

# Minnesota MFA Woodlands

Minnesota Forestry Association

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

[www.MinnesotaForestry.org](http://www.MinnesotaForestry.org)

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MFA Board Meetings  
DNR Cambridge Office  
10 a.m. – 3 p.m.  
• January 8, 2019  
• April 9, 2019

Conference Calls  
8 – 9 a.m.  
• December 11, 2018  
• February 12, 2019  
• March 12, 2019  
• May 14, 2019

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## Want to Meet a Busy MFA Member? Meet Janet Erdman

*By Bruce ZumBablen*

Some folks may remember reading about Janet in the fall/winter 2016 issue of Tree Farming for Better Forests. In that issue, Barb Spears wrote a fine article titled “Sustainability” that described Janet’s passion and connection to her family’s woods, growing up as the third generation on the family farm in southeast Minnesota. In that article, Janet gave credit to her parents for instilling in her their deep appreciation of the 450-acre property in Fillmore County, 225 acres of it in woodland, the rest in either the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) or in tillage.



From her early days of touring the woods with her father and looking for wildflowers with her mother and sister, Janet took a keen interest in natural resources and wanting to know more. Her thirst for knowledge led her to become a Dakota County Master Gardener, MN Master Naturalist, a MN Tree Care Advocate, and a MN Forest Pest First Detector. These programs require continuing education to maintain certification and serving as a volunteer to share knowledge.

Janet continues to seek learning opportunities by attending MFA field days and county forestry days, being an active member of the MN Women’s Woodland Network (MNWWN), and more recently, told me that she has learned even more by serving as a member of the MN Forest Resources Council (MFRC). Governor Dayton appointed her to the MFRC three years ago to represent family forest owners on the 17-member council that recommends programs and policies to the governor, legislature and agencies to encourage sustainable forest management practices on all Minnesota forest ownerships.

Still working as a medical librarian on a four-day work schedule, she often spends Fridays and weekends on the “farm” putting into practice what she has learned with the help of her husband, Mike, her “right-hand man,” and her adult children, Faith, Katie, and Eli and their spouses. Janet’s parents deeded the land to her through a life estate in 2002 and encouraged her to take leadership of the farm’s stewardship. Sadly, both parents passed away recently.

DNR forester Alex Gehrig in Preston is impressed with Janet’s interest and hands-on approach to managing the woodland. Alex helped her get cost-share funding for invasive species brush control, timber stand improvement and forest road improvements.

“She works pretty actively doing a lot of the on-the-ground herself and works closely with one of our local private consultants – including a timber sale a few years back,” said Alex.

That local consultant forester is Mitch Gilbert, Janet told me. She said she has learned so much from him – she helps him mark trees while he helps her with tree identification and animal tracks. He also teaches her about the changing vegetation on different soil types.

As Barb Spears wrote about Janet in her “Sustainability” article: “Her ‘hands-on’ approach led her to take the three session Metro Areas MNWWN Women’s Chainsaw Course in 2011 giving

*Continued on page 2*

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**Away from home for a  
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*Janet Erdman continued*

her confidence in handling a chainsaw safely for small trees and clearing vegetation, including invasive species."

While Janet can only do so much herself, the rest of the family plays roles, too. Husband Mike does much of the mowing and clearing of the trails. Her daughter Faith is the MN DNR's pollinator coordinator. She and her two children love the farm and have helped with picking apples and raspberries, building bluebird houses, looking for mushrooms and wildflowers and feeding birds. Son Eli helps with woods work, clearing and seeding trails, pruning walnuts, and tagging along with the forester. Daughter Katie is the family historian and has a deep love for the farm and the family history. Her 1½-year-old son loves running in the wide open. Janet's sons-in-laws, Joel and Nick, help out with projects, too, and Eli and Nick like to hunt deer and turkey on the property.

A couple of years ago, with the assistance of a helpful neighbor, the entire family participated in their first prescribed burn. Janet's husband Mike and son Eli spent a day at Carleton College at a prescribed burning workshop to learn about it. Recently, Janet enrolled the farm's woodland in the 2C Managed Forest property classification and was certified under the American Tree Farm System.



