



Minnesota Woodlands

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

www.MinnesotaForestry.org

Minnesota Forestry Association (MFA)

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MFA Board Meetings

Cambridge DNR Office, 10 am – 3 pm

- January 17, 2012
- April 17, 2012
- July 17, 2012
- October 19, 2012

Conference Calls

8 – 9 am

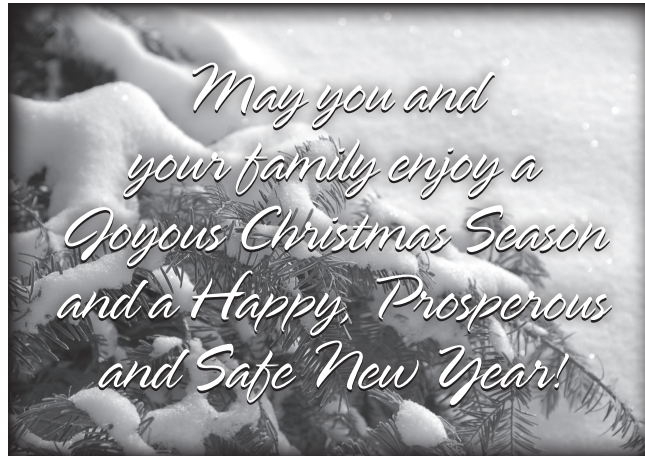
- December 20, 2011
- February 15, 2012
- March 22, 2012

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See the Ballot-Survey Form Enclosed!

The results of the election and the survey will be published in the next newsletter.

Please fill it out and return it today. It is easy – the stamp is already affixed. And by the way, all those who return the form by January 6th are automatically entered into a **drawing for one of three Gander Mountain Multi-Tools!**

Changes at DNR

Due to budget cuts in DNR's Private Forest Management (PFM) Program (the program that deals with private woodland owners), personnel will be reduced to the equivalent of 12 full-time field forester positions. This is a reduction from the 15-17 positions the program had been running on over the last 5 years.

Further, DNR's PFM foresters have been assigned new priorities which will leave less time to spend in the field working with private woodland owners. The priorities are:

- Review and approve stewardship plans that were written by private consultants.
- Provide technical assistance on cost share projects, including EQIP.
- Support landscape and stewardship efforts.
- Complete an occasional stewardship plan or timber sale.



Dave Epperly, currently Minnesota's State Forester, will be moving to a new position in the DNR commissioner's office. Candidates for his replacement will be sought from within DNR and nationally.

This reduction in the number of DNR Foresters working in PFM will be particularly felt in the northern part of the State. Private woodland owners in all regions, but particularly in the north, should become familiar with the consulting foresters working in your area. Find a list of consulting foresters at www.MinnesotaForestry.org.

Changes at the top also

Other recent DNR Forestry changes have occurred as well. Dave Epperly, State Forester, is moving to a new position in the commissioner's office. Andrew Arends, who was the Cooperative Forest Management supervisor, will be responsible for the state-land timber program. Andrew's position will be taken by Lillian Baker.

All the MFA board members are looking forward to meeting and working with the new DNR PFM people for the benefit of Minnesota's private woodland owners.

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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 any meeting. See a list of dates and board members elsewhere in this newsletter. For conference call meetings, obtain an access and pin number by contacting any board member listed on the left.

We have no new actions to report but do have plenty of ongoing projects:

Considering the creation of a new Private Woodland Owner Education Coop to coordinate educational opportunities for private woodland owners.

Planning for Spring Field Days 2012 to be held in Grand Rapids on May 19 & 20, 2012. The event chair is Dave Roerick, Grand Rapids.

Discussing creation of a system by which landowners can call a single number, MFA's office, to obtain information before they harvest timber on their land. In other states, this system is called Call Before You Cut. In Minnesota, it could be called something else but would have the same goals.

Planning for MFA's participation in the 2012 version of the Million Acre Conference, which is now being called, *Minnesota Family Woodlands: A Landowner Conference*.

