VOLUME VIII NUMBER 1 FEBRUARY 2005

NEW MEXICO TREE FARM NEWS

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IN THIS ISSUE

GREETINGS FROM THE NEW CHAIR, HARRY A. MORRISON

I am pleased to serve as Chair of the New Mexico Tree Farm Committee (NMFTC) for 2005-07.

My thanks go out to Will Stapleton, Past Chair who did much in his six- year term to promote the Tree Farm program in New Mexico. Will has agreed to serve as an Ambassador for the NMTFC so we won't be losing his experience and wisdom.

Unlike Will, I am not a Tree Farmer. I am a forester who has worked with New Mexico private landowners, including many Tree Farmers, since 1979. Over the years I have seen management of private forestland become more important than ever. Our recent drought conditions with its attendent fires, bark beetles, and low reservoir levels has increased interest in how our forests are managed. This and the fact that our world becomes more crowded every year will make good forest management more vital and valuable than ever.

The American Tree Farm System (ATFS) with over 55,000 members nationwide, is the largest forest landowner association in the country. It has played and will continue to play a big role in shaping forest management on private lands. The mission of the ATFS is outreach and education. It is also recognition for landowners who practice good forestry. The Tree Farm sign is recognized everywhere as a sign that the landowner is committed to good management.

The goals of the NMTFC over the next three years are to increase member involvement, continue and expand outreach and education through the Demonstration forests and the Bluebird project, and continue to inform members of forest management topics, news, and events through this newsletter and other means.

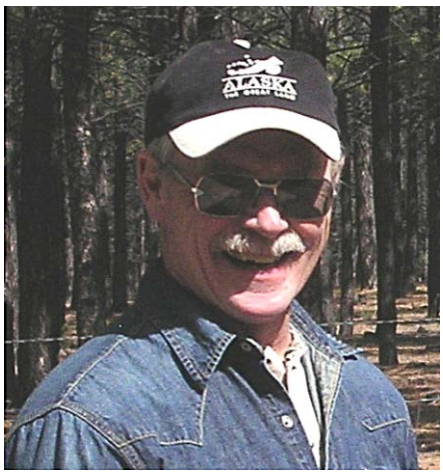
My personal goal is to visit as many of the 240,000 acres our 180 members in New Mexico own and manage as I can. Hope to see you soon!

NEW MEXICO TREE FARM COMMITTEE, 2005

2005 will see a new set of faces on the New Mexico Tree Farm Committee Executive Staff.

Harry Morrison takes over as Committee Chairman after serving the last 4 years as vice chair. Harry runs Quality Wood Products in the Chama Valley and has been a practicing Forester for many years.

Rachel Wood, a practicing forester with Wood Resources Group in Santa Fe takes over the Secretary duties from NMSU professor John Harrington.



A. Hart Allex, a Tree Farmer from the Penasco Valley (2003 Tree Farmer of the Year) takes over Harry's spot as Vice-Chair.

Charlie Wicklund, Forester Deluxe, who runs the NM Forestry Division Inmate Work Camp Program in Los Lunas will return as the Committee Treasurer.

We hope to run short biographies on these wonderful volunteers in future newsletters.

THANK YOU TO WILL AND JEAN STAPLETON

On December 2nd, 2004, Tree Farm Committee Executive members and friends meet in Bernalillo for a short Executive meeting, and then took Will and Jean out to lunch. Will had been Tree Farm Committee Chairman since 1998, and is responsible for the reinvigoration of the program in New Mexico.

We will miss them both, but know that Will is ready to get back to the work of Tree Farming on his Tree Farm southeast of Gallup.

THE 2003 NEW MEXICO TREE FARMER OF THE YEAR

Arnie Friedt (NMSF – Cimarron District)

On October 2, 2004 the New Mexico Tree Farm Committee along with fellow Tree Farmers and neighbors came together to honor A. Hart and Utilia Allex for being the 2003 New Mexico Tree Farmer of the Year. Hart and Utilia Allex are the 2003 New Mexico Tree Farmers of the Year because they go the extra chain to make their Tree Farm a better place to live, not only for themselves but also for the trees, wildlife and all who visit their property. The Allex's have owned Rancho De Jicarita since 1977, located near Peñasco, New Mexico. Those in attendance included friends, family, tree farm landowners; state forestry personnel, consultants and others interested in the management of private forestlands.

