



SOUTH DAKOTA FAMILY FORESTS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

December 2016

Bi-Annual Newsletter

BLACK HILLS ASPEN RESTORATION PROJECT ON PRIVATE LANDS



By John Parks Brigman, SD RC & F

Populus Tremuloides, quakies, trembling aspen, popples...Quaking aspen, or simply, aspen, go by many names. Their smooth, white bark and leaves that 'tremble' or 'quake' in the breeze and change brilliant shades of yellow and orange in the fall make aspen easily recognizable and a unique sight in our Ponderosa pine forest landscapes of the Black Hills. Across the rest of North America, aspen is the most widely distributed of all

tree species. However, here in the Black Hills, it covers only about 5% of the forest. It grows in areas of full sunlight and moist, yet well drained soils. Aspen grow in clones, meaning that all of the individual trees in an area are all clones of each other, not separate individual organisms. Some of these clones can grow to be enormous, even considered to be the largest living organisms on Earth. The 'Pando Clone,' in Utah, covers over 100 acres, contains over 47,000 individual trees, and is estimated to be over 10,000 years old! In the Hills, most of our aspen clones are much smaller, usually less than an acre or two in size along meadow edges and in higher elevations. Some of the larger areas of aspen in the Hills are in the Jasper burn area in Custer County, and in the Schoolhouse Gulch area of Lawrence County.

New growth, or regeneration, of aspen is based on sucker production from new shoots along the roots just below the soil surface. Mature aspen trees produce a growth suppressant, called auxin, and interrupting that flow of auxin is what stimulates new aspen growth. Auxin flow is interrupted by disturbance, which in forestry terms, usually means fire or harvesting. It is a lack of disturbance though, that is causing the slow decline and disappearance of quaking aspen from the landscape, not only in the hills, but across the west. However, an innovative new technique is going to be used in Lawrence County. The technique is called 'mechanical root stimulation' and it refers to the practice of the roots of mature trees being severed (12-15 ft away from the tree) to interrupt auxin flow in the roots to stimulate new sucker production. What makes this unique is that this practice mimics 'disturbance,' interrupting the flow of auxin without harming the existing mature trees. This is being done on private lands with grant funding through the Lawrence County Conservation District with the goal of regenerating and restoring quaking aspen. Other practices done in conjunction with the root stimulation include removing pine and spruce trees from within and around aspen areas, and fencing to protect any new growth from browsing from deer and elk. These practices will allow for existing aspen areas to be enhanced, expanded, and protected.

Cost share assistance is currently available for these projects on private lands in Lawrence County. Funding is only available until the end of 2017 and is limited. This is a truly unique project that could grow exponentially in its reach and impact if successful. Landowners that would like to participate should start by having their aspen areas evaluated by foresters from SD RC&F who will determine eligibility. Allyssa Kennel is the service forester in the Lead field office and can be reached at 605-584-2300 ext. 217 or Allyssa.kennel@state.sd.us or Parks Brigman, forest stewardship coordinator can be reached at 605-394-2395 or john.brigman@state.sd.us.



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DIRECTOR'S STUMP

Paul Schipke, *SD Family Forests Association Chairman*

2016 has been a busy year. It has been a year of re-organization, refocusing, and action. We reorganized SDCFFA into four functioning subcommittees and empowered them to act and undertake tasks for our members.

We also added a part-time Executive Director, Dennie Mann, and his wife Mary Ann as Treasurer. They are averaging ten hours a week to keep the diverse activities of organization on track and pay bills.

The Certification Subcommittee, chaired by Parks Brigman handled the 3rd party audit of our organization in administering the Tree Farm Program. After the National Tree Farm Audit Team visited eight Tree Farms and reviewed our activities, no non-compliance items were found. Many very positive activities in the South Dakota Tree Farm Program were noted. SDCFFA was approved to continue administering the Tree Farm Program.

The current workload is the highest in years with twelve prospective Tree Farm members in various stages of plan preparation and acceptance to the program. Tree Farm inspectors have their work cut out to address the needs of both existing members and potential members.

The Communication Subcommittee, chaired by Cory Tomovick has also been very busy. A new website (SEE BELOW) has been created which has current events and helpful information for Tree Farmers. This is the second edition of our semi-annual newsletter. Two brochures were produced that will be given to prospective Tree Farmers and to help recruit donors that might support our organization. These brochures have proven helpful to explain the goals and purpose of Tree Farm to government officials and other interested parties.

Advocacy for our organization continues to be another focus of this subcommittee. The SD Senate Bill 3 was passed with some improvements for forest landowners. Monitoring of Ag Taxation issues continues with more changes being discussed for 2017.