A BIG Event Coming in March

The hoots of an owl after dark may cause some to pause and wonder, "What was that?" The deer snacking on a favorite plant may cause one to think, "What can I do?" The field out back may cause one to ponder, "How can I put this to its best use?" The opening of a property tax statement may cause one to react, "How can I reduce this burden?"

Answers to questions on these topics, plus 50 more, will be presented at the **My Family Woodlands: A Landowner Conference**, scheduled for **March 9 and 10, 2012**, at the Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center in downtown Duluth. Topics as far-reaching as rattlesnakes, photography, selling timber, native prairies, and managing habitat will be offered the second day of the conference. Participants will have the opportunity to choose from 12 classes during each of the six sessions that take place throughout the day.

The first day, March 9, will focus on daytime tours, including bird watching, timber sales, and wildfire safe homes, plus workshops on using a GPS unit, intergenerational land transfers, and chainsaw safety. Late in the day, the exhibit hall will open, with displays from a variety of equipment, educational, and resource vendors, plus an answer booth and demonstrations.

The highlight of the evening will be local renowned phenologist, John Latimer. He describes his observations as "rhythmic biological events as they relate to nature." Learn how plants react to the forces of nature and how the blossoms of one plant indicate upcoming events for another plant. Photos captured of plants will pique the interest and fascination of many.

Lodging information is available through the Visit Duluth website at www.visitduluth.com or call 218-625-8105 and request the discounted lodging information for the My Family Woodlands conference.

Conference registration will be available in December. An agenda with topic descriptions, as well as other information, is available at www.MNDNR.gov/Forestry/WoodlandConference.



Tough Times for the Wood Products Industry

By Anne Petry

I can remember back in the early 1980s when our neighbor sold aspen for \$2 per cord and was happy to get it. I had heard that a few years before that DNR was hiring loggers to cut aspen and leave it lay because they wanted to regenerate the stand but there was no market for the wood.

We have been very fortunate in the last few years that various mills have been built and have been competing for our wood. Prices for aspen went as high as \$100 per cord. Even now, with prices in the \$20 range, things are much better than they once were.

But now, with the depression in the housing market and the decline in use of many kinds of paper, the wood products industry is suffering. In December, two of the three machines at Verso Paper's Sartell mill will be shut down permanently. Those machines have been cranking out paper for more than 100 years.

The machines produce the type of paper used in newspaper advertising inserts. In a statement carried in the St. Cloud Times, Pat Gibney, mill manager, said, "the machines just weren't cost competitive. Paper prices have increased 10 percent since 2005, and production costs — what we spend on energy, labor, wood and everything it takes to mix it all together — have gone up 25-30 percent in that time frame. The company couldn't keep those machines in operation and still be competitive."

Verso is one of five pulp and paper mills in the state.



Firm	Wood Used	Product
UPM- Blandin Paper Mill Grand Rapids	Aspen, Balsam Fir, Spruce	Lightweight coated publication papers
Boise White Papers International Falls	Aspen, Balm, Pine, Spruce, Balsam Fir, Birch, Tamarack, Ash, Maple	Office papers, label and release papers, base sheets, business and specialty printing grades
Verso Paper Sartell	Aspen, Balsam Fir, Spruce	Coated and uncoated publication papers
NewPage Duluth	Balsam Fir, Pine, Spruce	Uncoated, lightweight supercalendered magazine and publication papers
SAPPI North America Cloquet	Aspen, Balm, Maple, Basswood, Birch, Tamarack, Pine	Coated freesheet fine printing and publication paper, market pulp

According to DNR's 2010 report on Minnesota's forest resources, the five plants account for 75% of wood harvested in Minnesota. Of the remainder, 16% goes to sawlogs and similar uses, 7% goes to residential fuel and 2% to commercial fuel.

We can only hope the reduction in wood used by Verso because of the shutdown of two machines will be offset by other mills or by a rebound in housing construction which would benefit the two oriented strand board plants, Louisiana-Pacific in Two Harbors and Norbord in Bemidji.

Don't forget,
return the enclosed Ballot-Survey and have a chance to
win one of three Gander Mountain Multi-Tools!

