

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

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MFA Board Meetings

Cambridge DNR Office, 10 am - 3 pm• April 15, 2014 • July 15, 2014 • October 14, 2014

Conference Calls 8 - 9 am• May 13, 2014 • June 17, 2014 • August 19, 2014

• September 16, 2014

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News from the Legislature

By Bruce ZumBablen, chair, MFA Government Relations Committee

In the December/January issue of Minnesota Woodlands, I wrote "What? - Repeal SFIA?" I concluded that the Legislative Auditor's report on the SFIA (Sustainable Forest Incentive Act) would be discussed in the next legislative session. Well - guess what? It will be - but not in the context that I thought it would happen. A couple surprises.



Bruce ZumBahlen

Here's what has happened recently: Late last year, Sen. Saxhaug and Rep. Dill requested the Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR), Dept. of Revenue (DOR), and the MN Forest Resources Council (MFRC) convene a stakeholder group to discuss the issues raised and recommendations

cited in the Auditor's report. Under MFRC leadership, a group was appointed and has already had one meeting. The group is composed of representatives from the following organizations: a large landowner, forest industry, a county assessor, conservation, sportsmen, and recreational interests, the U of M Forest Resources Dept., DNR - Forestry, DOR, and MFA.

Now, the surprises: About the time of the group's first meeting, Rep. Davnie, proposed a repeal of the 2c Managed Forest property classification as part of a larger bill (HF 1884) to simplify MN's property classifications. And, most recently, Rep. Hansen introduced HF 2782 to repeal the SFIA. The sudden introduction of this last bill was brought to my attention by Kevin Walli only two days before being heard in the House Property and Local Tax Division on March 14, 2014. Following is my testimony on HF 2782.

"Mr. Chairman and Committee Members,

I'm Bruce ZumBahlen, Chair of Government Relations with the MFA, Minnesota's oldest conservation organization, founded in 1876 to promote stewardship of Minnesota's forests. Over time, our mission evolved to focus on management of family owned woodlands, which are the most threatened by development due to high real estate values and property taxes and where many owners lack knowledge on woodland management.

We pursue our mission through educational activities and advocacy with the goal of encouraging the retention and sustainable management of family owned woodlands.

The Sustainable Forest Incentive Program, or SFIA, as well as the 2c Managed Forest property classification, is very important in supporting that goal. I speak for the nearly 2,300 small woodland owners enrolled in the SFIA that have committed to managing their properties under a management plan and recording a covenant intended to protect the woodlands from being developed. Without the SFIA's annual incentive, a number of owners have told me that they would likely have sold their woodlands.

We are also concerned that without the SFIA, larger ownerships may find it financially to their advantage to sell their lands - causing some to be converted to other purposes, such as potato fields, or developed as cabin sites with impacts on wildlife babitat and water quality, let alone seeing new roads built by the new owners to access their properties.

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Minnesota Forestry Association

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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 starting at 10 a.m. During all other months, the meeting is held via conference call. Any MFA member is welcome to sit in on the face-to-face meetings and listen in on the conference calls. See the list of board members and meeting dates elsewhere in this newsletter. Contact any board member for further information. For a copy of minutes from any recent meeting, contact Carol Cartie at Information@MinnesotaForestry.org or 218-326-6486.

- Reviewed the following, all of which will be presented in detail at our Annual Meeting:
 - **2013 performance of MFA's three investment accounts** presented by Treasurer Dennis Thompson. It was a very good year with all three earning returns of more than 15%.
 - 2014 budget
 - **Comments by members** made during calls made by MFA's administrative assistant, Carol Cartie. Ms. Cartie has been calling a few members each week for the purpose of soliciting comments and ideas on how MFA can be of greater service. If you have not been contacted yet, expect to receive a call in the future.
- Approved a new Membership Brochure and Trade Show Display, both of which were presented during the Bemidji Minnesota Family Woodlands Conference and will be on hand during the Rochester Conference.
- Finalized plans for our 2014 Annual Meeting and Spring Field Day and discussed options for the 2015 event.

