the impact of exotic species. Exotics have been responsible for killing trees stressed by a changing climate. In an effort aimed at keeping land in productive forest cover, landowners have been provided incentives to plant species more suited to the warmer and dryer climate. This represents a significant shift from the philosophy of planting native species that were present in 2010. The change in climate has been a challenge and landowners are adapting.

Government programs for forestland owners have become more responsive to landowner and societal needs. This was the result of the need to balance the demand for wood products, the need for carbon sequestration, and the need for open spaces for a growing urban population. The aesthetic, economic and health value of family forests is recognized as an asset by the local community, the state's residents and the policy makers. This is reflected in reduced property tax assessments for landowners who agree to maintain their land in forest.

The emphasis has shifted from growing pulp to growing high quality hardwoods and conifers for lumber production. Timber stand improvement provides a source of income. The value of decorative wood products and hardwood lumber provides an economic incentive for forest management. Conifer plantations provide a wide range of economically valuable products, including lumber, pulp and energy production. Mixed hardwood forests are being planted. Carbon credits are a source of income for nearly 80% of family forestland owners. The combination of the right environment, policy, and market incentives to grow trees has increased interest in family forest management.

Societal interest in forestry and in understanding forest management on private lands is evident. Students from area schools work with landowner associations to visit family forestlands. Government funding is used to secure long-term arrangements with private landowners for use of their land for educational purposes. These arrangements include funds for the schools to conduct the trips, payments and tax incentives to landowners and contracts with landowner associations. Education at a young age helps sustain interest in forests and support for the family forestland owner.

The culture of owning a second home or small rural acreage common in 2010 has changed to that of a focus on the convenience, efficiency and costs savings found in city living. A reduction in wood use for residential building has occurred as people are moving from the rural areas and rural properties back to the cities. The high cost of energy and the efficiency gained by living in urban residential and multifamily housing are the main drivers of this trend. These factors have also reduced the fragmentation of rural lands. The reduction in wood use for construction has been balanced by an increase in wood use for energy production.

Communication technologies and the ability to remotely monitor forest stand conditions have merged. Landowners who have an interest in harvesting their trees are installing monitoring devices that can be used to alert loggers as to when to time their harvest operations to minimize soil disturbance. The cost of the technology is more than offset by the protection of the natural resources. Environmental organizations are asking state legislators to make use of the sensors mandatory on sites where harvest is adjacent to wetlands, streams, and lakes. Some landowners are using monitoring devices to deter theft of high value trees and to optimize the sale of these trees. For example, the device can be implanted into the base of the tree to monitor tree health, a radio signal is used to send data directly the owners website via wireless internet connection. If the tree is cut, the monitor registers the change in tree health and automatically sends notification to the owner. This is similar to the home sentry services available in 2010.

What will your family's woodland be like in the year 2060?

Post your thoughts on the Discussion Board through www.MinnesotaForestry.org

Fun Forestry Fact:

Quaking Aspens often reproduce through a form of cloning by sending out lateral roots, which in turn sprout clones of the original tree. Because all the trees in a grove are genetically identical and are interconnected via the root system, it can be said that the grove is one large organism. The largest such aspen grove, named Pando, is located in the Wasatch Mountains of Utah. It covers 106 acres and has 47,000 stems that weigh an estimated 13 million pounds!

Upcoming Events

For more information on these or other events, go to www.MinnesotaForestry.org or call MFA at 218-326-6486

February

Thursday, February 11

- 3:30 pm Property Tax & Incentive Payments for Forest Land (Lewiston)
- 6 pm Climate Change and the Minnesota Woods (Preston)
- 7 pm Property Tax & Incentive Payments for Forest Land (Lewiston)

Tuesday, February 16

- 12 noon Property Tax & Incentive Payments for Forest Land (Online). For content and registration details, see "Upcoming Classes and Events" on www.MinnesotaForestry.org.
- 2 pm Carbon Credit Payments for Wooded Property (Cloquet)
- 6:30 pm Managing your Woods for Grouse with Mike Larson-DNR Wildlife (Grand Rapids)

Saturday, February 20

- 9 am Winter Tree Identification (Duluth)
- 12:30 pm How Trees Grow & Top Ten Insect & Disease Problems of the Southern Boreal Forest (Duluth)

Wednesday, February 24

- 3:30 pm Property Tax & Incentive Payments for Forest Land (Lanesboro)
- 7 pm Property Tax & Incentive Payments for Forest Land (Lanesboro)

Thursday, February 25

- 12 noon Property Tax & Incentive Payments for Forest Land (Rochester)
- 6 pm Invasive Species (Waseca)
- 7 pm Property Tax & Incentive Payments for Forest Land (Rochester)

Saturday, February 27

- Horse Logging Demonstration (Stillwater)

March

Tuesday, March 2

- 6 pm Financial Aspects of Woodland Ownership (Winona)

Tuesday, March 9

- 3:30 pm Property Tax & Incentive Payments for Forest Land (Zumbrota)
- 6 pm Carbon Credits – Benefits for MN Landowners (Jackson)
- 7 pm Property Tax & Incentive Payments for Forest Land (Zumbrota)

Thursday, March 11

- 1 pm Made in the Shade: Profit from your Woods with Dave Wilsey – Extension (Grand Rapids)
- 3:30 pm Property Tax & Incentive Payments for Forest Land (Caledonia)
- 7 pm Property Tax & Incentive Payments for Forest Land (Caledonia)

Tuesday, March 16

- 1 pm Invasive Species & Forest Health and Disease Control (Andover)

Wednesday, March 17

- 12 noon Carbon Credits for Minnesota Woodlands (Online). For content and registration details, see "Upcoming Classes and Events" on www.MinnesotaForestry.org.

Thursday, March 18

- 1 pm Growing & Tending Your Forest (North Branch)

- 3:30 pm Property Tax & Incentive Payments for Forest Land (Caledonia)
- 7 pm Property Tax & Incentive Payments for Forest Land (Caledonia)

Thursday, March 25

- 2 pm Carbon Credit Payments for Woody Property (Bemidji)
- 6 pm Invasive Species (Redwood Falls)

Tuesday, March 30

- 6 pm Carbon Credits – Benefits for MN Landowners (Morris)

April

Tuesday, April 8

- 6 pm Carbon Credits – Benefits for MN Landowners (Owatonna)

Friday, April 16

- 1 pm Bird Conservation: How Landowners Can Help Minnesota's Birds (St. Louis Park)
- 3 pm Tree Planting – Julie Miedtke, U of M Extension and Andy Arens, Itasca SWCD (Grand Rapids)

May

Friday & Saturday, May 21 & 22
MFA's Spring Field Days & Tree Farm Awards. See flyer enclosed!

For MFA members, www.MyMinnesotaWoods.org is the best online source of woodland information. Here's what's new this month.



- Webinar series continues: 5 things every woodland owner needs to know now available. Next webinar: Property tax & incentive payments for forest land, Feb. 16
- Northern Minnesota phenology report
- Events calendar grows, now includes non-Extension events
- MFA member profile
- And much 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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