

treefarmer

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AMERICAN
FOREST FOUNDATION



AMERICAN
TREE FARM SYSTEM®

The guide to sustaining America's family forests

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Emerald Ash Borer Update

RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

Forest Service
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THE AMERICAN TREE FARM SYSTEM®

Tree Farmer is the official magazine of the American Tree Farm System (ATFS), a program of the American Forest Foundation. It is published six times a year for private forest landowners and volunteer foresters. Opinions do not necessarily represent those of ATFS.

MISSION

To promote the growing of renewable forest resources on private lands while protecting environmental benefits and increasing public understanding of all benefits of productive forestry.

Tree Farmer magazine is a forest enhancement publication by Tree Farmers for Tree Farmers and all who benefit from their endeavors. *Tree Farmer* espouses the environmental benefits of sustainable production of forest products through responsible forest stewardship on private forestlands. With information, advocacy, and practical advice, the magazine promotes sustainable forest practices for multiple benefits to society.

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JACK-IN-THE-PULPIT;
PHOTO BY NED THERRIEN



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By **BOB Simpson**

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In the January 23 issue of *High Country News*, reporter Jane Braxton Little sounds the much-belated alarm regarding the sale of vast tracts of U.S. forest industry forestlands.


As she points out in her article, approximately 35 million acres of industry-owned forestland has been sold since 1995. Last summer one company put up for sale nearly 6 million acres of its U.S. forestland. What some may not realize is this is the single largest land sale since the Louisiana Purchase. Ms. Little notes that a significant portion of this land will no longer be managed as a working forest. Large chunks are being carved out for shopping centers, housing developments, vacation retreats and more. What is left as working forests is held by Timber Investment Management Organizations, or TIMOs. These companies are set up purely for financial return, with no long-term sustainable forest management horizons. Most are chartered to only hold this land for 12 to 15 years, and then turn it over after they have realized their timber profits through liquidation.

What Ms. Little does not point out is that the social responsibility of managing our forests for the health, productivity and quality of life of our future generations now falls squarely on the shoulders of America's family forest owners.

Like the forest industry, family forest owners and certified Tree Farmers are feeling the pressures of increased taxes, regulation, globalization, local zoning ordinances, etc. For many, the only alternative is to sell what they've been nurturing for generations with

the hope of leaving a living legacy for their children. A U.S. Forest Service report states that, at current rates, during the next 30 years the loss of private forests converted to development will equal the size of Washington State.

However, it is not too late for family forests. Family forest owners must begin to work together to force Congress to see that not only do these forests provide recreation and aesthetic quality for our citizens, they are also strategically important to our nation in times of defense. These forests produce paper, chemicals and building products necessary to sustain a nation and its economy during critical times. Our government leaders cannot continue to take the existence of our family forests for granted.

Tree Farmers need to be rewarded for their long-term commitments to the land. This does not have to be done through a welfare-type system of handouts. It can be accomplished through well-crafted tax incentives. One in particular that the American Tree Farm System will be fighting for in the 2007 Farm Bill will be incentives for "ecoservices." You provide these ecoservices every day to this nation: pure water, clean air, abundant wildlife and forest products. It only makes sense that you should be recognized for this and rewarded through our tax code. 



Bob Simpson is Senior Vice President, Forestry Programs, American Forest Foundation.