The event started with a tour of the 70 acres, Hart talked about management of Ponderosa Pine forests including revegetating steep rocky slopes, thinning practices and

insect/disease control. After the tour, attendees enjoyed a delicious homemade Mexican lunch, which was provided by Hart and Utilia Allex. Following lunch a plaque and gifts (chainsaw and safety equipment) were awarded to the Alex's who were very appreciative of the honor. Hart, "As long as I can, I will continue thinning a few acres each year. My pleasure and pride in walking through the areas that have been completed is enough reward to continue. And the exercise is good too. The forest is my hobby and my obsession."

New Mexico Tree Farm Chairman Will Stapleton presents A. Hart and Utilia Allex their 2003 Tree Farmer of the Year Award.

FIREWOOD

(George Duda –- Energy, Minerals & Natural Resources Department, Forestry Division)

What is a cord of wood? It is 128 cubic feet, stacked in a 4X4X8 foot space, or in any three dimensions with a volume of 128 cubic feet. Considering spaces between the pieces, a cord will usually have about 80 cubic feet of solid wood.

What is creosote? Creosote is a flammable deposit inside the chimney, formed by the combination of smoke and water vapor. It is extremely important that any wood, resinous (like piñon or ponderosa pine) or non-resinous (like oak or aspen), be allowed to completely dry before burning. Drying (seasoning) fresh, green wood may take several summer months to properly dry. Drying time can be shortened by splitting. Damp oak or aspen can create just as much, or more creosote as piñon or ponderosa pine.

Chimney fires are dangerous. Hire a professional to inspect and clean your wood burning equipment. Burn only dry wood to minimize creosote and maximize the efficiency of your equipment. Poorly seasoned (damp or wet) wood, will yield about 18% less heat because water must driven off (water vapor and smoke makes creosote), before the wood can burn.

Different woods yield different amounts of heat. Here are some heat values of dry wood, per cord (in 1,000's of British Thermal Units):

One seed juniper……..	21958
Gamble oak……..	21163
Utah juniper……..	20149
Piñon pine……..……	18737
Alligator juniper……..	17288
Douglas-fir…….....	15330
White fir……..	14212
Ponderosa pine……..	14085
Aspen…….....	12576
Englemann spruce…….....	10880

Why is "cedar" not included on this list? There are no native cedars in New Mexico. Juniper is often called "cedar" because it smells like cedar. In New Mexico, when you buy "cedar", you are buying juniper.

Firewood should be stacked outside and away from your structure. It should be protected from rain/snow. More than firewood can be in your wood pile. Check for insects. If insects are present, wood should be covered with clear plastic, in full sunlight. Properly "solarized", any live insects will not survive the high temperatures generated under the clear plastic. The plastic should be sealed at the ground to hold in the "greenhouse" generated solar heat, which can reach up to 160 degrees F.

New Mexico has experienced a profound dieback of ponderosa and piñon pine. Six years of severe drought has created a favorable food supply for tree killing bark beetles. Firewood will be plentiful for the long term; so will insects. If bark beetles are present, it is possible for these insects to over winter in your firewood. If you have piñon pine or ponderosa pine in your landscape, bark beetles in piñon or ponderosa pine firewood can emerge in the spring to utilize your live trees. As temperatures warm up in the spring, bark beetles in piñon firewood can attack live piñon. Bark beetles in ponderosa pine firewood can attack live ponderosas. Spraying the firewood with chemicals will not affect the live insects; they are hidden and protected under the bark. Solarizing the wood is the best treatment to 'cook' living insects. Wood borers may also be found in firewood. Wood borers do not kill trees. Wood borers utilize wood which is already dead. Wood borers can actually be

heard inside the wood. Sometimes when splitting wood, large tunnels can be seen in which we can sometimes find live borers. These insects will not hurt your live trees.

Using dry wood in high a tech wood burning device is a good choice as a source of heat energy. Always follow the equipment manufacturer's operating instructions. If you live in or venture to the forest to cut your own wood, chainsaw safety is a primary concern. Always follow the saw manufacturer's operating and safety instructions.

Wood is a vast, renewable source of heat. Wood can reduce the demand of finite sources of fossil fuels. We will continue to have a bountiful supply of firewood in New Mexico. Using firewood as a source of heat, can help clean our forests of excess fuels that otherwise contribute to dangerous catastrophic wild land fires.

