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TREE FARM BULLETIN

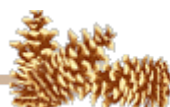
Joe Stehling asked me to write something for the newsletter after I finished pestering him for a letter of recommendation for yet another Collaborative Forest Restoration Program application by our company, Old Wood LLC.

Forestry, fire, sawmills, grants, and fire AGAIN, grants seem to be a large part of the cycle of our life here at the Viveash Ranch. I have been critical of the 'gentleman farmer' aspect of Tree Farming over the years from our business driven perspective, but as a citizen ranch owner, I see no higher calling than to manage a bit of God's wild country for the benefit of environment, beast and man.

Let me begin on June 1st, 2013, the day the second large fire in thirteen years came roaring up the steep slope from the Pecos River below us. I was at the USDA office signing papers for a Value Added Producer Grant for marketing of flooring from our 'small family farm or ranch'. My son called as I walked out into hot, mid-afternoon Albuquerque sun. "Dad, this is the one you've always been afraid of." Sinking heart. "Fire" I asked? "It's coming straight up from Tres Lagunas and the wind is blowing it straight at us, we're in the smoke plume right now." Matter of factly said. This 24 year old has been to a ridiculous number of fires in his few years. I will choke up for the rest of my life thinking of that moment.

We lost over 17 million board feet of timber, and saw over 1200 acres heavily burned in the Viveash Fire, 13 years ago to the day, in 2000. That fire came at us from the south and when it was done had left us with an entirely incinerated valley called Chaparito Creek. That fire burned on up and over Elk Mountain clear to the Gallinas Watershed above Las Vegas, over 30 miles away. This fire, the Tres Lagunas Fire, burned 'only' about 850 acres on our land, some 11,000 acres altogether, relatively small by these recent, enormous fire standards.

Year before last, our little volunteer wildland firefighting crew, (we call ourselves the Viveash Volunteers), was called up suddenly to go and help our friends the Mulanes who were busy being burned down over at their family's Dixon Apple Orchard. That fire at the south end of the Las Conchas, wiped them out but worse than the fire was the flood that ensued. That video can be seen on the video tab at our websites; <http://www.douglasfirfloors.com> or <http://www.woodblockfloors.com> We were asked by the State Land Office to help them clean up dangerous pine trees in the canyon after that fire. That large timber became a remarkable floor you will see at our new website: <http://www.oldwood.us> it's the blue-stained pine floor with the pond and the tree over it!



You will have gathered we have a bit of a recurring problem with fire in our family. Oh, did I mention our newly built, 50,000 board foot, bio-mass fired dry kiln in Las Vegas burned down in July of 2012?

This is getting ridiculous.

So what is a tree farmers to do? In the Tres Lagunas fire, guess what burned the hottest and first? One hundred acres we had *just thinned!!!* We were in the process of cleaning up 'stems' off the ground, mostly small diameter Doug fir when the fire came. When it hit, all that material on the ground burned really well. Where we had not thinned, in some areas, the wind blew the fire straight upslope through the needles so fast that the bottom of the trees was left nearly untouched. Not where we thinned though. That burned HOTTER than the rest of it.

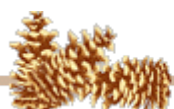
The take aways are that when a bad fire comes, on a windy day with high temperatures and near drought conditions, the best thing to do is run. The other take away for me is that we didn't thin nearly enough or clean up soon enough. No canopy touching would be a hard rule. Some would say 'it will blow down' but I say, better some blow down than all burned down. I would also advocate for post thinning controlled burning. Not easy in this day and age but I'd say very necessary. Areas where we had piled brush and slash over a decade ago, also experienced high ground temperatures when the fire came. I was counseled years ago, to make 'nesting for turkeys' in this manner. I think I was the only turkey! Never saw a bird and the trash was 'in piles' instead of spread around. If I had carefully burned those in snowy winter weather, I think it might have helped.

I won't go into 'clumps and clusters and cigar shaped openings' except to say that I think a good looking and fire resistant mountain would look a lot like the Santa Fe Ski Basin where they opened up a lot of mountain, leaving shaped dense pockets in some area and nicely opened 'glade' skiing in others. If you haven't been there, take a ski trip or hike up in summer under the 'old triple' chair and the new Quad to see what I mean. I think they did a great job of building a fire-proofed forest while making for some great skiing as well. Good hiking too! I'd bet the wildlife like it a lot.