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That said, we think the Auditor's report is a fair assessment of the SFIA. Frankly, our organization was aware of problems with the SFIA before the Legislative Auditor's evaluation. As a matter of fact, we welcomed the Auditor's evaluation hoping it would bolster our efforts to address a number of the same issues his report identified that we tried to address in the 2011 legislative session with HF 1121- a bill crafted by MFA but not heard in committee.

Recently, Rep. Dill and Sen. Saxbaug, requested the Dept. of Revenue, Dept. of Natural Resources, and the MN Forest Resources Council, to convene a stakeholder group under the Council's leadership, to recommend changes to the SFIA using the Legislative Auditor's report as a basis. We strongly support that effort.

I would like to conclude my remarks with this plea: "Please don't throw the baby out with the bathwater by repealing the SFIA. Despite its problems, it is still a viable means to encourage sustainable forest management." Please let the Forest Resource Council's group complete its work in coming forth with recommendations on the SFIA. Thank you."

At the end of my remarks, I was asked to describe some of the proposals we had in our 2011 bill. Following my testimony, MFRC's Ex. Director Dave Zumeta explained the benefits to forest resources from the SFIA and the charge of the stakeholder group's work to review the SFIA. Next, Steve Nelson, a forestry consultant (and MFA member), mentioned the need for the SFIA to address the spread on invasive pests, particularly oak wilt. The hearing concluded with comments by Wayne Brandt, MN Forest Industries' Ex. Director, on the need for his members to receive favorable property tax treatment if the industry were to remain competitive and keep their lands open to public recreation.

Usually bills heard in a tax committee are laid over for possible inclusion in an Omnibus Tax Bill, so it's unclear at this point if HF 2782 will be included. There is no Senate companion to repeal the SFIA as this article goes to print. So, SFIA's repeal has a long way to go.

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Your Woodland Legacy: A Gift or a Burden?

By Chuck Erickson, MFA Vice President, retired farmer and farm business management instructor

Consider the age old question: if a tree falls in the forest with no one around, does it make a noise? I think it does. And sometimes when I look past the tree and see the forest, I also think the woods are sending a message.

Woodlands are not stagnant entities. Comprised of various components, they require active stewardship, maintenance and appreciation. This applies to the lone tree in the yard or your forest.

Stewardship means setting goals and completing tasks. Ask yourself some hard questions about the woodlot's future. You can decide on its future through estate planning; or, the state will decide for you. Consider your family, hunting friends, land trust, limited liability company (LLC), etc. in the options. The investment in the legal paperwork allows the peace of mind that your woodland's future is secure. What a feeling of accomplishment my wife and I have with our established trust. Odds are my trees will outlive the both of us and their stewardship will continue through our family.

In the process of estate planning, include funding options for the woodland's perpetuity. Discuss this with the future caretakers and financial planners. Some options may be life insurance, investments, hunting leases and product sales.

We secured the future, so what about a plan for right now? If you do not have a stewardship plan, invest in one by consulting a professional forester. It pays back big dividends when used! I think the four different professional foresters who walked with me through my woods greatly impacted my plan. The ideas and concepts of each forester will enhance my legacy. I know my management and actions have improved. I only hope that the good Lord lets me live long enough to accomplish many of my goals.

Non-professional resources are available if cost may be a factor.



Chuck Erickson

The Minnesota Forestry Association (MFA) has local chapters with members very qualified to walk in the woods with you. Their input is usually based on the school of hard knocks and what has worked for them. Online resources from many different government agencies can also provide some guidance.

The hard part has been addressed. Now let's get out to the woodlot or forest to care for our legacy. This may involve a little sweat, but in seeing the woods, you can enjoy the satisfaction of being a good and faithful steward. Most of us have an idea what needs to be done. Push through the barriers and excuses to create the woodland you want.

A veterinarian once told me most farmers know how to farm better than they are doing. We get caught up in the "doing" without stepping back to "see" our forest and the trees. Take the time to be a good woodland steward through planning, action and appreciation. Then enjoy the woods through all your senses.