The Finance Subcommittee, chaired by Dennie Mann made major improvements to the operation of SDCFFA this year. Increased activities by the organization have required a significant increase in the "bookkeeping" and financial controls. These changes have essentially been completed with the primary focus now being shifted to fund raising activities. A large one year grant from The National Tree Farm Organization was secured. The stewardship cost share program continues with obtaining a two year matching grant from SD State Forestry and with continued support from Neiman Timber Company. Preparation is underway to seek funding from interested donors to cover the shortfall of funds needed to match the increased activities of SDCFFA. This will be the first major fund raising effort ever undertaken by SDCFFA.

The Membership Subcommittee, chaired by Doug Miller has taken on the overdue task of reaching out to current members and determining how SDCFFA can better serve the Tree Farmers of South Dakota. A mailed membership survey, two face-to-face meetings with Tree Farm members, and co hosting the Aspen Regeneration Workshop has given the subcommittee a renewed feel of what members are interested in. Involvement and feedback from members is critical as we continue to focus on what is important to SD Tree Farmers.

NEW WEBSITE / NEW TOOLS FOR SD FOREST LANDOWNERS

www.sdfamilyforests.org

By Cory Tomovick, Tree Farmer, Communications Chairperson

In the spring of 2015, SD Family Forests Association went through the process of creating a strategic plan. As an organization we needed to do a better job of communicating with property owners to give them the best management tools for their property. The committee began its work to develop ways to communicate better. One of the biggest jobs was to create a website for the organization. This work was benefited greatly by committee member, Brian Weidemeier, who owns Black Hills Technologies, a web development company. He is also a tree farmer. His work greatly benefited our ability to get the job done. Thank you, Brian.

Our website is a one-stop shop for everything you might need to manage your land including contact information, resources, cost share application, links to state and national agencies and partners. We have tried to make a website that serves you, the landowner. Please check out the website. We are in the final stages of review. If there is anything more you would like to see, please contact me at 605-430-4699 or by email (ctomovick@hotmail.com).

A WALK IN THE FOREST at SAWYER MEMORIAL TREE FARM

By Tracy Sigdestad, Project Learning Tree Coordinator

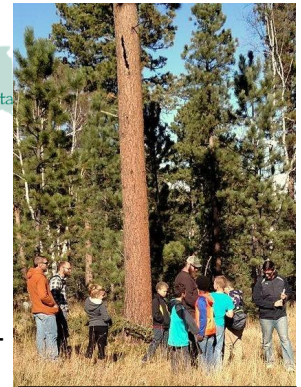
Project Learning Tree® (PLT) is a program of the American Forest Foundation (AFF).



AFF works on-the-ground with families, educators, and elected officials to promote stewardship and protect our nation's forest heritage. A commitment to the next generation unites AFF's nationwide network of forest owners and educators working to keep our forests healthy and our children well-prepared for the future they will inherit.

One of the programs of PLT is **A Walk in the Forest**. It is based on the idea that when you take a class or two of kids, their teachers, a handful of natural resource professionals, some tree farmers, and a piece of forested land at or near a school, you've got a magical few hours of long-lasting learning and inspiration.

On Thurs. Oct 20th, Lead-Deadwood 5th and 7th grade students got to experience this hands on opportunity at Sawyer Memorial Tree Farm. South Dakota's Project Learning Tree hosted the event.



Project Learning Tree Event

Students and teachers rotated through "stations" set up in the forest which addressed such topics as forest wildlife, tree identification, soils types and why trees grow where they do, forest management and tools of the trade. Knowledgeable professionals and volunteers provided active learning experiences which allowed students to explore their local forest and learn about forestry and other natural resource professions first hand.

If you are an educator interested in attending such an event, a resource professional that would like to volunteer, or a tree farmer who would like to use their land for this educational program, please contact South Dakota Project Learning Tree's State Coordinator, Tracy Sigdestad at 605-484-2330 or southdakotaplpt@gmail.com



Lead/Deadwood 5th & 7th Grade Students participate in Project Learning Tree.



Sawyer Memorial Entrance

By Bill Coburn, Industrial Forester, Neiman Wood Products

Sawyer Memorial Park is owned by the Nellie Sawyer Trust and is administered by the Sawyer Board of Trustees. The Sawyer Board of Trustees serve as directors for the land trust set up in memory of John Sawyer by his wife Nellie in the 1930's. The Sawyer Memorial Park is member of the American Tree Farm System and has been twice recognized as South Dakota's Tree Farmer of the year. The vegetation is being actively managed to enhance its productivity and composition and provide important revenue to support management costs and programs.