Member Profile: The Hedeens on Skunk Lake

A physician talking with a patient in St. Paul in the 1940s was the start of the Skunk Lake adventure.

The patient knew of 200 acres and a very rustic cabin on Skunk Lake, 17 miles north of Park Rapids. Soon after, the physician, Dr. Sidney Hedeem, piled his family into the car for the day-long trip to Park Rapids. They found the woods, the lake and the rustic cabin appealing but the purchase price was a problem. On returning to the St. Paul, Dr. Hedeem talked a colleague into buying half the land which made the transaction affordable and, thus, the beginning of the Skunk Lake adventure.

Twenty-five or more years later, in the early 1970s, Dr. Hedeem had passed the 100 acres and a newer cabin on to his son, Carter and his new wife, Florence. Dr. Hedeem's colleague also decided it was time to pass his 100 acres on and offered the land to Carter and Florence for a bargain price ... the price he originally paid for the land plus the taxes he'd paid over the years. Even at that price, Carter, now a young doctor, and Florence had to scrape to come up with the purchase price. "We knew it was the thing to do but, to come up with the price, we went so far as to cash in some insurance policies," Carter said.

Fast forward 40 years, to today. Carter and Florence have a home in Park Rapids, where he spent his career practicing osteopathic medicine. And they still have the Skunk Lake property, now with a new cabin they built themselves just after retirement in 2000. The cabin is cozy and rustic, with no running water, no plumbing and no electricity. It was built with as many recycled windows and other materials as the Hedeens could find. Being just 17 miles from home, the couple spends a lot of time here, winter and summer.



The Woods

The land is rolling hills covered with birch, aspen and pine. The Hedeens purchased an updated Stewardship Plan last year that included the ecological classification analysis of their property. Harvey Tjader, the ecologist who did the work, concluded, "This land is made for pine." Heeding the advice, the Hedeens planted 500 white pines last year and now spend many hours each fall bud capping the young trees to protect them from deer.

The Hedeens' Passion

The Hedeens believe in volunteering, starting with Florence's two-year stint in the Dominican Republic with the Peace Corp in the 1960s.

While they love the cabin, the lake and the woods, today the Hedeens' passion is the North Country Trail which is a 4,600-mile walking trail extending from Lake Champlain on the Vermont-New York border to the Missouri River in central North Dakota. The Hedeens' interest is in the 45-mile segment from the Cass/Morrison county line west to Itasca State Park.

Because the North Country trail is for walking only, it consists of a two-foot wide walking track with another one foot on each side cleared of brush. Being so narrow, all the work on the trail is done by hand, cutting brush and then grubbing out the roots. Since 2000, Carter has invested over 5,000 hours working alone and with others while covering the 45-mile segment multiple times. Today this section of the trail is completed so the Hedeens' work is limited to annual maintenance. See more information at www.NorthCountryTrail.org.

So, that conversation between doctor and patient more than 60 years ago led to a lifetime in Park Rapids, on Skunk Lake and on the North Country Trail.



Far left: Carter & Florence Hedeem on their Skunk Lake dock. Behind them is the stump of a tree under which they were married in the early 1970 when the water level was lower.

Left: The Hedeens have bud capped their 500 newly planted white pines. They like to cap the leader plus the first whorl of branches.

Conservation Easement. Minnesota Land Trust.

Like so many others, the Hedeens want to ensure their land on Skunk Lake remains primitive and pristine. In 1998, they began a two-year process of working with the Minnesota Land Trust to put their land under a conservation easement. Florence said, "The people at the Land Trust urged us to take our time and consider this carefully because, once the easement is in place, it is forever." The Hedeens signed their easement in 2000 and have since volunteered with Minnesota Land Trust to do annual inspections of other lands under easement in the area. "Each parcel is inspected by a volunteer for four years and then by a Minnesota Land Trust staff member during the fifth year," Florence said.

For more information, see Minnesota Land Trust's brochure enclosed and their web site at www.MNLand.org. Also, if you would like to talk with the Hedeens about their experience with a Conservation Easement, they would welcome your call. Reach them at 218-732-9226.



