



SOUTH DAKOTA FAMILY FORESTS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2019

Bi-Annual Newsletter

2018 TREE FARMER OF THE YEAR

On July 28 in Hill City, the SDFFA hosted our “Summer Social” which included a celebration recognizing our Tree Farmer of the Year (TFOY). With pride, we awarded our 2018 TFOY to Doris McDill. Doris started actively managing her property in 2003 and has been in the tree-farm system since 2006. Over the past 15 years, Doris has been an absolute role-model, regarding sustainable-forestry and multi-use activities on her 160-acre property.

Doris’ written, management plan identifies her top two goals as: a) to improve tree health and vigor and b) to reduce the risk of Mountain Pine Beetle (MPB). In that regard, Doris has actively implemented pre-commercial thinning actions (total of 135 acres from 2003 through 2017) and has aggressively minimized the MPB epidemic on her property. She participated in the State of South Dakota MPB “spotting and infested” tree-removal program (2003-2017) with 100% of infested trees being removed from her property. She has also volunteered to participate in other land-management organizations, such as being a member of the Forest Service Resource Advisory Committee.

We “**congratulate**” Doris on this award and **thank** her for her tireless efforts towards keeping our Black Hills forest healthy and sustainable for future generations!

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It has been a great year for landowners. We have had plenty of moisture and are relatively free from the Mountain Pine Beetle epidemic. Now, I'm hoping for a "normal" winter, free of major storms, but yet providing our critical moisture.

There have been a lot of questions concerning relationships between South Dakota Family Forests Association (SDFFA), the American Forest Foundation (AFF) and the American Tree Farm System (ATFS). It can be confusing and following is my attempt to provide a little clarification.

The **American Forest Foundation (AFF)** is a legally organized non-profit organization located in Washington, D.C. It has been classified a 501c3 organization by IRS. The stated mission of the AFF is "to ensure the sustainability of America's family forests for present and future generations in conjunction with our strategic partners".

Although not its primary function, AFF monitors Washington DC activities and represents forest owners interests. It is prohibited from lobbying but it does provide technical and other information to law makers at critical legislative subcommittee meetings. AFF also advises its members and partners of proposed legislation and encourages them to become actively involved in issues that could affect private forest Landowners.

The AFF created and administers the program called the **American Tree Farm System (ATFS)**. This program was created in 1941 and has served several purposes during its 77 year existence. Currently it continues to carry out the mission of the AFF with major emphasis on providing certification of private forestlands. In practice, it is the only option for certification available for small private landowners.

Currently 45 of the 50 states have arrangements with AFF to administer the ATFS within their states. Not all states are qualified, or chose not to certify forestlands within their respective states. Some administer "recognition awards" for sustainably managed forestlands following guidelines under the ATFS. There are over 74,000 small forest landowners managing approximately 20.5 million acres of privately owned forests in the program.

In summary, the ATFS is not a standalone organization with legal status. It provides certification and technical help to private forest owners throughout the US.

South Dakota Family Forests Association (SDFFA) is a non-profit corporation organized under the laws of SD. It also has been classified a 501c3 organization by the IRS. It is bound by the same restrictions as the AFF and also is allowed to have all donations (including membership fees) classified as tax deductions for the donors.

South Dakota Family Forest Association is the successor organization to the Keep South Dakota Green Association that was started back in the 1950's. During this period, KSDG also became the state sponsor of the South Dakota Tree Farm Committee. In 1974, KSDG attained its 501 c3 nonprofit status and continued to operate up into early part of the 21st Century when became inactive. At this point in time, the South Dakota Tree Farm Committee continued to operate as an organization under KSDG's non profit status. In 2008, KSDG's corporate charter bylaws were altered and the mission of the corporation was narrowed to primarily address private forestlands in SD. It retained its 501c3 status by the IRS and commenced doing business as South Dakota Family Forest Association.