*Janet Erdman with her family.*

With the future of the family farm in mind, a couple years ago, Janet arranged for her father, herself, and her adult children and their spouses to attend an Intergenerational Land Transfer Workshop by the University of MN Extension, hosted by MFA's Metro Chapter.

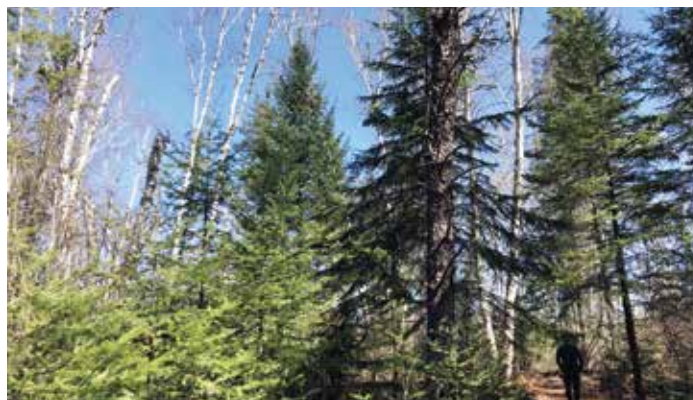
"I have a deep passion for sustaining our land and forests; hoping to pass on an improved environment to future generations," stated Janet in the 2016 article in *Tree Farming* for *Better Forests* magazine.

MFA is proud to have Janet as a member. As I told her, she is like a poster child for MFA and its mission of encouraging the retention and sustainable management of family-owned woodlands.

## The Lost 40

### How an Old Forest's Wisdom Can Contribute to Land Management

*By Anna N. Hess, AmberBeth VanNingen, Bryonna Persing*



In the far north of Minnesota, hidden in the expanses of peatlands and seemingly endless tracts of forest, resides a small pocket of towering trees, a relic of the great pine forests. The dirt path, crunchy with fallen pine

needles and dead leaves, leads you through a world of cathedral pillars, pockets of light filtering from the canopy. This is Lost 40 Scientific and Natural Area (SNA).

This area was once surveyed and recorded as part of Coddington Lake in 1882. You will find that it isn't a lake, though the surrounding landscape is pocketed with peatlands, streams and water bodies. Thanks to this old plat mistake, the 135-acre

area of marsh and forest was lost to time and now houses trees between 130 and 250 years old. This is unique and valuable for several reasons. Because only 2 percent of these pine forests remain, they provide rare opportunities

to learn how natural cycles in these communities occur. That knowledge contributes to more effective land management. These areas also house species that are not often observed but are part of those natural cycles, providing core habitat areas that help organisms to disperse into the surrounding landscape. Last but not least, these areas provide opportunities for teaching, research and recreation that are not comparable to other forest settings.

Lost 40, like most SNAs, went through a period of review to qualify for designation. Starting in 1963, Lost 40 was part of the Big Fork State Forest. The area was not nominated for inclusion in the SNA program until 1989. It would take several more years of public hearings and evaluations before the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Commissioner would sign the designation order in 1995. The designation was updated in 1997 to allow for dogs and hunting.

Designation, as with most SNAs, was not based on a single value. The Lost 40 forest and cathedral pines were clearly a highly contributing factor. Other important features include remnants of an esker formation, a meandering trail of gravel deposits left behind by receding glaciers more than 10,000 years ago. These deposits are often mined and exported for their highly valuable minerals.

One of the great advantages of the SNA program in the world of forest management is the ability to compare these areas of natural design to ongoing resource management practices on actively managed lands. This allows land managers to observe the products and processes, including growth, diversity and the general length of cycles on these soil types.

Lying in the Big Fork River watershed within the Minnesota Drift and Lake Plains ecological section, this particular parcel includes a variety of forest lands. The upland forest is composed of mostly white and red pine as well as white spruce and balsam fir. Lowland moist areas include marshlands, alder and black spruce. This combination is not unique to the area, but the relatively unaltered landscape allows for research of the native plant communities, water-related features and their interactions. The Big Fork drains eventually into the Souris-Red-Rainy watershed area, which flows into Hudson Bay after many hundreds of miles. Moose Brook travels from Dora Lake through the marsh at the edge of Lost 40.

