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## TREE FARM BULLETIN

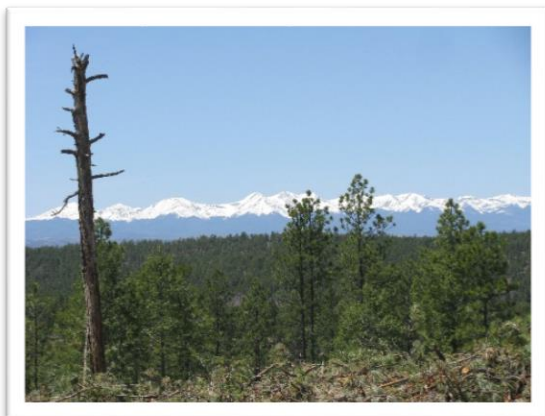
# TREE FARMERS FROM AROUND THE STATE VISIT VERMEJO PARK RANCH NEAR RATON

*By Mary Stuever*

The quiet row of large, red, brick kilns stand in the high mountain meadow as an unintended monument to an era where extraction ruled and sustainable ecosystem management was unknown. The kilns--and there are actually two rows of them several miles apart, twenty-four ovens in all—were built a century ago and used to make charcoal from the area’s forests. Old railroad grades attest to the slick transportation network designed to denude the surrounding hills of trees and ship the product – wood charcoal -- out of the mountains to markets that had no regulation or concern for air quality.

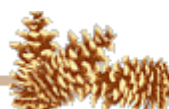


The contrast in values and forest activity 100 years later is, refreshingly, huge. The land, Vermejo Park Ranch, is now owned by Ted Turner, and is one of 21 ranches owned by the founder of Cable News Network (CNN). According to the Turner Ranches website <http://vermejoparkranch.com/>, Turner, the



second largest individual landholder in North America, supports innovative management to unite economic viability with ecological sustainability.

Recently I had to the opportunity to tour the ranch with an equally impressive group of private landowners. Although their own acreages are small in comparison to Turner’s two million acres of ranch land, their hearts and commitments to good land stewardship put them in good company with the billionaire. The New Mexico Tree Farmers are part of the American Tree Farm



System. Each landowner has embraced standards of sustainability and takes the stewardship responsibility of owning forest land seriously.

Our day started with a roundup of participants at the New Mexico Game and Fish office in Raton. Our objective there was to form carpools to limit the number of vehicles on the ranch – our first step into a world where concern for the land takes precedence. We met three Vermejo staff members once we entered the backcountry. Although forest management was the central theme of the day, we also discussed other natural resource concerns and issues. As evidenced by the brick kilns, the Vermejo Ranch forests in the section of the ranch we were visiting, was recently dominated by what had mostly established as dense, even-aged forests established in the last century. Ranch foresters are trying to restore these woods to healthy, uneven-aged, open forests. Our goal was to see the process through all stages.

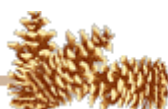


We drove through untreated and treated forests, past the first set of kilns, and making a stop at a working oil well. Although Turner does not own the mineral rights for the area we were in, it was clear that the Vermejo’s commitment to responsible stewardship extended to the surface lease agreement that allowed for the oil and natural gas extraction. Vermejo resource managers explained their strategy to reduce traffic and negative impacts from these operations.

After a lunch stop, we visited the woods operation, first to witness a feller buncher cutting trees on a relatively steep slope. The feller buncher is a single piece of equipment that can cut a tree at its base, and then move that tree upright through the forest to the next tree, bundling three or four trees together before setting them down.

A bit down the road, we witnessed a skidder hauling these bundled clumps of trees to a central landing where another piece of equipment de-limbed the trees and placed them in like-sized piles to be transported to various area sawmills and wood-processors.

Our final stop was back in Raton at Western Wood Products. “This was the highlight of the tour for me,” explained Tree Farmer Carl Struck from Peñasco. “It was really heartening to see all the wood being used efficiently and economically.” The facility included a





sawmill for dimension wood, a dowel pole processor for smaller trees, pressure-treatment facility, and a pellet plant to produce products from the waste and sawdust.

It was a wonderful day contemplating the all-around commitment to forest health and forest ecology that is such a contrast to extractive mentality that drove forest activities 100 years ago.

### **1) BUY, SELL OR TRADE**

Are you looking for forestry related equipment to buy (i.e. chipper, splitter, chainsaw, etc.)? Or, do you own

forestry related equipment you would like to sell or trade? We would like to help you make the connection with other New Mexico Tree Farmers. Provide us with a description of the equipment, price, photo and contact information and we will post it in the New Mexico Tree Farm Bulletin. If you would like us to help you make the connection please provide information to Arnie Friedt at [arnie.friedt@state.nm.us](mailto:arnie.friedt@state.nm.us)

### **2) COMMUNITY CORNER**

If your community is having a forestry related public event let us know the details and we would be delighted to promote your event in the New Mexico Tree Farm Bulletin. Give us the event details, Who, What, Where and When with contact information and we will include in our monthly bulletin. If you would like us to help you promote your event, please provide information to Arnie Friedt at [arnie.friedt@state.nm.us](mailto:arnie.friedt@state.nm.us)

### **3) NEW WEBSITE ADDRESS**

The New Mexico Tree Farm Program is in the process of switching website addresses. Our current website is at <http://www.nmfamilyforests.org/> and will be discontinued at the close of this year (2016). Our new website is at <https://www.treefarmssystem.org/new-mexico> and is already active. Current feature include: contact information, resources, newsletters, bulletins and our calendar of events. Take a few minutes and check out our new website (provided to us by the American Tree Farm System).