Three strikes and you're out! A sad baseball analogy on Minnesota's White Pine

White Pine



Dennis J. Thompson

By Dennis J. Thompson

Encouraging landowners to plant white pine can be difficult. People want to see success in that the trees they plant not only survive, but thrive. All too often, this is not the case with white pine. In Minnesota, three major forces limit the success of plantings. A bug, a fungus, and an ungulate wreak havoc on Minnesota's most historic tree species.

Early settlers began logging Minnesota's white pine forests immediately after arriving in the 1830s. Between 1870 and 1890, logging in Minnesota was rapidly swelling, taking advantage of expanded rail systems and a network of waterways that extended all the way down to the Gulf of Mexico. After a hard winter in 1901-02, timber production in the state began to fall and by the start of the Great Depression, the largest white pine mill in the world, located in Virginia, sawed its last white pine. The white pine logging era was gone just as quickly as it started.

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White pine is a long-lived tree species commonly reaching 200 years and maximum age may exceed 450 years. Compared to other pine species and hardwood species it grows with, it has a remarkable growth rate. Two of the largest white pines on record can be found in Michigan and Maine. Both are roughly 68 inches in diameter and 150 feet tall.

All total, 277 insects and 110 disease organisms are known to attack Minnesota's beloved white pine. Luckily, only 16 of the insects and seven diseases will cause sufficient injury or mortality. White pine weevil (the bug) and white pine blister rust (the fungus) are the two most important. The third major pest to our white pines is white-tailed deer (the ungulate), whose passion for that tender top bud has been a source of frustration for just about everyone who has ever planted a white pine.

The Bug - Strike 1

White pine weevils tunnel into the terminal leader of white pines, causing terminal death, growth loss, and crooked or forked stems. Attacks become visible in early June when the terminal leader suddenly wilts, forming a very characteristic shepherd's crook. Within a week or two, the needles of the terminal leader turn brown-red in color. The loss of the terminal leader results in one or more lateral shoot taking over upward dominance. This leads to a noticeable crook in the main stem or forked stems, which reduces the commercial value of the tree. Adult weevils emerge from infested shoots in mid to late summer. They overwinter in the needle layer, generally beneath the tree from which they emerge. Female weevils lay eggs in terminals early the following spring.

Weevils are more common in open-grown trees that get full sunlight. Managing young white pine under an existing overstory can minimize weevil damage; however, heavy shade can be detrimental to white pine growth. Planting and maintaining high densities of white pine can also reduce weevil damage. Competition created from densely planted trees promotes rapid height growth and will force laterals on weevil attacked trees to straighten quickly. If a white pine becomes infested, clipping currently wilted terminals in July will help prevent damage in the following year by killing the new generation of weevils. Be sure to remove enough of last year's growth to get all of the larvae feeding under the bark. Clipped terminals should be collected and destroyed.

The Fungus - Strike 2

White pine blister rust is a fungal disease of white pine that was introduced into North America around 1900. Live needles are the first to be infected; then the fungus grows into the twig and towards the stem of the tree. A blister rust canker is the result of an infection that has been growing under the bark of a branch or stem for several years and is cutting off the supply of food and water to parts beyond the infection. White pine blister rust causes branch death, stem cankers, and top-kill and can be fatal. It infects white pine through live needles during the late summer when temperatures are cooler, and a thin film of water forms on the needles. As a result, most infections occur within nine feet of the ground where dew or moisture are most likely to collect. This disease is more common, and more serious as you go further north and east in Minnesota, but can occur anywhere in the state where late summer weather is cool and moist.

Pruning is beneficial to any size tree. However, it is best to start when the trees are small and continue until all the branches on at least the lower nine feet of the tree have been removed. It is important to find and remove even the lowest and smallest limb or sprig of needles. Cutting off infected limbs that are flagging (a large group of needles or an entire limb that turns orange) may help save the tree. For blister rust control, it is not necessary to clean up or remove the limbs pruned from the trees or sanitize pruning tools (they will not transmit infection) between uses. It is not necessary to remove infected trees from the area either since blister rust in not transmitted from tree to tree.