Sawyer Memorial Park encompasses over 380 acres just south of the Tomahawk Golf Course along both sides of Highway 385. This property is a private land trust dedicated to the public for their enjoyment. 330 acres are perpetually protected from development by a Conservation Easement administered by the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. Currently, the property hosts a portion of the South Dakota snowmobile trail system, has a state certified archery range overseen by the Northern Hills Archers. There is also the Sawyer Memorial Interpretive Trail which provides a wonderful learning experience using well designed signs to talk about the biological environment and cultural history of the area. Sawyer Memorial Park is open to all nonmotorized activities such as hiking, hunting, snowshoeing and cross country skiing. The Sawyer Memorial Park is also the site for the "Walk in the Forest" sponsored by South Dakota Project Learning which hosts hundreds of grade school kids each year from all over the Black Hills. The Tomahawk Country Club's driving range also occupies part of Sawyer Memorial Park.

The 3300 foot loop "Sawyer Trail" consists of 5 trail signs that detail the ecology of Ponderosa Pine, Black Hills Spruce and Aspen/Birch forest communities, the importance of forest management and the history surrounding the Black Hills Ft Pierre narrow gauge railroad and the Homestake Mine.

MOUNTAIN PINE BEETLE DECLINE IN THE BLACK HILLS

By Nicole Pysers, Forest Health Forester, SD RC & F

At long last the mountain pine beetle epidemic in the Black Hills is coming to a close. Mountain pine beetles are native insects that have been killing trees likely as long as they've been around. This does not mean the beetles have been eradicated, or that they won't come again, but it does mean their populations Hills wide are crashing significantly.

The State of South Dakota's Division of Resource Conservation and Forestry (SD RC&F) along with the South Dakota Association of Conservation Districts (SDACD) have been assisting landowners in the Black Hills for the past seven years by identifying and marking mountain pine beetle infested trees on their land. The State has also marked every year in Custer State Park, and collaborated with Black Hills Counties and the Black Hills National Forest to mark pine beetle infested trees. These trees are treated in several different ways with cutting and chunking or removing being the most popular.

As seen in this and past epidemics, the nature of the beetles' population tends to have a slow steady build, a peak, and a steep crash. As the population crashes it enters an endemic state where they will persist until conditions are right to start growing again. South Dakota's Forest Health Specialist Dr. John Ball defines this as, "Endemic populations are when the tree mortality from an attack is less than about one tree per two acres (or about 20 female adults flying per acre, less than that it's hard to coordinate an attack on a tree)." Beetles will persist in this state by attacking small numbers of weakened or stressed trees. With low numbers they are not capable of overwhelming the defenses of more than a few trees in a widespread area.

The State's tree marking data illustrates the behavior of the mountain pine beetles' population during the peak and crash. This epidemic started taking hold in the late 1990s and 2011-2014 were the peak years with hundreds of thousands of trees dying. Now, the beetles have entered their endemic state. So far, three quarters of the way through this surveying and marking season the crews have only found 1,494 infested trees on 14,084 acres. This number is drastically down from past years. The chart below shows the numbers of acres surveyed and the number of infested trees marked.



SD Association of Conservation Districts
Marking Crews

Year	Acres	Infested Trees
2010	23,849	54,235
2011	36,274	121,152
2012	30,023	96,731
2013	44,814	81,865
2014	51,727	134,743
2015	55,103	26,522
2016*	14,084	1,494

*The 2016 making season will end 12/31/16.

These are not the final numbers.

Even though populations are endemic, there are still areas throughout the Black Hills that are considered "hot spots", where high numbers of infested trees are still occurring. There are also high numbers of "at risk" areas where there are dense stands of forests that have a higher potential of being infested due to the favorable conditions for mountain pine beetle. Private landowners can negate the impacts of MPB on their properties by removing infested trees and thinning their forested land. Landowners will also have to take care in managing their pine regeneration so we won't end up with the same stand structure the beetles love 40 years from now.



SDACD Marking
Crews



SDACD Marking Crews

Membership Workshops / Seminars for 2017

By Doug Miller, Membership Committee Chair

As you may recall, the South Dakota Family Forests Association (SDFFA) sponsored tree-farm, membership meetings last June. The purpose of these meetings was two-fold: 1) Regarding the SDFFA organization, communicate the “who are we”, “what is our purpose” and the benefits of tree-farm membership and 2) Review the results of the April – May membership survey, mailed to all 108 members.