Within this parcel, trees grow to 130 feet high and three feet thick. Although selective cutting occurred on the esker parts of the forest, the rest has remained intact. During the initial land survey of the 1800s, surveyors marked several trees, including two specimens of jack pine and one tamarack, to identify section corners. At the time of the survey, the oldest pines (now around 300 years old) would have been around 80 years old. These trees are now categorized as old-growth, a designation given to natural forests that have developed

over at least 120 years without severe disturbance, such as fire, a windstorm or logging. Less than 1 percent of DNR-administered forests are designated as old-growth, making this a rare and protected habitat condition.

We have learned through a century of observation and research that such pine forests are adapted to disturbance. Fires that are damaging in the crown areas or on the ground will cause varying degrees of die-off, which encourages the growth of species such as red and white pine. Without this disturbance, the forest would convert to a different but related leafy plant community. These successional stages make up the natural cycle of plant communities over time and are dependent on soil types, topography, latitude and climatic variations. These natural conversions can be seen at several stages. These stages include the development of groundcover species, the transition of understory shrubs and trees, and the development of crown cover features that influence the filtration of sunlight and water reaching the ground. Understanding these successional stages is critical to land and wildlife management.

The marshes of the area were altered. Settlers attempted to drain the water features to farm what appeared to be rich, black soil. We now know that these soils do not support agriculture, because they are highly acidic and nutrient-poor. They are, however, some of the most supportive natural systems for water

filtration and carbon storage. They draw contaminants from the soil, recharge groundwater systems and store organic materials.

Native animals rely on this area for migratory stopovers or year-round habitat. Animal concentration areas support the surrounding landscape and allow for relatively uninhibited breeding and dispersal. Many uncommon species utilize the area, including the iconic loon, northern goshawk, American woodcock, black-backed woodpeckers and a variety of flycatchers, sparrows and warblers.

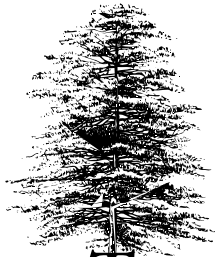
You can visit Lost 40 today by traveling north through the Chippewa National Forest. Hiking, skiing and snowshoeing, photography and bird watching are all allowed at this site. Along with many recreational activities, Lost 40 supports unique research opportunities and public education through the SNA Program and the U.S. Forest Service.

Additional information on allowed uses of SNAs across Minnesota can be found at [www.mndnr.gov/snas/rules.html](http://www.mndnr.gov/snas/rules.html)

*Anna Hess is a natural resource manager, engaging in scientific education and outreach throughout the Arrowhead. Bryonna Persing is an administrative specialist, coordinating community engagement and inquiries. AmberBeth VanNingen is a Regional Scientific and Natural Areas Specialist, traversing the wilds south of Canada. Together, they work with the Minnesota DNR Scientific and Natural Areas Program throughout the northeast portion of Minnesota.*



Original plat, 1882.



# Meet a Tree

## Quaking Aspen



By Dennis J. Thompson

Quaking aspen, *Populus tremuloides*, is known by many names across its growing range. In the Lake States Region, popple or poplar is common. To the west, it may be referred to as golden aspen or mountain aspen. Others may call it trembling aspen or trembling poplar. Whatever the name, this fast-growing, short-lived pioneer tree species is one of the most important trees in Northern Minnesota. It is also the most widely distributed tree in North America and can be found at sea level on both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, and in elevations as high as 11,500 feet in northern Colorado! Worldwide, only European aspen and Scotch pine have wider natural ranges.

Quaking aspen grows on a variety of soils ranging from shallow and rocky to deep loamy sands and heavy clays. Good aspen soils are usually well-drained, loamy, and high in organic matter, calcium, magnesium, potassium, and nitrogen. Because of its rapid growth and high nutrient demand, quaking aspen has an important role in nutrient cycling. Under the best of

conditions, quaking aspen may get to 120 feet in height and over 50 inches in diameter. More typically, mature stands range from 70 to 85 feet tall and average 10 to 14 inches in diameter.

Like every other plant, quaking aspen does flower in the spring and produce seed (fruit). The seed produced is viable and, under the right conditions, will grow into a mature tree.

However, quaking aspen is most often regenerated when the main stem of the tree is severed or damaged. This can be done by drought, flooding, wind, fire, insects, diseases, or most commonly - by timber harvesting. The stems that are produced sucker and sprout from the root system, a process often referred to as cloning.