To further repel deer, Carter Hedeem is trying out the new Repellex Systemic Animal Repellent Tablets. The dime-sized tablets are dug an inch or two into the ground. They are supposed to make white pines distasteful to deer for one to two years. See www.Repellex.com.

Tips

FROM A FORESTER

Dennis J. Thompson - District Forester, Aitkin County Soil and Water Conservation District

New woodland owners often want to do two things right away: plant trees and dig a pond. There is nothing wrong with planting trees -- thousands of acres are reforested every year by dedicated private woodland owners. And, dug in the right spot, wildlife ponds can provide excellent habitat for amphibians like frogs

and salamanders. But, many new landowners do not realize all the other options they have, like managing their existing woods. Besides increasing in value, a well managed forest will result in better habitat for wildlife.

Managing timber does not always mean big equipment doing big timber sales. Smaller projects, like timber stand improvement projects (TSI) done by the landowner with a chainsaw, can greatly improve the quality and growth of the trees. Projects as simple as removing poor quality trees that are crowding out nice, big trees can be done little by little. The trees that are removed become an endless source of firewood for the landowner, his friends and neighbors.

"Some of the best hardwood stands I know of in Aitkin County," Dennis said, "are owned by former County Land Commissioner Roger Howard. He has never had a major timber sale. Rather, he constantly works at TSI, removing 50 to 100 cords of wood each year. The result is an outstanding woodland that can be appreciated by future generations."

It is hard to get away from planting trees as it often seems like "the right thing to do" but keep in mind that managing your timber resource is also important. "I do not want to sound like I am against planting trees or digging ponds," Dennis said. "I own some land with my dad who, last year planted 200 white spruce seedlings and started talking about expanding the pond!"

Dennis Thompson is a District Forester with the Aitkin County Soil and Water Conservation District. He has been working with a private landowner in central Minnesota since 1998. As a certified Forest Stewardship plan writer and tree farm inspector, Dennis has written over 320 Stewardship plans covering approximately 36,000 acres. In 2007, Dennis successfully developed a Forest Stewardship Council group certification program for private forest landowners in Aitkin County. Today, the management of that group includes 18 landowners and 2,692 acres.

Dennis has been an elected board member of the Minnesota Forestry Association since 2006 and currently serves as Treasurer. Dennis also serves on the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources State Stewardship Committee and is an advisor to the Minnesota Soil and Water Conservation District Forestry Association. He is also a member of the College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences Alumni Society. Dennis has a B.S. in Forest Resources from the University of Minnesota, College of Natural Resources.



Dennis J. Thompson, left, is the professional forester. Dennis F. Thompson, right, is the dad and the family tree planter.



Keith Matson

Itasca County Private Woodland Committee's Fall Tour

Keith Matson hosted the Fall Tour at the Cutfoot Sioux Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp. This was one of 15 CCC camps established and operated in Itasca County between 1933 and 1942. The tour group enjoyed exploring the remnants of the camp and imagining what life was like there 70 years ago.



Happy Birthday Trees

By: Bruce ZumBahlen

On September 16, 2011, Steve and Debbie Morgan hosted a birthday celebration for the Norway (Red) pine that was planted 50 years ago on their tree farm located south of Wabasha, MN. The event was sponsored by the MN Tree Farm program, Wabasha County Forestry Committee, MN DNR, Nelson Cheese and Deli, and the Morgan's.

Steve Morgan, who operates an insurance agency in Faribault, MN, bought the pine covered land 21 years ago and commenced to actively manage the property. His goal is to develop the property to mimic Itasca State Park's large pine. Over the past 20 years, the stand has been pruned, thinned a couple times and inter-planted with some white pine. Controlling buckthorn has almost become a hobby.

Steve explained some of the other challenges encountered in managing the property such as dealing with damage from a hail storm and the introduction of thistle likely brought in by logging equipment that recently thinned the woods. Steve obtained a Stewardship Plan and enrolled the property under the 2c Managed Forest classification two years ago. The cost of the Stewardship has already been recovered by tax savings realized under 2c.