For further information contact your local New Mexico State Forestry office. Listings are found in the blue government pages under State, Energy, Minerals & Natural Resources Department, Forestry Division. The United States Forest Service listings can be found in the blue government pages under Federal, Agriculture Department of, Forest Service. If these listings are not in your local directory, call (505) 476-3325 in Santa Fe for State Forestry. Call (505) 842-3292 for United States Forest Service in Albuquerque, (505) 438-7840 for United States Forest Service in Santa Fe.

When transporting any woody product, consider State Law 68-2-22: "No person shall cut, remove, transport or sell any woody product without written consent of the owner or proof of ownership, whether the land is public or privately owned." Such consent or proof of ownership must accompany the wood being transported.

THE KISS OF DEATH

A. Hart Allex

Psst! Did you hear that? Psst, psst-there it goes again. That is the kiss of death for more of my trees. Psst is the sound of spray paint making a little spot on the bark. Psst means that tree has been selected for removal at some time in the future. As I walk through my forest there are hundreds and hundreds of marked trees. It seems the number constantly grows.

Thinning a forest is a tough job. It is physically demanding, mentally challenging and unforgiving. There is no going back. Once a tree has been cut all you have is a stump, firewood and slash-no more tree. Mistakes may be made but they are not fixable.

There is time for a second opinion. Between the time a tree is marked and the chainsaw arrives there is a window of opportunity to reflect upon the decision. I have rubbed paint off the bark of a few trees but not often. At the last moment before the saw bites wood I look up at the whole tree. Are you sure? I ask myself.

How did I get to this stressful decision making position? It all started with a forest that was/is a jungle. How can a southwest forest be a jungle? It doesn't take an abundance of water. Simple mismanagement or non-management will do it every time. There are thousands of acres around us and probably millions more in the southwest that look the same.

In our 45 acres of Ponderosa Pine there are many with 2000 or more trees per acre. An old growth forest, if you could find one, might have two or three hundred per acre. To give our trees a decent chance at a productive life there needs to be less-hence thinning.

At the beginning, I am what I call the Samurai chainswordsman. My mental image is of a Samurai soldier swinging his huge sword as he charges through the bad guys. The chainsaw works the same way as I swing it back and forth through thousands of little trees. In many places they are so thick I have to cut for some time before any of them can fall down. Sometimes it takes more energy to get them to the ground than to cut them in the first place. These trees can be 30 or 40 foot tall and two or three inches in diameter.

This is the first stage in the thinning process. I cut somewhere in the neighborhood of two-thirds of the trees in any particular area. The resulting mess is very unsettling. The tangle of trees reminds me of a Disneyland nightmare filled with giant pretzels all intertwined. I try to keep the down trees from leaning against live trees. The bark beetle knows it can really get me mad by walking up the dead into the living and cause more death.

During this first stage it is very difficult to do a good job of selecting the "leave" trees because of the absolute density of the forest. Just trying to look at a tree from all angles is impossible due to standing or down trees in the way. That is the reason for only taking two-thirds out. When the firewood folks get done and after we have burned all the slash then I can see what is left.

Now I can walk around a tree and check it out from top to bottom at different angles. Then I find out how good my initial thin was. At times it is very dismal and depressing. So many more to go down? Is there no end to this massacre? Are there really any good trees in this bunch? Psst. So begins the second thin.

On the second pass I may take out half of the trees I left the first time. It may be the following year or many years later. If the original cut was through a stand of very small trees I would intentionally leave them thick to protect them from wind and wet snow "lean overs." The beetle, too, will take its share. Now it is time to get tough on the decisions. When there are several nice, big, straight trees close together I have to think about it for a long time. If they are doing so well close why not leave them alone? How many large (8 inch and larger) trees do I have and why sacrifice these? If I look real close I can sometimes find a defect that will help my decision. Or the bark is in trouble from lightning or squirrel damage. Or there are no branches on one side from another tree shading it out. Psst. How about a bad tree that is all by itself? Another tough one.

If I have already taken off the lower dead branches from a section it is real easy to wander around with my eyes at the tops of the trees. If not it is dangerous. Psst. Firewood guys come and get it.

By the time I get to stage three the forest already looks great and meets my standards. Nothing on the floor but pine needles and pine cones, grass and small vegetation is starting to grow and the spacing between trees allows me easy access. But we are not done yet. There is more selecting to be done. By now most of the trees are straight, well formed, undamaged and, maybe, the bottom branches are gone. But the trees are still too close together for future growth.