Clone size in an aspen stand is primarily a function of clone age, number of seedlings initially established, and the frequency and degree of disturbance since seedling establishment. After a disturbance, sucker regeneration can be 5,000 to 10,000 or more stems per acre given the quality of the site. Dormant season cutting generally produces vigorous suckers the next growing season. Summer cutting produces a sparse stand initially, but the number of suckers after two years is usually the same regardless of cutting season.

Because it is very intolerant to shade, quaking aspen is best managed by clear-cutting. The light, soft wood has very little shrinkage and high grades of aspen are used for lumber and wooden matches. Most aspen wood in Minnesota goes into pulp and OSB board. Besides being a staple tree species in the timber industry, quaking aspen is also invaluable to a whole host of wildlife species, but that is a topic best covered in a separate article.

**Did you know?** Although individual stems of a clone may be short lived, the clone itself may be thousands of years old and longer lived than the oldest giant sequoia.



Top: Aspen suckers. Bottom: Mature aspen grove.

# MFA Board Elections 2018

## Chad Converse, Motley

Chad graduated from the University of Minnesota with a degree in Forest Management. He worked for the USDA Forest Service for many years. After retirement, he became a Consulting Forester. Over the last 35 years, Chad has acquired land in the Motley area, with both woods and fields. He has planted trees, built ponds and planted native grasses. Chad was first elected to the MFA Board in 2013.



## Bill Sayward, Grand Rapids

Bill and his wife Cathy moved to Minnesota in 1987 to manage and own Itasca Greenhouse Inc. in Cohasset. He is still working at Itasca Greenhouse under the new owners. Prior to moving to Minnesota, Bill worked as the Research Forester for Georgia Pacific in Woodland, Maine, managing two company nurseries that supplied containerized tree seedlings for planting on company lands in Maine and New Brunswick, Canada. In later years, these two nurseries were made profit centers supplying containerized tree seedlings to private and industrial landowners in the northeastern U.S. and in eastern Canada. Bill and Cathy have three boys who were raised in the Grand Rapids area. Bill has been active in forestry all his life, working on the family woodlots in Vermont since 1955 planting trees, improving timber stands and wildlife habitat, and surveying and managing boundaries. He and Cathy have managed the woodlot on their homestead in Arbo, Minn., as well as a clonal seed orchard of improved selections of balsam fir and some other species. Bill has really enjoyed trade shows and visiting with other landowners over the years. He looks forward to working as a director of MFA and visiting and working with other woodland owners.

## Mike Vinje, Maple Grove

Mike was born and raised in Brainerd, Minn. Growing up, he was introduced to the outdoors and hunting and fishing by his grandparents. In high school, he worked for his father in the family logging and trucking business. His father had Potlatch and other logging contracts during that time, and Mike learned much about working in the woods and heavy equipment. He went to college at DeVry Institute of Technology in Phoenix, Ariz. Mike began his career as an aerospace engineer at Hughes Aircraft, Space and Communications in California, designing and testing commercial satellites. After three years at Hughes, he realized “you can take the boy out of Minnesota, but you cannot take Minnesota out of the boy,” so he followed his heart and returned home to Minneapolis. After 11 years at Honeywell Avionics, he moved into information technology and consulting. In 2004, Mike founded his own IT and Business Services Consultancy. He grew that firm from startup to \$33 million in revenue, 200 employees, and continual recognition for fast growth and as a “best place to work.” In 2015, Mike sold his firm and has since been providing business owners with strategic consulting services and working with an investment bank. Six years ago, he bought a small cabin in the Brainerd lakes area and some woodland close to Camp Ripley. Mike now spends a lot of time enjoying and working in his woods. He recently completed the Master Woodland Owner course through the University of Minnesota Extension.



## OFFICIAL BALLOT 2018 Directions

1. Select a candidate by placing an “X” in the appropriate box. Those with Family Memberships are entitled to TWO votes.
2. Return the ballot to the MFA office, postmarked no later than January 15, 2019. (Any ballot postmarked after this date will not be a valid vote.)
3. You may write in the name(s) of any MFA member in good standing.