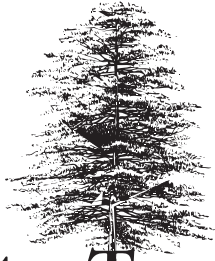
The dozen folks who attended the start of the event took a short walk into the woods to hear presentations on invasive species and their control, tree regeneration and pruning considerations, and pine management practices. Participants were given a short quiz on the topics covered, such as counting how many buckthorns were located on 1/100th of an acre parcel that was roped off. Prizes were given for correct answers and following events in the woods, more folks joined the group to enjoy cake and coffee under a tent erected for the event. Most of the afternoon was cloudy, but as soon as the cake arrived, the sun came out. What a great way to end the celebration.



Debbie & Steve Morgan.



Steve with a Baby Buckthorn plant.



Meet a Tree **The Christmas Tree**

Private woodland owners are some of the few people who have the option to grow and harvest their own Christmas trees. What a great way to make memories for the family as you plant seedlings that will become Christmas trees, nurture them to maturity and then harvest them.

If you are interested in growing Christmas trees, here are some tips:

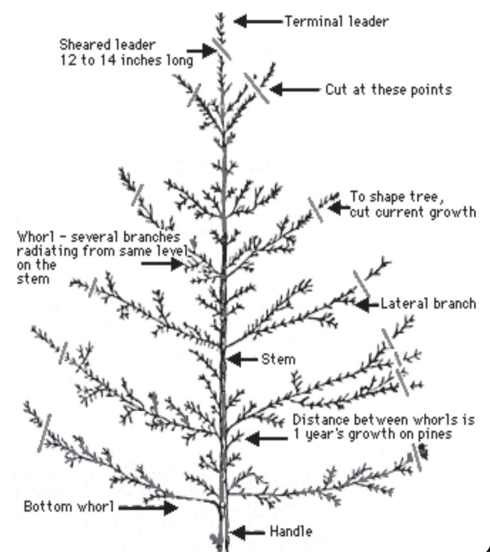
What to plant? The species to plant might depend on your soil. If it is sandy or sandy-loam, then white or red pines will do well. Spruce like loamy soils with plenty of moisture and plant nutrients. Balsam fir is the most site demanding of native species; it does not do well on droughty soils or those low in nutrients. Even more demanding is the non-native species, Fraser fir. This “King of Christmas Trees” demands good soil, good moisture and low soil pH of 5.2 to 5.8.

Spacing: Pines should be planted six feet apart; spruces and firs, five feet. Be sure to leave enough room between rows for mowing and other maintenance.

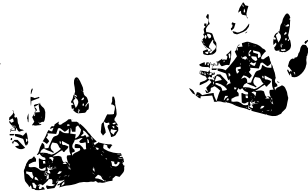
Shaping: The single most important part of growing and managing Christmas Trees is shaping, which is a combination of shearing and pruning. Shearing is the trimming or cutting back of the current growth of the terminal leader and side branches to improve the form and density of the tree. Pruning is the complete removal of competing terminal leaders or side branches that are protruding too far out from the tree. Shaping stimulates new bud formation around and immediately below the cut surface. The number of buds formed is usually 2 to 5 times as many as were cut off. The branch development arising from these buds accounts for the additional fullness of the tree when it is cut. Shearing and pruning are usually done simultaneously and the whole process is referred to as shaping. Once you begin shaping, it must be continued each year until the trees are cut.

Shaping Pines – One should start shaping pines after they have been in the ground 3 or 4 years, or as soon as their vertical growth exceeds crown development. The most favorable time to do this is during the early part of the growing season when the new growth is soft and succulent, approximately 10 to 14 days before vertical growth ceases and before the new wood hardens. In Minnesota, this is usually from mid-June to early July. Shaping too early in the season will cause the formation of too many buds and will result in irregular growth. If the trees are shaped after the new wood has hardened, not enough buds will develop and those that do will produce weak and stunted shoots. Shaping pines during the dormant season is not recommended.