The purpose of the membership-survey review was to validate survey results and add to the list of important topics the SDFFA should be working on, short and long term. The survey pointed out varied priorities, with five topics standing out at the highest-level of interest:

"From the Stump to the Store". To address processes associated with all aspects of pre-timbering, timbering, hauling and milling operations. An important part of this topic would be how to write an effective contract between the landowner and contractor/saw mill.

Estate Planning / Legacy Opportunities. To address various estate planning / legacy options, including Conservation Easements, Trusts, Limited Liability Corporations (LLCs), etc.

Advocacy. Topics may include, but not limited to: What are the opportunities for tree farm advocacy at the local, county and state level? How should we, as a tree farm organization, be advocating to our political leaders? What tools and networking opportunities are available in support of advocacy efforts?

Taxation. To disseminate AG / Non AG property tax information. Topics may include, but not limited to: What is the property tax law? How does each county apply the property tax law?

Funding / Cost Share. To address the types of funding sources available to our tree farm members. Available information may include: What is available from the State of SD, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), Conservation Districts, etc.? Who does a tree farm member contact? How does one apply for these \$\$\$?

Based on available resources, the SDFFA is anticipating conducting three (3) membership workshops / seminars during 2017. Recently, via email and direct mailings, the Membership / Education Subcommittee (MES) requested your additional prioritization of the above five (5) topics. Based on your input, **Taxation**, **Funding / Cost Share** and **Advocacy** were the top vote-getters and will be the workshop / seminar areas of focus for next year. (**NOTE:** For those members who were interested in “From the Stump to the Store” and “Estate Planning / Legacy” topics, rest assured these are important topics and will be given top priority for 2018.)

The MES gives a special “thank you” to those members who sent in their votes. As always, input and direction from our membership is paramount to the success of our SD Tree Farm program.

Doug Miller, Membership / Education Chair (605-578-1102)



Field Tour Participants

SEPTEMBER 2016 FIELD TOUR

By John Parks Brigman, State Administrator, Tree Farm Program

On a beautiful Saturday morning in September, SD Tree Farmers Doug and Denise Miller hosted a landowner workshop and field day on their tree farm property near Nemo. The half day workshop was titled ‘Ecology, Management, and Restoration Efforts of Quaking Aspen in the Black Hills.’ The day included speaker presentations and a walking tour of the Miller property to illustrate some of the earlier discussion topics.

Thanks go out to the SD Division of Wildland Fire for lending their grill for the day, speakers who gave presentations, SD RC & F for partnering on the workshop, and especially to Doug and Denise Miller for being willing to host the event on their property.

SD TREE FARMS PASS NATIONAL ASSESSMENT

By John Parks Brigman, State Administrator of Tree Farm Program

The word 'certification' carries a little extra weight in the South Dakota Tree Farm program. Simply put, yes, South Dakota tree farms are certified as belonging to the American Tree Farm System. However, being a 'certified' tree farm means a lot more. SD Tree Farms are certified forests, meeting international standards for sustainability as verified by a third party. The American Tree Farm System has been endorsed by the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC). PEFC is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organization whose endorsement provides an assurance mechanism to purchasers of wood and paper products that they are promoting the sustainable management of forests. PEFC is a global umbrella organization for the assessment of and mutual recognition of forest certification systems in various countries around the world. PEFC is the world's largest forest certification system. Affiliation with PEFC benefits certified Tree Farmers by opening doors to certified wood and forest benefits markets.

A requirement of maintaining 'certified' status is undergoing periodic independent third party assessments. In other words, we have to prove we're doing what we say we're doing. These assessments occur roughly every 5-6 years for every state with a certified tree farm program. Price Waterhouse Coopers (PwC) is the firm that conducts these assessments for ATFS. The 'assessment teams' consist of a PwC representative, and ATFS representatives, and state tree farm program representatives.

The South Dakota Tree Farm program underwent an assessment in 2016 to determine if the standards of sustainability are being met on South Dakota's certified tree farms. South Dakota was one of 4 states assessed in the 16 state west-central region, and one of 8 states assessed nationally in 2016. Other states assessed in 2016 included Wyoming, California, and Wisconsin from the west-central region, Arkansas and Texas from the southern region, and Vermont and Pennsylvania from the northeastern region. The process began in January with a meeting where 8 SD Tree Farms were randomly selected for assessment. Over the next few months management plans and supporting documents were compiled and shared with ATFS and PwC for review. The actual field assessment happened over two days in June. The assessment team met with the selected tree farmers or their representatives on their properties to review their management plans, records, and see any recent management activities.