Vote for three, each for a three year term on the MFA Board of Directors	First Vote	Second Vote (Family Members)
Chad Converse, Motley (incumbent)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bill Sayward, Grand Rapids (incumbent)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mike Vinje, Maple Grove	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Write In: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Write In: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
For Family Members, please print your name here so we can verify that you are entitled to two votes: _____		

**Thank you for voting!**

Tape Here

Tape Here

Tape Here

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Return Address (Optional)

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Any comments you'd like to add? Put them here and then fold this side in first.

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# Walk in the Woods Report: Paul Dickson Forest

By Kelly Smith, Carlton SWCD

Kettle River Woodland Council started October with a Walk in the Woods hosted by Paul Dickson. Sixteen gathered for two hours on the 67-acre property along the Kettle River, just upstream of Rutledge.

Paul is a knowledgeable and experienced consulting forester. His company, Dickson Forestry Inc., based out of Onamia, has been providing timberland management and Woodland Stewardship Plans for private landowners in east central Minnesota for over 20 years. He can be reached at 320-630-7651 or P.dickson@frontiernet.net.

Paul owns this property to produce timber for future income, though he and his family enjoy recreation here, too. The sandy soil of most of this property grows good red pine, gaining timber volume at about 2 percent per year. Dickson Forestry marked and oversaw the thinning of the 71-year-old stand (third time) two years ago by Bell Timber. The current value of the standing timber is estimated at \$2,500/acre (after thinning). As an investment, Paul figures he is getting a 5-10 percent return on his property. In 10 years, when the basal area should reach 180 square feet per acre, Paul plans to thin again, taking about one third of the trees.

To reduce the costs of his investment in the property, Paul has enrolled in SFIA with a 50-year covenant that has an annual payment enough to cover the taxes. If the land is sold, Paul considers the SFIA long-term covenant and income to be a selling point. It also ensures a continued undeveloped status and forest management of the property.



*Paul Dickson shares pine management experiences.*

There are different approaches to managing red pine. Timber buyers who manage for poles and house logs, like Bell Timber, want tall, straight trees with less taper. To achieve this, they do the first thin when the trees reach 25-30 years old, down to a basal area of 120-140. Timber buyers who manage for lumber, like Potlatch, prefer short, thick trees for making 2x4s. They start thinning at 20 years, down to 90 BA.

Markets for timber and pulp keep changing. Pruning red pine doesn't usually add to the timber value, though it can on walnut and oak. Currently, there's not much market for red pine pulp or many markets for any type of white or Scots pine. White spruce, with its long, strong fibers and white color, has a good pulp market, making up 40-50 percent of it. The biomass market for wood chips has disappeared.



*Silver maple holds the banks from eroding, and provides great fish and wildlife habitat. Managing for timber income elsewhere on the property and enrolling in SFIA made it affordable to keep this stretch of river undeveloped.*

Thinning pine plantations improves the timber growth rate, tree health, resistance to insect, disease and storm damage, and allows seedlings underneath to get the next forest started. Red pine is shade intolerant. When the standing trees lose their live branches up to the top one-third mark, it's time to thin. In Paul's case, he is cutting back the under-story birch and other broadleaves to release and encourage red pine regeneration.

In a 20-year-old stand of volunteer jack pine poles, Paul is doing a pre-commercial thinning with his chainsaw, getting space between the crowns. In 10 years, he plans to thin it again in swaths.

Paul has about 15 acres of forest along the river infested with buckthorn and Amur maple. He and his family are working through this with hand tools and herbicide. Invasive plant infestations keep forests from renewing themselves and lower wildlife habitat quality. In areas cleared, he is seeing native plants and young trees coming back.

For landowners with timber harvest projects too small to attract a logger, financial assistance is available from the DNR, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and some Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs). Financial assistance is also available for stream-side tree planting, invasive plant control, clean up of storm damaged or insect/disease killed timber, and reestablishing a forest.

Though the primary focus of this forest is timber income, Paul's family also enjoys hunting, swimming and getting outdoors. By managing for timber income and lower carrying costs, Paul can afford to keep this property from being subdivided and developed. All of us are benefiting from wood products, a clean, natural stretch of river, and a bird migration corridor.