Shaping Spruce and Fir – One should start shaping spruce and fir after they have been in the ground 3 to 5 years, or as soon as their vertical growth exceeds crown development. Shaping on spruce and fir can be done at almost any time of the year, except during the period when the growth is elongating. Many growers shape their spruce and fir after they are done with the pines.



Creature Feature



By: Jodie Provost, DNR Private Land Wildlife Habitat Specialist
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Welcome to Creature Feature! Each issue, this brief article will highlight one of Minnesota's woodland wildlife species. When we know and understand our woodlands and their inhabitants, we can better enjoy, appreciate and support their existence.

Least Weasel

This issue's creature is a fierce hunter, capable of killing prey 5-10 times its own weight. The least weasel (*Mustela nivalis*), at just 6.2-7.5 inches long and 1.4-2.0 oz in weight, is the smallest Carnivora member and smallest member of the Mustelidae family. In Minnesota this family includes pine marten, fisher, mink, weasels, skunks, wolverine, badger and otter.

This tiny but voracious predator is native to North America. Its range likely includes all of Minnesota. However, it is listed as a species of special concern and a species in greatest conservation in need in Minnesota due to few recordings of its presence, despite extensive survey work in suitable habitat. Possible factors may include habitat and prey loss, poisoning, predation and competition from short-tailed weasels which are more common.

Now is the season when least weasels sport their white coats in northern latitudes. In summer, they are brown on the back and whitish underneath. They resemble short-tailed and long-tailed weasels, also found in Minnesota, but are smaller and lack a noticeable black tail tip. Interestingly, their fur fluoresces under UV light, while fur of short-tailed and long-tailed weasels does not.

Least weasels use a wide variety of habitats, generally avoiding just deep, dense forest, open water and urban areas. Habitat is likely selecting based on presence of their primarily prey, mice and voles. Other prey includes bird eggs and nestlings, moles, shrews, young rabbits, squirrels, rats, lizards, salamanders, frogs, fish and insects. They are active day and night, using sharp senses to rapidly patrol a regular hunting route and stay alert for predators such as hawks, owls, other weasels, foxes, cats and snakes. When resting, vole or mole burrows, holes in trees, logs and buildings, or similar sites are used.

Territories of up to 60 acres are established using a pungent odor exuded from anal glands. They are solitary except for breeding, which typically occurs in spring and late summer, but can occur all year. Young are tended by both parents and families break up when young are 9-12 weeks old. Females may have two litters per year of four to five young. Average life span is less than one year. Their density fluctuates with rodent populations.

To enhance your land for least weasels, consider habitat management that provides food and cover for them, mice and voles, including sufficient vegetative ground cover and downed woody debris. Do these smallest of mustelids a favor by not leaving poisons out and keeping cats indoors.



The Least Weasel is brown and white in summer and all white in winter.

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.

PLANNING AHEAD FOR 2012

Friday & Saturday, March 9 & 10, 2012

- Minnesota Family Woodlands: A Landowner Conference (Duluth Entertainment & Convention Center). This "Don't Miss" event is a successor to the two Million Acre Conferences that have been held in Duluth. For more information see "The BIG Event" piece in this newsletter and contact Stephanie Kessler, 218-326-1130 or go to <http://z.umn.edu/MFWC>.

Tuesday & Wednesday, March 20 & 21, 2012

- 50th Annual Shade Tree Short Course (Bethel University, Arden Hills). This is a two-day course for everyone interested in urban forestry and arboriculture. For more information and online registration, go to www.cce.umn.edu/shadetree.

Friday & Saturday, May 18 & 19, 2012

- MFA's Annual Meeting and Spring Field Days (Forest History Center, Grand Rapids). For more information, contact event chair, Dave Roerick at 218-326-3774 or DRoerick@gmail.com.

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

MyMinnesotaWoods.org

Your source for woodland stewardship advice



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION

Here's what's new at MyMinnesotaWoods:

- New details on the March 2012 MN Family Woodlands Conference
- 2012 webinar series: What topics do you want to see?
- Woodland Stewardship study guide now available online
- Itasca County Firewise project gains national attention
- Northern Minnesota phenology report
- And, as always: Poem and Quiz of the month, events, links, 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.