Shrub species that are part of the Ribes family (primarily currant and gooseberry) play a critical role in the life cycle of the blister rust fungus. The spores that infect white pine needles are produced on Ribes leaves. Making sure not to plant these species in and around your white pines helps break the life cycle. If time and energy permits, eradicating existing Ribes plants in the immediate area can be beneficial to the health of your white pine.

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Photo above by Joseph O'Brien, USDA Forest Service. Photo below by Becca MacDonald, Sault College.



Extension Hosts Bemidji Landowner Conference

With the students away on spring break, family woodland owners took over the Bemidji State University campus on March 14 and 15. Three day-long workshops and 24 concurrent presentations made for a busy couple of days. Between the two days, about 130 different landowners, foresters, and others were there to take it all in.

Friday workshops included a large gathering of women landowners and smaller groups to learn about monitoring seasonal change and early detection of forest pests. Many of the same people returned Saturday for presentations on everything from songbird habitat to the lingering influence of the last ice age on Minnesota woods. Tree planting, pine and aspen management, intergenerational land transfer, emerald ash borer, and many other topics filled out a busy day.

MFA was on hand as well, with forester Dean Makey available to answer questions all day and lots of action around MFA's booth, which featured the Call Before You Cut campaign.

This was the first of two Spring 2014 Minnesota Family Woodlands Conferences. The second, in Rochester, will be held April 25 and 26, over Arbor Day weekend. Get more information, including the code for a discount for MFA members, at <u>www.MinnesotaForestry.org</u>. Extension is exploring the possibility of co-hosting a similar conference next year in Grand Rapids in partnership with the Minnesota Master Naturalist Program. So keep your eyes peeled for announcements about an even bigger and better event next year.

The conference, funded by the Minnesota Forest Stewardship Program and University of Minnesota Extension, was sponsored by the Minnesota Tree Farm System and Minnesota DNR – Forestry.



Above: A distinguished group of landowners at the Saturday conference.

Right: Several vendors were present Saturday as well. Here, Bill Sayward of Itasca Greenhouse shares his extensive tree planting experience, and products, with attendees.



John Latimer of KAXE Radio fame discusses monitoring seasonal change on a cold March Friday at the Minnesota Family Woodlands Conference.



Extension's John Loegering brought the house down with an entertaining talk on songbird management.



The Minnesota Forestry Association was well represented on Saturday. That table was full of Call Before You Cut folders earlier in the day!



Minnesota Women's Woodland Network Gathering

By Barb Spears

During the Bemidji Minnesota Family Woodlands Conference, 19 women gathered to "talk trees", learn more about caring for their woodlands, meet with female natural resources professionals, and learn about the Minnesota Women's Woodland Network and how they can become involved or start a network in their local area.

Many stories were shared and questions asked about woodland management and we played a woodland version of the TV game "Jeopardy" to quiz participants on their woodland knowledge. There was also a speed networking session where Jana Albers (DNR Forest Health Specialist), Sue Brokl (Consulting Forester), Katie Haws (Retired DNR Non-game Wildlife Specialist), Julie Miedtke (UMN Extension Forester) and Marge Sella (NRCS District Conservationist) moved between five tables every 15 minutes for direct dialogue with participants. One exciting outcome of this day is the start of a Minnesota Women's Woodland Network in the Bemidji area with several women volunteering to help plan upcoming events or host a walk in their woods.

The toolkit "Growing Your Peer Learning Network: Tools and Tips from the Women Owning Woodlands Network" produced by Oregon State University

was used to help plan this gathering. The toolkit "focuses on the nuts and bolts of designing, forming, holding, and maintaining a peer-learning group, whether the group you want to reach is women woodland owners or any other group of people who have similar goals for learning."

Funding for this event was provided by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture through the University of Minnesota and Oregon State University to help develop women woodland networks nationwide.

Barb Spears is a consultant in forestry doing business under TWF Consulting and chair of MFA's Metro Chapter. Contact her at Barb@TWFllc.com.

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Above: Katie Haws, retired DNR Non-Game Wildlife Specialist, records notes.

Below: Jana Albers, left, a DNR Forest Heath Specialist, leading a speed networking discussion.