After reviewing management plans and seeing management activities on the ground, the South Dakota Tree Farm program was determined to be fully in compliance with the 2015-2020 standards of sustainability. In fact, South Dakota was the only state program to have zero non-conformities out of all the states assessed in 2016. Based on the efforts of South Dakota and the other states assessed, PwC confirmed that ATFS is operating in conformance with the standards of sustainability. The success of the field assessment is a direct result of a lot of hard work not only from those on the assessment team, but especially the tree farmers and inspectors from those that were assessed. For more info on the field assessments, see the latest issue of sightline express, or online at treefarmssystem.org. A special thanks to all that were involved!



AFF Assessment (Tomovick Site)



AFF Assessment (Scherrer Site)



AFF Assessment (Moore Site)

2016 SOUTH DAKOTA TREE FARMER OF THE YEAR



(Reprinted from Custer Chronicle, September 28, 2016)

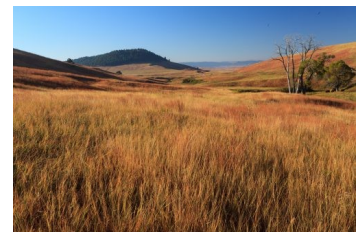
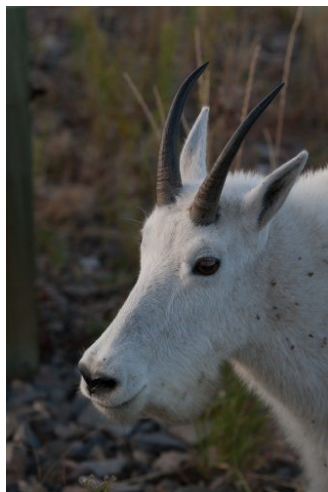
It's with great pleasure that the South Dakota Family Forests Association, administrator of the South Dakota Tree Farm System, recognizes the Oswald Family Limited Partnership (OFLP) Properties as the Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year for 2016. From an application, submitted by Dave Hettick, State of SD Service Forester, OFLP Properties was selected based on their commitment to forest stewardship, long-range conservation values and community involvement. OFLP Properties has operated under a written management plan for over 20 years and became a certified tree farmer in 2014. As a certified tree farmer, OFLP Properties has exhibited extraordinary devotion to improving their property via harvesting of saw logs / posts, forest-stand improvement, wildfire fuels reduction and meadow / aspen restoration and enhancement. OFLP Properties' mountain pine beetle suppression has resulted in over 3500 infested trees being salvaged or treated by chipping. Further, Julie Oswald has demonstrated a "tree farm proud" attitude by making presentations to the Custer County Conservation District and working with the Project Learning Tree organization to schedule school-children, field trips.

From left to right: Andy Kelford (Land Manager – OFLP Properties); Tom Oswald, Julie Oswald and Carolyn Oswald-Workman (Owners – OFLP Properties); Paul Dinzeo (President – OFLP Properties); Doug Miller (Membership Chair - SD Family Forests Association); and Dave Hettick (Service Forester - SD Division of Resource Conservation and Forestry).

In addition to a plaque, recognizing this achievement, OFLP Properties has received a \$250.00 gift certificate from the Chain Saw Center in Spearfish. We wish to sincerely thank Darrin Donat, of the Chain Saw Center, for this generous contribution and recognizing the importance the tree farmer plays in maintaining a healthy, sustainable forest in the Black Hills.



SOUTH DAKOTA TREE FARM PHOTO GALLERY



SEND US PHOTOS OF YOUR SOUTH DAKOTA FAMILY FOREST: WOOD, WATER, WILDLIFE, RECREATION, and **YOUR** FAMILY. Email your photos to: SDtreefarm@gmail.com

South Dakota Tree Farm Advisory Committee

- Paul Schipke, Tree Farmer & Chairman
- Patricia Turbiville - Consulting Forester & Secretary
- Dennie & Mary Ann Mann
- Executive Director & Treasurer
- Bill Coburn - Industrial Forester
- Greg Josten, State Forester
- Parks Brigman, State Agency Forester & Certification Chairperson
- Cory Tomovick, Tree Farmer & Communication Chairperson
- Doug Miller, Tree Farmer & Membership Chairperson
- Bob Burns, Tree Farmer
- Kory Bossert, NRCS
- Ben Wudtke, Forestry Association Forester

Subcommittee Members

Communication and Public Relations

Cory Tomovick - Chairperson, Tracy Sigdestad, Patricia Turbiville, Ben Wudtke, Brian Weidemier, and Adrian Stuart

Financial & Fundraising

Dennie Mann - Chairperson, Bill Coburn, Doug Miller, Bob Burns

Certification

Parks Brigman - Chairperson, Bill Coburn, Bob Burns

Membership & Education

Doug Miller - Chairperson, Lynn Kolund, Paul Schipke

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