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Committee

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On October 9th, an absolutely gorgeous New Mexico fall day, Tree Farmers, foresters, and Gary Johnson the National Tree Farm representative for the Western region visited the Bryan and Barbara Willard Tree Farm. The Willard Tree Farm consists of 79 acres of mainly Ponderosa pine forests intermixed with pinyon pine, juniper and Douglas fir situated just outside the village of Ruidoso.

Barbara Willard is a second generation Tree Farmer, her father is a certified Tree Farmer in Maine.



Barbra and Bryan Willard receiving the 2009 New Mexico Tree
Farmer of the Year Award from Joe Stehling

Bryan and Barbara have owned the property since 1993. Original written forest management recommendations were established in 1994 and a Forest Stewardship land management plan was completed in 1997. In 17 years the Willard's have implemented some sort of forest management on nearly all of the 79 acres.

In 1997, the Willard's conducted an individual tree selection and salvage harvest on 50 acres of their tree farm (yield of 161,570 board feet of sawtimber and 20 cords of fuelwood). Harvest prescription called for the removal of beetle killed timber and heavy mistletoe infected individuals first. Harvest prescription called for retaining all viable non-host species. Natural regeneration after harvest has been extremely successful.

One year after harvest completion, the Willard's conducted a follow up TSI entry on 33 acres of the commercially harvested Ponderosa pine. Since 2001, and most recently in 2008, 55 acres have been treated under landowner cost-share programs to increase forest health and mitigate the threat of damaging fires.

Bryan and Barbara Willard have always sought recommendations from professional foresters before embarking on any forest management activities. They also carefully selected their timber contractor. In spite of this, the Willard's have been the target of criticism from adjacent landowners who were misinformed about forest management in the early years of their management activities. Ruidoso and its views about forest health have changed a lot since then, but Bryan and Barbara are to be commended for being pioneers within the community and having the mettle to exercise their rights as property owners in the face of unenlightened public comments from their peers.

In conjunction with presentation of the Tree Farmer of the Year award and the \$350.00 gift certificate from the Stihl Corporation, Barbara Willard related the history of their farm and how the neighbors have come around to appreciating all they have done on their property.

Following Barbara's presentation Charlie Wickland, chairman of the New Mexico Committee to host the national tree farm convention in Bernalillo, New Mexico, briefed attendees on the status of convention planning and tours that are being developed for attendees. He made a plea for volunteers to assist. Several tree farmers expressed an interest in helping. Joe Stehling, Vice Chairman of the New Mexico Tree Farm Committee invited all tree farmers to attend the quarterly meetings and requested active participation. Following the presentations, Andrew Frederick, Capitan District forester led the group on a tour of the property that showed the excellent work done in the past and the problems with scrub oak that is overtaking parts of the property after the canopy was opened. Other problems viewed were mistletoe which is a continuing problem and will need to be addressed in the future. The group discussed several solutions to the problems, but none that will be a final solution. Maintaining the property will be a continuing and long term workload.

Following a wonderful lunch prepared by Barbara and Andrew Frederick's wife the group toured a second section of the property that has a waterfall and slightly different tree stands consisting of more Douglas fir and oak trees.

Next Tree Farm committee meeting will be held 08 December in Albuquerque. All tree farmers are invited to attend.

(Joe Stehling)