SDFFA's primary mission is "to encourage the maintenance, improvement, and sustainability of the long-term growth, quality, and availability of wood and other renewable forest resources from private forestlands; while protecting environmental benefits". The mission or purpose list other activities but concluded with "to promote the continuation of good forest stewardship through certification programs, avoidance of forestland fragmentation, and to support the multi-generational continuance on private forestlands."

SDFFA has entered a "Memorandum of Understanding" with the American Forest Foundation to administer the ATFS within the state of SD. Our organization is qualified to, and has the authority, to carry out the ATFS Program within SD. This program is currently the only avenue available to the private landowner to sell "certified wood products".

SDFFA is legally responsible for its activities within the state of South Dakota. With less than 10% of the necessary funding coming from AFF, the SDFFA is obligated to operate as a functioning non-profit organization to obtain the funds necessary to carry out its activities within the state. Although the bulk of the funding goes toward administering the ATFS, other money is used to advocate for private forest landowners within SD and for specific public education activities.

Hopefully that helps clarify the muddled waters. I encourage all of you to check out the websites of the 2 organizations and the ATFS "Program" on their websites.

We remain extremely thankful for all the volunteers and financial donors who support our organization. Thank you for all your efforts that have helped us continue. We will continue in the future to balance the real value to our Tree Farmers with the resources that are available.

Paul Schipke

Dear All,

I cannot express my gratitude enough for this amazing opportunity to live, work and study in the Black Hills. This summer's journey has been so enriching and has left me with a huge sense of fulfillment. My entire experience has by far exceeded any initial expectations, and SDFFA has helped make it all possible. There are many highlights from my time spent here. Educationally and professionally, I have worked with outstanding forestry professionals who have helped me improve the application of forestry skills, as well as communication with landowners. In the field I have assisted with data collection, learned about the processes of grant and cost-share programs, written sections of Forest Stewardship Plan updates, learned techniques to effectively manage ponderosa pine and aspen forests, and helped to perform a Tree Farm inspection. In my free time I have taken full advantage of exploring the Black Hills and surrounding areas (even as far as Idaho!) whenever possible. The local culture is fantastic. I have loved living as a Rapid City local, even if the time was short. I am in awe of the Black Hills and the beautiful forests within. Hopefully, in the near future, I can continue my Black Hills experience!

Truly, it has been humbling to meet so many individuals with a passion to help achieve sustainable forests for the present and future. Thank you all for your commitment to Tree Farm! And, again, thank you for making this incredible opportunity possible and welcoming me into the Black Hills!

Sincerely,

Jen Millsaps

SDFFA Fund Raising Committee Report

Several years ago when South Dakota Family Forest Association decided to go down the “Forest Certification” pathway, SDFFA also committed to finding a way to raise enough money to fund all the activities and administration costs that go along with certification.

Our committee spent much time and effort reviewing and discussing how other state tree farm committees were handling certification and funding their organization. Some states chose to immediately start charging their members an annual fee. This met with limited success. Several states lost a significant number of tree farmers who decided that they were not going to pay for something they had been getting for free.

Other states ended up initially losing a fair number of members but then immediately began picking up new members to a point now after 3 years they have more members than before the required annual fee. In South Dakota, we decided that we were going to slowly transition into an organization that would be dually funded by sponsors and members by 2019. In 2016, we successfully identified prospective sponsors/donors who we asked to make a 3 year financial commitment to our organization. Included in these donors are 6 SDFFA board members. Using the proceeds from these sponsors, we were able to fully fund our programs activities for the last 3 years.

During this time our membership committee, under Doug Miller’s leadership, has offered many benefits and values to our members. Included in this, is making sure that county assessors understand and value small family forests as agricultural properties. We felt that in order for us to ask for membership fees, there should be great value. So that brings us to 2019 as we transition into requiring our members to have as they say “skin in the game”. We believe we have and will provide great value to our members. It is important to note that memberships will still only supply about 40% of our total projected income going forward. During 2019, our committee will be talking with our members about their concerns and ideas of how to continue making South Dakota Family Forest Association the premier forest landowner organization in South Dakota.