I guess my ranch is now the poster child for 'what to do after the fire'. We did an aggressive clear-cut after the Viveash Fire but that was on easier ground. This current fire was on a lot of very steep ground, which will be hard to get to and besides, there are precious few markets for timber nowadays. After the Viveash Fire, I immediately had a contract for some 6 million feet of burned timber from Rio Grande Forest Products. Now, I am struggling to find a single buyer besides my own flooring enterprise. If any of you know anyone interested in helping me simply pay for the cleanup, meaning cheap timber, please let me know. I can be reached at: 505-983-5454 and feel free to call.

That's enough rambling about forest, fires and us for now. I'd love to get going about the value of value-added, the marketing value of Tree Farming and you could get me on a rant *against FSC anytime*. I hear the Green Globes program intends to include us and I hope we will hear more about that soon. Thin more than you are inclined to, cleanup by all means, take kids out in the woods whenever you can. Try to remember, they are only trees and your family are people! Love them both but hold your family very near. Fire has taught me that.

David J. Old of the Viveash Ranch and Old Wood LLC





RESPONSIBLE LAND
STEWARDSHIP

BENEFIT RAFFLE!

To Support Responsible Land Stewardship in the
San Juan - Rio Grande Watersheds of Colorado and New Mexico.

A complimentary membership to the Chama Peak Land Alliance is included with the purchase of each ticket. So everyone is a winner! Drawing May 1, 2015. Need not be present to win. Make checks payable to "Chama Peak Land Alliance" or pay online at www.chamapeak.org

TRIP 1: \$100/ticket; 1,000 tickets to be sold.

PRIME SEASON, ANY WEAPON BULL ELK HUNT AT THE LODGE AND RANCH AT CHAMA LAND & CATTLE COMPANY, CHAMA, NM (SEPTEMBER 19-23, 2015)

Enjoy this trip for 2 and experience the thrill of a world class, free range, 5 day/6 night "peak of the rut" trophy bull elk hunt scheduled for September 19-23, 2015 at the Jicarilla Apache Nation's 36,000 acre Lodge and Ranch at Chama Land & Cattle Company located to the east of Chama, New Mexico.

The trip includes lodging, meals and bar for one hunter and one non-hunting guest, one bull elk license, one-on-one guide service and a trophy bull elk hunt for one person.

This will be a unique opportunity because the winner may choose any weapon for this hunt i.e. bow, muzzle-loader or rifle .30-06 or larger.

TRIP 2: \$50/ticket; 1,000 tickets to be sold.

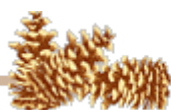
FISHING ADVENTURE ON TROUT STALKER RANCH, CHAMA, NM (MAY - OCTOBER 2015)

Enjoy an overnight fishing adventure for 4 on the Rio Chama at the Trout Stalker Ranch. Located immediately south of the Village of Chama with nearly two miles of Rio Chama frontage, this Fishing Adventure will provide a lifetime of memories for up to 4 fishers. Two will fish with a guide on the Rio Chama, alternating with the other two who will be fishing on both the 11-acre "Arrogant Goose Lake" and the 3-acre "Muchas Truchas Lake."

This is a private, non-commercial ranch, not open to the public. The group will arrive in the late morning, fish the first afternoon, cook out for dinner on your own or drive into the Village of Chama for restaurant dinner, enjoy comfortable accommodations on the Ranch, fish the next morning, and then depart on the third afternoon.

www.chamapeak.org

The Chama Peak Land Alliance is a 501c3 non-profit organization of conservation-minded landowners working collaboratively to practice and promote ecologically and economically sound land management in the southern San Juan Mountains of Colorado.



FROM THE CHAIRMAN: I would like to thank David Old for his write up featured in this month's bulletin and apologize to him for the delay in publishing. As I mentioned previously we would like to feature a tree farmer more frequently in the bulletin. So please send to me your input. We can make it read good if you are concerned about your literary abilities.

Our next Committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 12 August in the Department of Agriculture building on Jefferson Street in Albuquerque. Please plan on attending.

Also plan on attending our Tree Farmer of the Year celebration currently set for 10/18/2014.

