



SOUTH DAKOTA FAMILY FORESTS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

June 2016

Bi-Annual Newsletter

YOUR LAND, YOUR LEGACY

As a forest land owner, you know that your forests are an extension of you and your family. You achieve personal satisfaction and enjoyment on your land by sustaining a healthy forest and enhancing wildlife habitats, which benefits society as a whole through clean air, water, and open space. You are not alone. In fact, you are part of a network of families in the Black Hills and across the country committed to sustainably managing private lands and creating a legacy for future generations.

South Dakota Family Forests Association, through the SD Tree Farm program, is committed to providing you the tools, voice, and network, you need to practice stewardship of natural resources for sustainable family forests. Part of our commitment is to communicate more with you through this bi-annual newsletter, a website (coming soon), membership meetings, a surveys, training opportunities, and Tree Farm tours.

Being a part of the Tree Farm program gives you access to the resources of two national organizations: the American Tree Farm System (www.treefarmssystem.org/) and The American Forest Foundation (www.forestfoundation.org/). These organizations advocate for you and all private landowners of forested lands across the country.

Other benefits include training and networking opportunities, participation in a group that advocates for sustainable forest stewardship practices, certification, cost share opportunities, a “no charge” recertification inspection, and the gift of a sign to display on your property. You have a choice of labeling your property as a Tree Farm or as a Family Forest.

We look forward to hearing from you. Please let us know your concerns and what you want from the South Dakota Tree Farm program.

SD TREE FARM PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION:

PHONE: 605-394-2395 / Email (SDtreefarm@gmail.com)

Your Land & Legacy	1
The Director's Stump	2
2015 TF of the Year...	2
A Success Story ...	3 & 4
Resources for You ...	5
News for You ...	6
Photo Gallery...	7
Contact ...	8



Great Grey Owl,
possibly your neighbor

MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

A survey questionnaire was mailed to all Tree Farm members in late April, with the requested completion date of June 1. If you haven't completed the survey, there is still time for you “to be heard.” Please complete and transmit your input to Doug Miller, Chair of the Membership Committee, in one of three ways:

Email: ordwayantiques@msn.com;

Mail hard copy to: Doug Miller / 12224 Nemo Road / Nemo, SD 57759.

If more convenient: Call Doug Miller (605-578-1102) and give your feedback verbally.

DIRECTOR'S STUMP

Paul Schipke, *SD Family Forests Association Chairman*

This year we are celebrating 75 years since the first Tree Farm was signed up in the state of Washington. The American Tree Farm System (ATFS) was organized nationally and was spurred on by WWII from concern of ensuring an adequate supply of timber to support the war efforts. Unpredictable wildfires and the lack of knowledge on good management practices on private lands were the basis of this concern.

The South Dakota Tree Farm Program (SDTFP) was formally organized in 1954. The early work by South Dakota State Forestry was with the Windbreak Tree Farms and Woodland Tree Farms. This was primarily a recognition program for the well managed Woodland and Windbreaks Tree Farms.

By the mid 1990's there was a push to introduce a certification element into these programs. It became critical to have a professional Forest Management Plan and for Tree Farmers to follow criteria that demonstrated sustainability of the forest lands. Certification was generally felt to be a requirement to market wood products successfully. This requirement for certification varies throughout the US and world based on country, region, and wood product.

Today in South Dakota, the main focus is to grow and develop a viable and vibrant organization to address the specific needs of South Dakota tree farmers. Advocacy of landowners on state and county issues is of high concern along with sharing information on forestry practices and availability of cost share funding for forestry practices. We have spent time developing a strategic plan to accomplish these goals. Four sub-committees are in place to support the foundational work required. This has increased our need for active volunteers and administrative funding.

At the National level, the ATFS has a team of advocates in Washington DC to make sure the issues of private forest owners are represented. These advocates solicit input from each state forestry organization in order to understand the broad issues being faced by landowners. Working in tandem with the national organization allows us to do more for South Dakota landowners.

SOUTH DAKOTA TREE FARMER OF THE YEAR (2015) - STUART ADRIAN

Dave Hettick, State of South Dakota Service Forester

It's with great pleasure the South Dakota Family Forests Association, administrator of the South Dakota Tree Farm program, announces Adrian Tree Farms as the Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year for 2015. Adrian Tree Farms was selected because of their commitment to forest stewardship and long range conservation values.

Since becoming a certified tree farm in 1986, Adrian Tree Farms has exhibited extraordinary effort to improve their property through forest-stand improvement, hardwood and range enhancement, and wildfire fuel reduction. Stuart Adrian accepted this honor on behalf of himself and his siblings, all are participants in the Adrian Tree Farms, LLC.

In addition to a plaque recognizing this achievement, Adrian Tree Farms received a \$250.00 gift certificate from the Chain Saw Center in Spearfish. We sincerely thank Darrin Donat, of the Chain Saw Center for this generous contribution. SD Tree Farmers play an the important role in maintaining a healthy, sustainable forest in the Black Hills.



Photo of Paul Schipke, Stuart Adrian,
and Dave Hettick

WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

Ben Wudtke, *SD Family Forests Association*

It is no secret that forests are dynamic in nature and we have certainly seen our fair share of changes here in the Black Hills from wildfires and insects. Wildfires have incredible potential to induce sudden and significant changes to forests on a landscape scale. The most recent driver of change has been the mountain pine beetle epidemic which flourished in the abundant dense forest stands. As the trees turned red, land owners and agencies tasked with managing our natural resources came to the harsh realization that the time for proactive forest management had passed and found themselves scrambling to implement timber sales to reduce the impact from the beetle. Limited resources in the fight against the beetle meant some areas were not treated and the dilemma of how to ad-



Photo of a firefighter taking advantage of the thinned forest to control the North Pole Fire. Stumps are visible where trees were removed through forest management activities. Photo taken from <http://wildfiretoday.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/2015-03-10-NorthPoleFire-284->

dress the dead, falling trees across all ownerships is now daunting. In the time between catastrophic events, it seems the consequences of not actively managing our forests are forgotten.