Donor Appreciation Barbecue

South Dakota Family Forest Association held its second annual Donor Appreciation Barbecue at Paul and Julie's Schipke's tree farm this fall. It was well attended with over 20 people enjoying a great barbecue provided by the one and only Parks Brigman. Paul's handiwork was on full display as the attendees were able to view an extraordinary rock tower that he and his family built. Housed in the tower, Paul has two real cannons that shoot real cannon balls. Wow. It was quite the sight and sound when the 30 pounder pulverized the air powering the cannon ball 400 yards across the valley.



One of the highlights of our gathering was to recognize the Neiman family for their generous support for and guidance to SDFFA and also for their long term commitment to "Sustainable Forests and Sustainable Communities" in the Black Hills for over 4 generations.

Sawyer Memorial Park Aspen Project

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation volunteers from the Gold and Northern Hills Chapters, along with Sawyer Memorial Board of Trustee members finished constructing an aspen regeneration protection fence project on Sawyer Memorial Park. It took over 321 volunteer hours of work to put up two, 6 foot woven wire fences and ½" cable around two areas totaling about 3 acres. The cost of the fence materials and some other costs were provided for by grants from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and the Lawrence County Conservation District. The ½" cable was donated by Butte Electric Cooperative.



Pictured below from left to right are Rich Eddy, Michael Tollesrud, Larry Karns, Ron Island, Dan Essink, Mike Anderson, Leo Stewart, Troy Niehaus and Bill Coburn. Not pictured Josh Atkins

With pride, your South Dakota Forests Association (SDFFA) leadership wants to share a summary of our successes! As you may recall, over three-years ago, the SDFFA underwent a major, organizational transformation. In May, 2015, our national organization, the American Tree Farm System, facilitated a 1 ½ day Strategic Planning session. This session was the genesis for a major change to our organizational structure. With a “Certification” objective, our new structure focused on committee establishment and was dedicated to identifying and accomplishing “value-added goals” on behalf of you, our membership.

This newsletter communication proudly announces the successful achievements of your SDFFA over the past three years, 2016 through 2018! Please take some time to review and analyze the enclosed display showing the successes of each committee. We’re hopeful your assessment concludes that your SDFFA has delivered exceptional results, in such areas as access to valuable knowledge / education / training resources, effective networking with forestry professionals / other tree farmers and responsiveness to your needs, such as advocacy with state / local officials, to mention a few.

Based on the above “successes” documentation, we’re hopeful that you, our members, will agree to financially support the SDFFA. The Fundraising Committee has worked hard to generate revenue, to offset our expenses, by obtaining generous donations from thirteen individuals and corporations. These thirteen agreed to a three-year commitment (2017-2019) with a total donation of almost \$13,000 / year. However, the three-year commitment will end in 2019, which leaves the SDFFA searching for additional revenue sources. Thus, in February, 2019, you will be receiving an SDFFA communication asking for your support via a \$75.00 membership fee.

If you should have any questions or concerns, regarding the upcoming membership-fee request or any other tree-farm-related item, please don’t hesitate to contact one of us.

Chair: SDFFA Board of Directors – Paul Schipke (605-490-8161).

Committee Chairs: Parks Brigman–Certification (605-394-2588).

Bill Coburn–Fundraising (605-645-1199).

Bob Burns-Communications/Public Relations (605-787-4783).

Jamie Schmidt-Membership/Education (605-645-4470).

Got Accomplishments?Continued (2016)

Certification

- Certified/Recertified 17 Tree Farms
- Trained/Retrained 9 Inspectors
- Sponsored 3rd Party Assessment of SDTF
 - “No” non-conformities
 - 1 Opportunity & 2 Positive Recognitions
- Improved data quality in TF Database
- Recruited 7 New TF members

Communication/Public Relations

- Sponsored a SDTF booth at AgFest Legislative Day in Pierre SD
- SDFFA participation in annual ATF Conference
- Updated & improved booth exhibit
- Establish framework for publishing 2 newsletters annually
- Established SDFFA website

