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TREE FARM BULLETIN

PRACTICING MY FORESTRY SKILLS DURING A PANDEMIC

By: Hart Alex, NM Tree Farmer of the Year (2003 & 2015)

People ask me what has changed? "I have more time to work in my forest now," I tell them. We were already somewhat "isolated" on our ranch. Our closest neighbors are half a mile away. But before the Rona (CoRONAvirus) came along, we were spending several days a week in the urban zone (Taos) doing city things-gym, shop, eat, medical, etc. Now that is over.

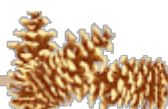
In the pre-Rona days, I was glad I could do three days a week in the forest with my crew. Now I have seven to choose from. Glorious is the right word.

At the beginning, (March) I told my crew we were done working until this passes. Now it appears it never will. So, with lots of calls coming from wood customers, I opened for sales in May-weekends



only. Have had a record season with 350 truckloads of wood out by August. I did make a few customers laugh by using a cardboard box for their cash. It was on my Honda (ATV). Told customers to put their money in it. "I am not touching that stuff, without washing it first," I said.

Due to positive cash flow, I hired three of my best sawyers back in early May and had them working six days a week dropping and chopping. We are way ahead of the wood haulers. We finished thinning the 37-acre property we started last fall. Then we did a final(?) treatment of the 54-acre property we had thinned twice before. All while waiting for entry into a new jungle. That is a 27-acre property sale that was hung up by probate for one of the eight owners. Soon, I think.



During the almost two months my crew was off, I did the regular forest work, just without their help. Make and burn slash piles. Cut branch and buck trees. Enjoy the ambiance of a forest without people. Had time to “smell” the roses. Very nice!

We finished cutting the rest of the white fir in one canyon. Most were already dead or dying from the broom rust. The aspens are happy campers with the additional sunlight.

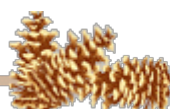
The massive ponderosa seed production, last year, brought lots of turkeys in the “fluff” the needles in their search for seeds. Even though we have had a very weak monsoon, we still managed to do some slash burning. That job is never ending. Also seeded barren slopes and unused logging roads with 600 pounds of grass seed. Always waiting for more rain.

We are now in a final clean up in preparation for a 20-acre grass fire this fall. Trying to eliminate the last of the firewood in that area. We had a two-acre grass burn practice exercise last fall to train my crew. Reintroducing fire to the forest is long overdue, though we have been burning slash piles throughout the eight years. Not the same.



I tell people, who chose to listen, that I have been on a “mission” from God. Borrowed that from The Blues Brothers. Why else would I voluntarily give up my retirement to “fix” the forest? My crew and I have worked on almost 350 acres, so far, and it never ends.

Turning fire prone jungle into a park like setting has been one of the greatest challenges I have ever had. It also gives me some of the best rewards. The Rona is just another challenge among many.



The webinars will address what soil really is, what soil health looks like, and particularly how this relates to erosion, sediment accumulation, water conservation in the soil, and getting plants to grow. We will look at the relationships between the surface and soil ecology. The webinars will identify local soil conditions and how to improve them, for example in support of erosion control on degraded areas, farming in sediment areas, and farming in places without sediment. Participants will learn more about indicators of soil health below and above-ground, erosion and sedimentation features, how plants are connected through fungal networks, how the soil microbiome accumulates carbon, soil texture and soil alkalinity and to what extent the soil system stores water.

HEALTHY SOIL WEBINARS

#1: *Defining and Measuring Healthy Upland Soil*
Wednesday August 12, 11:30 am - 1:00 pm

#2: *Restoring Soil Health in Degraded Uplands*
Wednesday August 26, 12:00 noon - 1:30 pm

#3: *Restoring Soil Health in Fields Affected by Sediment*
Wednesday September 9, 12:00 noon - 1:30 pm

#4: *Maintaining Soil Health in Fields with Native Soil*
Wednesday September 23, 12:00 noon - 1:30 pm

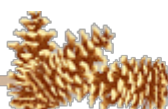
All Webinars Are Free of Charge

Registration Required:
<https://quiviracoalition.org/embudowebinars/>

Presented by Jan-Willem Jansens of Ecotone Landscape Planning, with support from Embudo Valley Library & Community Center, New Mexico Department of Agriculture's Soil Health Program, and Quivira Coalition

The webinars will introduce Five Soil Health Principles and demonstrate how to conduct simple terrain measurements and soil observations to evaluate soil health conditions. The second webinar (Wednesday, August 26, at noon) will focus on erosion features and causes and erosion control techniques, specifically, around arroyos and along off-road vehicle tracks. The third webinar (Wednesday, September 9, at noon) will focus on farming problems at locations with excess sediment and management solutions to improve soil health and plant production. The fourth webinar (Wednesday, September 23, at noon) will focus on farming in areas that do not receive much sediment and farming practices that would improve soil health in these conditions.

Each webinar stands on its own. However, because each webinar builds on the previous one, they form a series. You can register for each webinar by visiting <https://quiviracoalition.org/embudowebinars/>. After you have registered, we send you some reading materials, a brief survey, the Zoom webinar link, and some clarifications about Zoom webinars.



1) NMTFC 2020 RAFFLE

NEW MEXICO TREE FARM COMMITTEE 2020 RAFFLE

Tickets will be sold through Labor Day, September 7, 2020

The raffle will take place after Labor Day and the winners will be announced in the September Tree Farm Bulletin

First Prize: Un-guided Private Ranch Cow Elk Hunt Landowner Tag

Second Prize: Large Custom-made Metal Art Piece

Donated by Carl and Lisa Bartley

Third Prize: \$100 Cabela's Gift Card

Cow Elk Landowner tag donated by the Bartley Ranch

Unit 45, Hunt dates, any five days between 11/7 and 12/10/2020

Winner will be responsible for NMDGF license and tag

\$10.00 Each

To purchase your 2020 Raffle ticket(s) send a letter and check (payable to NMTFC) to:

Doug Boykin

1118 Hope Farms Road

Socorro, NM 87801

Doug will in turn send you your numbered 2020 Raffle ticket stub(s).

2) COMMITTEE MEETING

All Tree Farmers are invited and encouraged to partake in our 3rd New Mexico Tree Farm Committee Meeting of the year (three held annually). Please join us at 1:30 pm on Wednesday, December 9th, 2020. Due to Covid-19, it is too early to determine if this meeting will be in person or by videoconference.

3) 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? Forestry related equipment only, please, no homes or land. 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

4) E-MAIL INSTEAD OF SNAIL MAIL

Would you prefer to receive your Tree Farm Bulletin by e-mail instead of snail mail? If so, contact Arnie Friedt at arnie.friedt@state.nm.us and provide him with your contact information. By receiving your Tree Farm Bulletin by e-mail our operating costs are reduced. Thank you for considering this option.