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The Ungulate - Strike 3

The white-tailed deer is one of the most popular big game animals in Minnesota. Found in every county, the deer population in Minnesota is near one million. Its diet consists of a variety of agricultural crops, grasses, acorns, leaves, twigs, and buds. With a diet that changes every year from grazing summer grasses to browsing winter shrubbery, heavy deer densities can certainly cause wide-spread damage at certain times of the year. This is especially true in the fall and spring for young white pine buds – a favored food source. Occasional browsing of the terminal bud of white pine by deer is typically not detrimental to the tree. While this will decrease growth and reduce tree vigor, lateral shoots can quickly take over dominance. The problem arises when trees are repeatedly browsed over many years.

Protecting white pines from deer can be difficult and expensive. Chemical repellents are effective, but can be expensive if you have a lot of trees to spray. Physical barriers such as tree guards are inexpensive to purchase, but can take a lot of time to install. The best way to protect pines from deer damage is with paper bud caps. A bud cap is simply a piece of paper wrapped and stapled around the terminal leader and bud of the tree. This protects the terminal bud from deer, yet allows the tree to grow up through the paper during the next growing season. Browsing of lateral (side) branches and buds is usually not detrimental to the health and survival of young white pine. Bud caps are inexpensive and easy to install.

Member Profile: Priscilla & Harvey Harvala

As part of their retirement plan, Priscilla and Harvey Harvala moved in July 2009 from 50 wooded acres in Esko, where they had lived for 34 years raising their five children, to 300 acres near Snellman, Minnesota and the Smokey Hills State Forest. This is the homestead property where Harvey was born and raised along with his seven siblings. (Snellman is in Becker County, east of Detroit Lakes and west of Park Rapids.)

After buying the property from family members, they constructed their retirement home with features like handicap accessibility and a ground source (vertical wells) geo-thermal heating and cooling system. The tongue and groove wood for the floors, vaulted ceilings boards, and trim were all cut from the oaks on the property that had been damaged by porcupines.

Priscilla retired from a career as a buyer at Potlatch Corporation in Cloquet and Harvey continues his consulting engineering career from his home office. All of their property is managed under the 2c Forest Management Plan, which has proven to be very helpful in reducing property taxes. They are interested in considering property management under a LLC.

The property is located in a transitional zone between the coniferous and deciduous forests and, as a result, has a wide variety of tree species. Priscilla said, "Living in a rural area requires hard work at times and lots of equipment to maintain the property, but is also keeps us physically active. We have always enjoyed the freedom of country living and sharing space with all the wild animals of the forest."



Priscilla and Harvey Harvala with their giant, red golden retriever, Logan.

Making maple syrup is a family tradition that was started by Harvey's parents which he and Priscilla continue. They recruit family and friends of all ages to share in the work of tapping approximately 400 trees. Even grandchildren get involved in collecting sap and stacking wood. Three outside wood stoves are used to boil the sap in stainless steel pans. After the finishing is done outside, Priscilla does the bottling in the kitchen in bottles bearing their own label, "Old Saps' Maple Syrup!" The final product is distributed among the helpers.

When people ask Priscilla and Harvey how they know when the maple syrup season starts and ends, they always answer with this old saying: "The sap starts running when the crows begin cawing in the spring, and the sap run ends when the frogs start singing!" It is amazing how accurate this tale has proven to be!

Discovery Literally Turns Maple Syrup Industry Upside Down

And, yes, we do mean "literally."

Today a maple syrup farm has tall maples and snowy woods, pretty much an idyllic Minnesota scene. A recent scientific discovery, however, means that forests of mature trees could be replaced by fields of dense saplings, much like the row crops of Big Ag. No longer would maple syrup be a product of the wild. No longer would it have to abide by the rhythms of nature.

So back to the "upside down" part for how it all works. Two researchers from the University of Vermont discovered that sap can flow up from the roots of a maple sapling. In contrast, when a mature tree is tapped, sap flows down from the crown to the base.