According to forest guidelines I should be able to drive my pickup between any two trees (eight foot spacing). With large trees that would not be enough but with my little ones it is reasonable. I am not even close. But looking at the DBH/BA charts you will find a little tip for future problems. If your density on an average five inch tree is 436 per acre (at 60BA) and your trees grow an average of half an inch a year like ours do, in ten years your tree diameter would be 10 inches. With that size tree you should only have 109 per acre. So over a ten year period you should cut down 327 more trees per acre. How is that for unfinished business? Psst.

Maybe in one hundred years we will have an incredible forest with all the components back in place that have been stripped over the years. But for now we can enjoy the feeling of progress and success while walking through what we have "managed" and always carry a spray can.

A NEW TOOL TO REDUCE FUELS?

Jackie Denk, Fire Information Officer, USDA Forest Service Kaibab National Forest.

(Sept. 13, 2004) Making a home defensible against wildfire requires a little time and effort and a lot of tools ---everything from rakes and pruning sheers to chainsaws and lawnmowers. But for one local resident, those tools just wouldn't do. Her tool of choice in preparing for wildfire season 2004? Cows.

To increase the safety of her home, Shirley Strong called the Kaibab National Forest last spring to request that cows be put to pasture near her property in Pine-Aire Estates. She hoped that by the cows doing what comes naturally — eating — the amount of fuels near her property would be reduced.

"When I picked up the phone and she said she wanted to talk about cows, I immediately thought the worst," said Paul Webber, range conservation specialist on the Williams Ranger District. "Usually, people call to complain about cows. It was refreshing to talk to someone who was really thinking about how they could use livestock to their benefit."

Strong's home near Garland Prairie is surrounded by a sea of grass. With the prolonged drought, Strong has watched that grass get drier and drier. She has also watched it grow so dense and matted that she feared the smallest flame could turn into a large inferno.
"Because there has been less and less water, we have been seeing less and less wildlife in this area," said Strong, who has lived in Pine-Aire Estates since 1995. According to Strong, smaller numbers of wildlife have meant greater amounts of grass and an increasing concern on her part about the threat of wildland fire, especially during the spring and early summer when strong winds push across the prairie. "We live right on the edge of the prairie, and it is a concern for us with all of that grass out there."

The Strong residence is on the north side of the Dutch Kid and Grey pastures, which make up about 1,300 acres of the 12,160-acre Bellemont Allotment. The Bellemont Allotment is permitted to Rex Maughan, who usually runs about 285 cows on it. Because of prolonged drought, Maughan voluntarily reduced his herd to 230 cows — a number that Webber said the allotment would be able to graze in 2004 given forage monitoring findings.

While the Dutch Kid and Grey pastures are used during summer grazing rotations, cows are not typically put to pasture there until later in the season. "The Strongs

were concerned about the potential for fire to rip through the prairie," Webber said. "They wanted the cattle out there as early as possible to help reduce some of the fuels."

Because of Strong's request, Webber worked with managers of the allotment — Mary and Neil Abbott — to place the cows there first. The 230 cows were on the Dutch Kid and Grey pastures near the Strong residence from May 15 through June 10.

"I thought it was a great idea because the corner of the pasture near their home hasn't gotten much use," Mary Abbott said. "The grass had become so overgrown and matted that it wasn't really palatable to antelope or other wildlife anymore."

The Strongs and Abbotts had two major objectives in putting cattle into the area. First, the cows would eat the overgrown, matted grasses thereby reducing the risk of a wildland fire moving through the area. Second, the movement of the cows would churn up compacted grasses and soils, allowing new grasses to sprout.

In order to help ensure those objectives were met, the Abbotts placed salt blocks near the Strong residence to attract the cows, which tend to avoid getting very close to homes. According to Webber, the salt did the trick, and the cows began feeding right along the Strong's fence line, reducing flammable material along the way.

"This was a winning situation for everyone," Webber said. "It resulted in greater safety for the Strongs, better relations between permittees and landowners, and an awareness of some of the positive aspects of grazing rather than the negative things people usually hear."

While everyone was pleased with the results, Webber said that the same arrangements can't be made again next year because of the rest-rotation grazing schedule that is in place on the Kaibab National Forest. Pastures are not used every year because of the importance of allowing the land to rest after use by cattle. However, both Strong and Abbott agree that they would like to do this again in the future.