Fundraising

- Established a committee to identify short-term, funding options for the SDFFA
- Developed a fundraising plan focused on:
 - Developing a fundraising brochure
 - Identifying Prospective Contributors
 - Making face-to-face contacts
 - Requesting 3 year commitments

Membership & Education

- Conducted TF membership survey
- Developed a work plan based on input from membership survey
- Worked on accuracy of membership list
- Conducted 2 General membership Meetings
- Conducted an Aspen Regeneration Workshop
- Presented Tree Farmer of the Year Award with a news release by the Custer Chronicle
- Submitted/received grant approval from the National Tree Farm Organization for:
 - 3 Workshops/Seminars for 2017
 - 2 membership meetings for 2017
- Published a “Timber Sale Contract” Guidelines document.

Got Accomplishments?Continued (2017)

Certification

- Certified/Recertified 24 Tree Farms
- Developed/Updated Forest Stewardship Plan Cost Share/ Classifications
- Developed Program updates
- Recruited 11 new members
- Improved data quality in TF Database
- Supported the mentoring of a forestry-summer student, via a National Tree Farm Grant
- Sponsored a Tree Farm member “Summer Social”
 - Recognized Inspector of the Year

Communication/Public Relations

- Hosted a county, Tax-Assessor Workshop
 - Attended by 5 of the 6 county assessor’s offices in the Black Hills
- Sponsored a Tree Farm tour for SD Secretary of Agriculture, Mike Jaspers
- Sponsored a SDTF booth at AgFest Legislative Day in Pierre SD
- Participated in annual American Tree Farm National Leadership Conference
- Maintained www.sdtreefarm.org Web Site
- Published 2 newsletters

Fundraising

- Obtained 13 fundraising contributors
- Total Revenue: \$12,810
- Hosted an appreciation barbeque for Contributors

Membership & Education

- Conducted TF membership survey
- Developed a work plan based on input from membership survey
- Conducted 2 General membership Meetings Focused on
 - Property Tax Presentations
 - Fundraising/Cost Share Presentations
 - County Assessors, Workshop Presentation
- Sponsored a Tree Farm-member discount for attending the Society of American Foresters (SAF) Spring Conference
- Co-sponsored a Custer Co. Conservation District “Landowner Workshop”
- Partnered with//Supported Project Learning Tree’s youth education of forestry issues
- Co-sponsored a Tree Farm member “Summer Social”
 - Recognized Tree Farmer of the Year

Got Accomplishments?Continued (2018)

Certification

- Certified/Recertified 29 Tree Farms
- Published a Standards-Based, Educational Reminder—"Contracts"
- Trained/Retrained 9 Inspectors
- Improved data quality to almost 100% accuracy in the National Tree Farm Database.
- Supported the mentoring of a forestry-summer student, via a National Tree Farm Grant
- Sponsored a Tree Farm member "Summer Social"
 - Recognized Inspector of the Year

Communication/Public Relations

- Sponsored a SDTF booth at AgFest Legislative Day in Pierre SD
- Testified before the SD House Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee
 - Black Hills Resilient Forestry Strategy Support
- Hosted a Norbeck Society annual event to highlight the benefits of Tree Farm Management
- Participated in annual American Tree Farm National Leadership Conference
- Maintained www.sdteefarm.org Web Site
- Published June 2018 newsletter

Fundraising

- Obtained 13 fundraising contributors
- Total Revenue: \$12,810
- Hosted an appreciation barbeque for Contributors

Membership & Education

- Co-sponsored a Custer Co. Conservation District "Landowner Workshop"
- Co-sponsored a Tree Farm member "Summer Social"
 - Recognized Tree Farmer of the Year
- Co-sponsored a "Forest-to-Products" Workshop
- Conducted September 2018 membership survey
- Developed a work plan based on input from membership survey
- Developed a process to initiate membership dues, to be presented to members during 1Q, 2019
- Submitted/received approval from National for an "Engaging Women Landowners in Leadership Program"
- Making preparations for an "Estate Planning/Legacy" workshop
- Partnered with//Supported Project Learning Tree's youth education of forestry issues

Review and Analysis of September Membership Survey

Question 1: How would you describe your current understanding of the relationship between the ATFS SDFFA and SDTF Program, as it applies to you and your property?