These woods walks provide forest landowners contacts with forestry professionals, info on project assistance, and sharing of experiences with other forest landowners. If you would like to host or attend future walks, contact Kelly Smith at 218-384-3891.

## Upcoming Events

Find more events, and more information on these events, at the MFA website, [www.MinnesotaForestry.org](http://www.MinnesotaForestry.org), or by calling MFA at 218-879-5100.

### December Brrrd-Count

Maplewood Nature Center  
Saturday, Dec. 15, 9:30-11 a.m.

Drop in to watch and record winter birds on trails or at feeders. Enter your sightings into eBird or hand-write a list for the naturalist. Double the fun by renting a pair of snowshoes for \$5/pair (if 6" snow on the ground). Ages 14 and older. Fee: Free program. Activity No. 16163.

### 23rd Annual Itasca State Park Winter Bird Count

Monday, Dec. 17, 8 am-3:30 p.m.

Part of the national Audubon Christmas Bird Count, participants will have the opportunity to explore Itasca State Park and gather bird count data that will help track migration patterns and changes in winter bird species. Meet at the Jacob V. Brower Visitor Center lobby between 7:30-8 a.m. for count area assignments. No RSVP is necessary. For more information, call 218-699-7251.

### Webinar: A Fisheries Perspective on Timber Sale Design

Tuesday, Dec. 18, 12-1 p.m.

Speaker: Jeff Tillma, Minnesota DNR-Fisheries. Cost: \$20 per webinar or \$50 for the entire 2018 series. To learn more or to register, visit [sfec.cfans.umn.edu/2018-webinar-dec](http://sfec.cfans.umn.edu/2018-webinar-dec)

### Nature Hangout

Maplewood Nature Center  
Saturday, Dec. 22, 1-3:30 p.m.

Parents can get some holiday preparation work done while we go outdoors for a treasure hunt with the Naturalist, then back inside to meet live animals and complete a craft. Fee: \$25/youth; register by Thursday, Dec. 20 at [maplewoodnaturecenter.com](http://maplewoodnaturecenter.com), or call 651-249-2170. Ages seven to 11. Activity Registration No. 16165.

### Snowflake Wonders

Maplewood Nature Center  
Saturday, Jan. 5, 1:30-3 p.m.

Learn how snowflakes are formed in the sky and peer at beautifully preserved snowflake crystals up close on the microcam. Make a snowflake catcher to take home so you can identify different kinds of snowflakes all winter. Fee: \$5/person; register by Thursday, Jan. 3 at [maplewoodnaturecenter.com](http://maplewoodnaturecenter.com), or call 651-249-2170. Activity No. 16271.

### Winter Open House: Snowshoes and Tracks

Maplewood Nature Center  
Saturday, Jan. 12, 10:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

Learn how to walk, run, and turn around on snowshoes. Learn about animal tracks and signs from self-guiding activities. A naturalist will answer nature questions, and orient you to the nature center trails. Sleds available for pulling young kids. Fee: \$5 per person, includes snowshoe rental, cider and all activities. Register for snowshoe orientation at [maplewoodnaturecenter.com](http://maplewoodnaturecenter.com), or call 651-249-2170. Activity No. 16272.

### Volunteer Stewardship Project: Burn Brush, Invasive Removal

Lost Valley Prairie Scientific and Natural Area  
Saturday, January 26, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Warm up by burning brush piles in this bedrock bluff prairie SNA. If there isn't too much snow, volunteers will also do some brush removal. Contact the Lost Valley Prairie SNA steward, Jim Smetana, for more information at [jmsmetana@hotmail.com](mailto:jmsmetana@hotmail.com).



Minnesota Forestry Association

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*Change Service Requested*

### A word from the Editor:

As snow begins to fly, the temperatures dip into the single digits (or below), and yet another year comes to a close, I want to again extend gratitude to you, our loyal readers. Without you, this wouldn't be possible. I, and MFA, look forward to continuing to work on behalf of family forest owners and, through education and advocacy, promote wise stewardship of forest lands.

As always, I want to encourage anyone to reach out to me with ideas, thoughts, suggestions, concerns, and more, so that we, together, can continue to produce a newsletter that is thought-provoking and serves as an important resource for Minnesota's private woodland owners.

May your holiday season be joyous, safe and prosperous!



*Happy holidays!*