"The keys to our survival [as ranchers] are education and community relations," Abbott said. "It is important to take any chance we get to show people that we are trying to be good stewards of the land. We all want to keep the range in the best condition that we can." [*Reprinted with permission from Author Jackie Denk (jdenk@fs.fed.us)*]

FOREST (MANAGEMENT) CERTIFICATION – A CAN OF WORMS OR A GREAT STRIDE FORWARD?

JOHN HARRINGTON (NMSU – MORA RESEARCH CENTER)

Did you realize you are a member of the oldest forest certification program in the United States? You bet ya. The American Tree Farm System, founded in 1941 was in the business of forest certification of private forest lands long before forest certification had become a requisite marketing tool for selling building supplies or paper. But what exactly is forest certification or forest management certification? Is it just another marketing ploy? Is it just about timber production? Is it just another method for others to influence a landowner's decision? Is just another cottage industry for natural resource professionals? Read on.

Forest certification is a process used to recognize well managed, sustainable forestlands. Similarly, forest management certification is a process used to recognize forest management practices which result in the sustainable production of forest resources. Certification has become increasingly popular recently for several reasons depending on one's perspective. Industry views certification, in part, as a means of good marketing by assuring their customers that the products they are purchasing have been produced in a sustainable fashion. Environmental groups and the general public as a whole see certification as a check and balance mechanism to ensure a company or forest landowner is committed to sustainable forestry. Forest landowners see certification, in part, as validation process that they are practicing sound and sustainable forest management.

Presently, there are many certification organization and associated programs that provide forest or forest management certification. These organizations and programs include: The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), National Forestry Association's "Green Tag Program", the American Forest & Paper Association's "Sustainable Forestry Initiative" and the American Forest Foundation's "Tree Farm Program" of which you all are members. Forest certification programs, including the American Tree Farm Program usually have two requisite components. First, the applicant for certification must have developed and implemented a sound management plan. Second, the forestlands must have met or are meeting pre-determined performance standards.

A key attribute that allows these certification programs to meet the objectives of all parties concerned is the objectivity of the certification program. In the Tree Farm Program, objectivity of the certification process is

attained by requiring an accredited Tree Farm Inspector to conduct Tree Farm inspections. Accredited Tree Farm Inspectors have the professional backgrounds and specialized training to evaluate whether a forest landowner is meeting the American Forest Foundation's "Standards of Sustainability." These inspectors provide the necessary third-party (independent) verification that a Tree Farm has a sound management plan and is meeting all pre-determined performance standards. Third-party verification is analogous to certification. This process, regardless of a person's interest or vantage point, results in the build-up of trust. The landowner trusts that their management plan is resulting in them practicing sustainable forest management. The company buying products from the Tree Farm trusts that products are being produced and harvested in a sustainable manner. The general public trusts the products they use are not being produced at the expense of the environment. The term "product" can refer to any number of products generated from forests and woodlands including timber, wildlife, recreation, water, and aesthetics.

Some of New Mexico's older Tree Farmers may have noticed some changes in the inspection form and inspection process recently. These changes are the result of the American Tree Farm System updating both its standards and guidelines to recognize advances in measures of forest sustainability. These changes are the result of the American Tree Farm System taking the necessary steps to be internationally recognized as a credible forest certification program for family forest landowners.

Briefly, in December 2002 the American Forest Foundation, sponsor of the American Tree Farm System, approved nine "Standards of Sustainability" that all Tree Farms must meet. These standards are:

Standard 1. Ensuring Sustainable Forests. The American Forest Foundation's Standards of Sustainability promote the growing of renewable forest resources on private lands while protecting environmental benefits and increasing public understanding of all benefits of productive forestry.

Standard 2. Compliance with Laws. Forest management complies with all relevant federal, state and local regulations and ordinances.

Standard 3. Commitment to Practicing Sustainable Forestry. Forest owners demonstrate their commitment to sustainability by developing and implementing a long-term forest management plan.

Standard 4. Reforestation. Forest owners provide timely restocking of desirable species of trees, compatible with regional ecosystems on harvested areas and idle areas where tree-growing is the land use objective.

Standard 5. Air, Water and Soil Protection. Forestry practices maintain or enhance the environment, including air, water, soil, and site quality.

Standard 6. Fish, Wildlife and Biodiversity. Forest management activities contribute to the conservation of biodiversity and maintain or enhance habitat for native fish, wildlife, and plant species, with emphasis on natural plant animal communities and rare plants and animals.

Standard 7. Forest Aesthetics. Forest management practices minimize negative visual impacts of forest activities.

Standard 8. Protect Special Sites. Special sites are managed in a way that recognizes their unique characteristics.