Results: 83% of the respondents indicated only a “fair” or “unsure” understanding.

ACTION: The SDFFA leadership needs to continually communicate the relationship between these three entities.

Question 2: In what areas do you think the SDFFA needs to improve as an organization? Select two.

Results: Respondents indicated a need to improve – top two: 47% Communications and Advocacy; 32% Membership and Education.

ACTION: None identified, at this time.

Question 3: Since our last survey in 2016, what SDFFA efforts have been most valuable to you? P

Results: Top Four “Most Valuable”: Connect with a forester / tree farm inspector, Tax Assessor Workshop, Semi-Annual Newsletter, and Relevant Communication(s). Bottom Two “Least Valuable”: Provided access to certified woods markets, Summer Socials.

ACTIONS: **1)** Newsletter Addition – Communicate the availability and roles & responsibilities of Allyssa Gregory and Dave Hettick, as SDRC&F Service Foresters, and Consulting Foresters. **2)** The Membership & Education and Communications & Advocacy committees are to sponsor another Tax Assessor Workshop. **3)** Continue the “Educational Reminders” process by adding additional, relevant topics, such as Standard 4: Protecting the Air, Water and Soil, as it relates to weed management. Further, communicate other important communications, such as the long-eared bat status/actions, ATFS activities, etc. **4)** Potentially, partner with the Lawrence County Conservation District to develop appropriate Workshops and Field Days (e.g. Weed Management). Consult with Dave Thom to build on the successes of the Custer County Conservation District.

Question 4: Overall, what do you value most from membership in SDFFA? Prioritize your top four.

Results: Top Four “Most Valuable”: Advice from a forester / tree farm inspector, Local Advocacy (county, state government), Workshops / Field Days, Certification of Wood Products from Your Land. Bottom Two “Least Valuable”: Socials / Awards Events, General Membership Meetings.

ACTIONS: See ACTIONS section for Question 3 above.

Question 5: Specific to your tree-farm property, what additional SDFFA support do you need to better accomplish your management plan’s goals and objectives?

Results: Top Responses – (10) “Nothing at this time”, (2) Estate Planning, (2) Respect by others of our private property.

ACTION: Estate Planning workshop tentatively scheduled for January, 2019.

Question 6: Regarding AG property / tax issues, do you have any recommendations as to how the SDFFA can better serve our tree farm members?

Results: Eleven (11) respondents indicated a need to be proactive at advocacy, such as actively contacting and educating county assessors and other policy makers. Two (2) respondents indicated a need for changes on their respective weed boards.

ACTION: Need to execute more Advocacy actions for 2019.

WE NEED AND THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!!

UPCOMING EVENTS

If you having any upcoming activities that you would like in the newsletter please email the information to: SDtreefarm@gmail.com.



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 Family Forests Association Board

- Bill Coburn: Chairman & Ret. Industrial Forester
- Paul Schipke: Vice Chairman & Tree Farmer
- Mary LaHood: Tree Farmer
 - Executive Director & Treasurer
- Doug Miller: Tree Farmer & Secretary
- Greg Josten: SD State Forester
- Parks Brigman: SD RC&F Forester
- Bob Burns: Tree Farmer
- Kory Bossert: NRCS
- Patricia Weyrich: Forester
- Ben Wudtke: BH Forest Resource Assoc.
- Jamie Schmidt: Industrial Forester
- Dennie Mann, Board Member

Committee Members

Communication and Public Relations

Bob Burns - Chairperson,
Patricia Turbiville, Stuart Adrian

Financial & Fundraising

Bill Cohburn- Chairperson,
Dennie Mann, Doug Miller

Certification

Parks Brigman - Chairperson,
Bill Coburn

Membership & Education

Jamie Schmidt - Chairperson,
Lynn Kolund, Doug Miller,
Geri Konenkamp, Parks Brigman

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