Reversing the flow of sap required a bit of engineering, namely vacuums and lopping off the tops of saplings. When vacuum tubes were attached to crownless saplings the plants kept producing sap, far more than the saplings themselves held. The researchers hypothesized that the saplings must be drawing moisture from its roots, "like a sugar-filled straw stuck in the ground."

An acre of topless, vacuum-sucked saplings could be ten

times as productive as an acre of traditional forest. Maple farms of the future could not only be much smaller, but there's also no reason they would need to be in a forest.

The flow of sap is always dependent on freeze-thaw cycles, but small saplings need less freezing than mature trees. Reversing



University of Vermont professors Abby van den Berg and Tim Perkins with their invention that can produce vastly more maple sap per acre.

the flow of sap could truly revolutionize the maple syrup industry—saving it or destroying it depending on your view.

The changes aren't here—yet. The necessary equipment isn't commercially available, so scaling up still presents a challenge, but the researchers have applied for a patent.

In the future, though, it is possible that there could be a lot more choices in the grocery store syrup aisle. There'll still be cheap Aunt Jemima's and fancy genuine maple syrup, but there'll also be all the stuff in between: farmed and vacuumed, perhaps, in Minnesota.

Interested in Promoting Wildlife?

Here is the best educational value you'll ever see! Thanks to the program's sponsors, there is no registration fee, no charge for housing and no charge for food!



The Wisconsin Coverts Project is a wildlife program for private woodland owners and Minnesotans are invited. This

year's workshops will consist of three days of indoor sessions and outdoor experiences for those who want to enhance their woodland for wildlife. More than a dozen Minnesotans have participated in this workshop. All have been enthusiastic about their experience. One of them, Chuck Erickson from Battle Lake, said, "This was the best workshop I've ever attended."

The workshop will be held from 6 p.m. Thursday, August 21st through noon on Sunday, August 24th in northeastern Wisconsin at the University of Wisconsin's Kemp Natural Resource Station in Woodruff, Wisconsin. It's a long drive from any Minnesota location but worth it!

For more information, find a brochure and application at <u>www.</u> <u>MinnesotaForestry.org</u>. There are only 25 positions available so apply early but no later than June 15th!

MFA's *Forester Phone Line* A free service for MFA members only! Call for an appointment with the forester: 218-326-6486

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





Thinking of harvesting timber from your land?

Call Before You Cut

You will be sent a packet of information with no cost or obligation to you.



Upcoming Events

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

Friday & Saturday, April 25 & 26, 2014 (Rochester) Minnesota Family Woodlands Conference

- If you like trees and woods, you won't want to miss this Conference planned for family woodland owners. Here's what to expect:
 - Friday, April 25: Optional half-day and day-long workshops.
 - **Saturday, April 26**: The main event. A full day of presentations and discussions on family woodlands topics. We'll have 20 local experts, plus information booths and vendors, on hand to present and answer your questions.
- For a complete list of speakers, topics, and presentation times, visit http://z.umn.edu/MFWC. That site also includes an online registration form or a flyer that you can print and mail in if you prefer. For a 10% discount on the registration fee for the main event, enter **MFAmember** in the discount code box.
- Questions? Contact Eli Sagor at 612-624-6948 or esagor@umn.edu. We hope to see you there!

Friday, May 16, 2014

 4pm – 9pm – *MFA's Annual Meeting*, Banquet and Tree Farm Awards (U of M Cloquet Forestry Center).

Saturday, May 17, 2014

 8am – 3:30pm – *MFA's Spring Field Day* (U of M Cloquet Forestry Center). For details, see the flyer enclosed with this newsletter. Enter before May 1st and be entered into a drawing for a Stihl chansaw!

Thursday - Sunday, August 21 - 24, 2014

• Wisconsin Coverts Project – Wildlife Program. See more information in this newsletter and on our web site, www.MinnesotaForestry.org.



Win a Stihl Chainsaw!

If you haven't registered yet for our Annual Meeting and Spring Field Day, find the flyer enclosed. Register before May 1st and you will be entered into a drawing for a Stihl Chainsaw! Not sure if you can attend? Register now and, if you are unable to make it, get a refund.

REGISTER TODAY and GOOD LUCK!