Standard 9. Wood Fiber Harvest and Other Operations. Wood fiber harvests and forest operations are conducted in accordance with the management plan and with sensitivity to other forest values (e.g. water quality, regeneration, wildlife habitat, biodiversity, special sites, etc.).

(Reproduced from the American Tree Farm System Webpage "Certification-Standards of Sustainability for Forest Certification." http://www.treefarmsystem.org/).

Within each one of these standards there are at least one performance measure and at least one indicator for each performance measure. As of July 2004 all Tree Farms need to meet these Standards. I encourage you to visit the American Tree Farm System Webpage - http://www.treefarmsystem.org/ to find out more about the standards, performance measures and indicators. If you want to find out more about Forest and Forest Management Certification I suggest the following resources:

American Tree Farm System – Webpage - http://www.treefarmsystem.org/

Guidebook – Forest Management Certification on Private Forestlands in the U.S. 2003. Naureen Rana, Will Price, and Nadine Block. 46pp. Pinchot Institute for Conservation http://www.pinchot.org/

Forest Certification in North America. 2002. R. Fletcher, M. Rickenbach, and E. Hansen. Oregon State University Extension Service. EC 1518 8pp.

LARGE, MEDIUM, AND SMALL FOREST STEWARDSHIP IMPORTANT TO ALL

Will Stapleton

In the 18 years that I've been a member of the New Mexico Tree Farm Program, I've had the good fortune to travel to many Tree Farm events and witness some impressive examples of forest stewardship.

The Tree Farm owners were excellent mentors, but as I confessed in a previous newsletter article, I dawdled when it came to accepting these new ideas and techniques as my own. Being charitable about my motives, I contend that it was only because I was waiting for "the most favorable set of circumstances to converge before starting a project."

Favorable circumstances, for a project that I have started recently, began converging during the years 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2004. In 1999, I hired a neighbor, Ed L., to do some road work. When the task was completed, we had time for discussing, among other things, the amount of dead wood on the property. Eventually, he was maneuvered into a written agreement to cut and remove standing and downed dead wood. His only remuneration was the considerable firewood that he salvaged. He was also responsible for piling and burning the slash. In time, there were fewer brushier areas and more open ones.

One of the open areas was fairly large. What to do with it? Should I leave it, stumps and all, as a large fallow area? Should I remove the stumps and work it up for planting as a small meadow? Should I reforest it with ponderosa pine ort another species not so susceptible to mistletoe damage? This required more contemplation and consultation.

The second favorable circumstance began moving into position during the March 25, 2000 New Mexico Tree Farm Meeting in Mountainair, New Mexico.

Sid G., rancher from the Capitan, New Mexico area, was guest speaker. His narrated slide program, entitled "Lessons I Have Learned on My Ranch," pertained to his use of controlled fire as a tool in eradicating piñon/ juniper forest and restoring rangeland to its natural (grassland) state.

He reported that after the restoration, water tables rose and streams began flowing again. The piñon is a gluttonous consumer of water, so once it is gone, water begins to accumulate.

Prior to Sid's presentation, I had not viewed the revered piñon, the State Tree of New Mexico, as an invader and pest. He convinced me otherwise in the ground.

The third favorable circumstance began moving into position during 2001 when I was privileged to attend the Tree Farmer of the Year Event and Tree Farm Tour at the Buchanan Ranch south of Pie Town, New Mexico.

During the tours, participants saw where cool-season grasses have been planted to reclaim meadows and control erosion, 200 acres of ponderosa pine the were thinned in 1993, a bench being cleared of piñon/juniper with heavy machinery and slash burning (and an area like it that was cleared four years ago, then seeded to cool-season grasses), and a large pasture that is being restored to former "savannah" type vistas and vegetation. This "Forest Stewardship Workshop" was thoroughly instructive for me.

The fourth most favorable circumstance moved into position during a weekend in 2004 when we were at the Tree Farm. I had gone to the Community Water Co-op's well to fill our water containers for our weekend stay. It was going to be a wait as there was a man (stranger) ahead of me, filling a rather large tank. As we waited, Ed S. and I became acquainted and struck up a conversation. He passed along some very useful information about another person, Richard M., a retired contractor who had brought some of his smaller equipment with him when he retired to the community. To make a long story short, no time was wasted in contacting and inviting him over to the Tree Farm.

