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TREE FARM BULLETIN

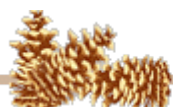
Five Tree Farmers along with some 25 friends, family, and neighbors met on a beautiful fall day, 29 September, to honor Richard and Carol Spears as the New Mexico Tree Farmers of the year. The Spears welcomed everyone to their 160 acre tree farm with hot coffee, cooked in a campfire pot, along with donuts and pastries. The tree farm consists of pinion juniper, ponderosa, mixed conifer and is a Crosby Mountain in-holding of the Cibola National Forest.

The program began with Nick Smokovich, Forester with the New Mexico State Forestry Socorro District, describing the work the Spears accomplished starting in 2008 using County, State, and Federal grants. Before the Spears started work, one could barely walk through the property. Once the thinning and cleanup was done, the property had an almost picture perfect Firewise landscape with properly spaced trees that were limbed up to remove ladder fuel to mitigate the possibility of a crown fire. In doing the thinning the Spears made use of almost all materials for posts, firewood and poles; burning much of the slash and making wildlife habitat piles for the remainder. The Spears were helped in their quest for grants by Catron County completing the Datil WUI Community Wildfire Protection Plan that indicated that their private property was the #1 priority area for wildfire potential. Hence there was much interest in doing work in the area to reduce that risk. Following Nick's description of the farm, New Mexico Tree Farm Committee Chairman, Joe Stehling, gave a description of the Tree Farm program, its requirements and advantages. Several attendees, all neighbors, indicated an interest in becoming certified tree farmers.

The program continued with a tour of part of the property and a demonstration by our intrepid foresters, Nick and Todd Haines, District Forester from Bernalillo County, on how to measure a tree as a candidate for the Big Tree program. They demonstrated by measuring a Alligator juniper that proved to be 58 feet high, 17 feet 2 inches in circumference, and 64 inches in diameter. Attendees were asked to guess the height of the tree. Guesses went from 60 feet to 140 feet, with most on the high side showing how difficult estimation of tree height is without instruments. The closest estimate was from the New Mexico Tree Farm committee treasurer, Charlie Wicklund, a retired NM state forester. Of course he had an unfair advantage of some 30 years in the field. Numerous discussions ensued on wildflowers, differences between juniper and cedar trees, growth characteristics and control of scrub oak, oak trees, selection of trees for removal, and thinning operations.

The tour concluded with Stan Towner, National Resource and Conservation Service District Conservationist, leading a discussion on thinning impact on water courses and springs. The removal of young and intermediate age trees, which use considerable water compared to mature established trees, has caused heretofore dry springs to regenerate themselves and start producing water after sometimes years of being dry. This has happened even following a moderate level wildfire that removed dense understory.

The day concluded with a hamburger bar-b-que lunch and the presentation of the plaque and Stihl's \$250.00 gift certificate as recognition as Tree Farmers of the Year. Our congratulations to the Spears. I hope to see more tree farmers at our events next year.





(Left to Right: Richard Spears, Carol Spears and Joe Stehling)



(Big Tree measurement demonstration)



(Left to Right: Nick Smokovich and Charlie Wicklund)