In the days that followed, and without further instruction, Richard would grade water bars in the most-used access road, uproot and pile stumps from the large open area, and remove a clump of dead oaks. Then he and his wife left to spend the winter in Phoenix.

With the stumps removed, the large open area began to have more appeal as a meadow. But could a meadow on a small tree farm (10-100 acres)***** be as meaningful, in terms of stewardship, as one on a medium-sized (101-1000 acres) tree farm, or a large (1001-over 10,000 acres) tree farm? Granted, it might not be as visible to passengers in a jet airliner flying overhead at 33,000 feet, but the possibilities for improving wildlife habitat, watershed, sustainable forestry, biodiversity, and recreation are there. They just need to be considered on a different scale; e.g., instead of herds of elk and deer, family groups are more fitting.

Working up the moist loamy soil of the meadows area.

So the favorable circumstances have converged to select meadow as the use for the large open area. Let the preparation begin! See photo in which the moist sandy loam soil is being readied for the seeds. Seeding (see photo) was done prior to rain showers which covered seeds with the correct amount of soil.

Seeding into the furrows which will be partially filled in by rains and wind. Seeding a mixture of western wheatgrass, winterfat and yellow sweetclover.

***** New Mexico has 179 Tree Farms in the American Tree Farm System. Source: Socorro District, N. M. Forestry Department, 2004.

NEW TREE FARM INSPECTORS

Doug Boykin & John Harrington

Traditionally, Tree Farm Inspectors in New Mexico have been district timber staff of the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources – Forestry Division and Harry Morrison and John Harrington. Well that changed recently. Seventeen new natural resource professionals underwent training to become Tree Farm Inspectors. Six of these seventeen were Forestry Division field staff and the rest were consulting foresters. Also, during this training, several previous Tree Farm Inspectors received the required training updates to maintain their inspector status. The new Tree Farm Inspectors are:

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SLASH BURNING ON THE LLANO

A. Hart Allex

No matter how much or how little thinning you do sooner or later all that slash laying on the ground is going to become a problem, not to mention a fire danger. For us it was counter productive. We started thinning as a means of making it possible to walk through parts of our forest where the trees were so dense that walking was hazardous to your health. After thinning we still couldn't walk through those parts. Now we could get between the trees but the ground was covered with such a knee deep maze of branches and long thin trees that it was almost worse than when we began. The only things that could get through there were the elk. With their long legs and small feet they seemed to enjoy bedding down in the middle of the worst places. I am sure they felt secure in there.

So what to do with thousands of cubic yards of biomass? One of our neighbors hauls a pickup load to the dump now and then but he only has two acres. One of them piles slash here and there all over his property for wildlife habitat. I don't like the scenery filled with piles-my idea of a forest floor is pine needles, pine cones and grass. We have tried chippers-too expensive at $140 a day, too noisy and then what to do with all the chips?

Burning seemed to be the only reasonable and efficient solution. But, of course, burning adds a whole set of new problems. Over the years we have stumbled through this learning process and with fine tuning have almost turned it into an art form. With almost twenty acres thinned and burned we feel like we are masters.

At the beginning we tried the BLM/Forest Service technique of large piles and burn when there was snow on the ground. Two problems attend this method: the large piles meant large flames which means singed leave trees and at the end there is a large mess of unburned stuff, charcoal and huge fire rings. And, over many years, nothing ever grows there.

Then we tried picking and burning in smaller fires fed as they burned in the snow. This protected our leave trees but was difficult, wet and cold for us. We found we could each control two or three fires and just keep walking around feeding them so the flames wouldn't get over five feet or so. The snow often meant slash was frozen to the ground or hidden so when spring arrived we found an incomplete cleanup.

But the idea of two or three small fires for each of us was a good one. My wife says two is good. The next thing we tried was burning when it was wet but no snow. I loved watching an afternoon or evening rain because I knew I could burn the next morning. That seemed to work fairly well for the larger branches and small trees. Once the fire finally got going it was OK and we didn't have to worry about sparks causing unplanned fires (always our biggest concern). But waiting for rain in the arid southwest causes impatience. And the wet slash smokes too much. Smoke rising from the forest causes observers stress even after a week of rain. Our first visit from the Peñasco volunteer fire department was caused by wet slash.

I had four smoke fires going as most of the slash that day was needles and small branches. I was leaning on my rake when the dogs, who always provide security for me in the forest, started barking. Over the hill ran a half dozen guys carrying shovels. I told them I had trouble walking up that hill and was impressed they could run. When they caught their breath they said they had a call in report of the forest on fire and flames poking through the trees. I smiled and said "after a week of rain?" and looked at four smokers with a three foot diameter and flames about a foot high. They laughed and said they had to respond to the call no matter how inconceivable it was. They commented on how nice my "managed forest" looked and said I needed a burn permit even if it was wet. Since those early days I now get burn permits with several month windows and extensions. The local fire officials know that I can do it right.

Fall and early winter was our wet window of opportunity. For the last three years we have averaged 15 or 20 burn days a year to deal with about five acres of slash. Those days are often spread out over several months.

This year, for the first time, we also burned green slash. Usually I cut trees in the winter, the wood haulers take out the firewood during the summer, and we burn slash in the fall. But this winter I did a second thin on the five acres around our buildings and did not want dry

branches on the ground till fall. Green slash is tough to get started but using a propane torch makes it easier and once it is going it is the same as brown slash. Our south facing hillside is usually clear of snow a large part of the winter when I can't work in the main forest.

A burn day starts around 7 or 8. We feed fires about two or three hours. That is about the end of our strength. Then we consolidate the fires by pushing the edges in and piling leftovers on the center. If we are going to have any winds they usually start around ten or eleven so we try not to have any more flames by that time. Then I come back every couple hours to check and push the edges in some more. A rake works great for that job. While I am "watching" the coals I usually am cutting dead branches off the leave trees for the next burn. Over a two day period all the coals burn down and the pile is just a flat two inch layer of ash. When it is cold we shovel the ash into drums and haul to the landfill. A drum of ash is probably equivalent to twenty pickup loads of slash. A little rake scratching on the fire ring and a sprinkle of pine needles almost disguises the location. With the dead branches off the leave trees and the ground cleaned up we now can walk through "our park."

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Donations to cover printing and mailing cost are always appreciated.

Dear New Mexico Tree Farmers:

Well it looks as though we are sticking to the old format again. I want to thank Will Stapleton and A. Hart Allex for their submissions. I want to encourage all New Mexico Tree Farmers who wish to submit their writing to do so. The easiest way is to submit your article, poem, etc. via electronic mail to John Harrington (joharrin@nmsu.edu) or by regular mail at:

John Harrington
NMSU – Mora Research Center
P.O. Box 359
Mora, NM 87732

I am planning the next issue (Volume VIII (2)) to be out by late June.

Lastly, I would like to take the opportunity to personally thank Will Stapleton for all he has done for the New Mexico Tree Farm Program and for being a colleague, a great debater and most of all a friend.

John Harrington, Editor (joharrin@nmsu.edu)

Will Stapleton and John Harrington at the Gascon Ranch Demonstration Forest.

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You can still order your New Mexico Tree Farm logo now. An eight inch logo patch costs $52, a six inch patch costs $21, and a 4¼ inch patch costs $18. If you wish to have the logo sewn on a garment (vest, shirt, or jacket) please included it in the package. If you wish the package sent back to you, please include a self-addressed and durable mailer large enough for the garment and/or patch. **Make checks payable to: Will Stapleton, NM Tree Farm Program, P. O. Box 356, Aztec, NM 87410.** Thank you for your support of the New Mexico Tree Farm Program.

NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY – MORA RESEARCH CENTER FIELD DAY – MAY 20, 2005

Please join us at the NMSU-Mora Research Center in Mora, New Mexico on May 20, 2005 from 9:30 – 2:00 for the Center's bi-annual open-house. Presentation topics will include updates on the Center's various activities including, techniques for predicting biomass in piñon pine, evaluations of carbon sequestration and distribution in piñon/juniper woodlands, updates on forest genetics research and presentations and demonstrations of recently developed forestry software.

Field activities will include a demonstration of tree shearers and field rock harvesting equipment as well as a tour of the Center's field plots. A barbeque lunch will be provided.

We are also tentatively planning on putting on a workshop for Tree Farmers on how to conduct field measurements and interpret the information collected. At present we would try to conduct the workshop following the Field Day from 2:00 to ???. Before we plan this we would like to get an idea of how many Tree Farmers would be interested in participating. If you feel you would be interested, please contact me at the Mora Research Center at 1.505.387.2319 ext 11 or by electronic mail at joharrin@nmsu.edu . Or, contact Doug Boykin at the Socorro Forestry District at 1.505.835.9359 or by electronic mail at dboykin@state.nm.us

The NMSU – Mora Research Center.