I often think of an article that appeared in the October 21, 1963 Rapid City Journal titled *We Were Warned on Beetles* and am left bewildered how, during the last 18 years, anyone could be surprised we have had a problem with mountain pine beetles. But this is often the

cycle witnessed; chasing the latest problem in the forest instead of being out in front of it. While we will never remove wildfires or mountain pine beetles from the forested ecosystem, we have some choice in the scale of the disturbances. Recent examples in the Black Hills illustrate where active forest management has played a key role in preventing structure losses, improving firefighter safety, and preserving forest health.

Last spring the North Pole Fire ignited on a red flag warning day, west of Custer, with serious potential for cabins and homes to go up in smoke along with the trees. Firefighters were quick to respond and were fortunate enough to find the fire burning in an area of a recent timber sale. The reduced fuel loads moderated fire behavior and allowed the firefighters to attack the fire. The thinned forest stands also meant more, safe access to defend structures immediately adjacent to where the fire was burning. In total, the fire burned less than 60 acres. Additionally, because the forest had undergone previous management, the fire burned through the understory providing ecological benefits similar to historical, natural processes in ponderosa pine forests. Without active forest management, this fire may have run a very different course with catastrophic outcomes.



Photo from Cold Fire with seedlings that were killed in previous prescribed fire visible in the foreground. Photo taken from <http://wildfiretoday.com/wp->

Flash forward one year and the Cold Fire and Storm Hill Fire ignited keeping firefighters on their toes. Again, past forest management played a critical role in wildfire behavior. In the case of the Cold Fire, a recent, large prescribed burn that reduced fuel loads substantially decreased fire behavior and gave fire-

(WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO cont'd)

fighters the break they needed to attack the fire. It was reported in the Washington Times that, "Authorities say firefighters gained a significant advantage when the fire burned into an area of a recent prescribed burn, which provided fewer fuels for the fire to consume." In a contrast of past forest management, and the lack there-of, the Storm Hill Fire burned through an area of a previous timber sale and an area of heavy mountain pine beetle mortality. In the thinned forest the fire burned through the understory cleaning up residual forest fuels and largely left the overstory stand structure intact. However, the fire killed nearly all the remaining trees in some areas of mountain pine beetle damage as a result of the heavy fuels accumulations left in the wake of the beetle infestation. This can be seen on the blackened hill sides near Mitchell Lake. Additionally, these areas of past mountain pine beetle mortality are cause for concern to firefighters. Ray Bubb, the Storm Hill Fire Incident Commander, reported to KOTA, "The main thing is, with all this dead bug kill and everything - we're not going to put people up on that slope. It's just too dangerous. Those trees will fall down..."



Photo of Storm Hill Fire burning an area of past forest management. Photo taken from: <http://wildfiretoday.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Storm-Hill-Fire-940-pm-Jim-Burk.jpg>

The amazing piece in all this is that none of it constitutes a revolutionary concept. In fact, it isn't even close to new thinking. Foresters have known for more than 100 years that thinning the forest prevents mountain pine beetle populations from exploding, and substantially reduces fire behavior and fire effects. Yet, these basic concepts must be re-learned during each mountain pine beetle epidemic or following a Jasper Fire type of event. The forest is in a constant state of change and sometimes it's easy to miss the growth and changes in the forest between disturbances and the continuing need for active forest management. Through consistent application of active forest management principles, we can move the forest closer to a resilient, healthy, and safe condition.



Photo of green forest where timber sales were implemented to thin the forest contrasted with areas of red trees killed by mountain pine beetle.

"Participation in the Tree Farm program is a positive means to an end...a sustainable, forestry end. The South Dakota Family Forests Association offers effective access to local networking, exceptional learning opportunities and quality, professional advice. The combination of these has allowed us to successfully achieve our management goals of a healthy forest, improved wildlife habitat and woodlands diversity."

(Doug & Denise Miller)

PROGRAMS TO HELP YOU MANAGE YOUR LAND

NRCS EQIP GRANT

Benefits

Eligible program participants receive financial and technical assistance to implement conservation practices, or activities like conservation planning, that address natural resource concerns on their land. Payments are made to participants after conservation practices and activities identified in an EQIP plan of operations are implemented. Contracts can last up to ten years in duration.

Eligibility

Agricultural producers and owners of non-industrial private forestland and Tribes are eligible to apply for the EQIP. Eligible land includes cropland, rangeland, pasture-land, non-industrial private forestland and other farm or ranch lands.

Partnering for a Healthy Forest

Working together, the USDA NRCS and the South Dakota Department of Agriculture Division of Resource Conservation and Forestry (SDDA RC&F), are offering assistance for forestry conservation practices on private lands in SD's Black Hills region. Conservation practices can improve forest health and benefit fish and wildlife.

THE FIRST STEP

The first step in managing or improving private forest land is often a forest management plan. To get started, contact NRCS personnel at your local service center or the SD Department of Agriculture Division of Resource Conservation and Forestry staff, who, depending on your situation, will work with you to develop a forest management plan.

South Dakota USDA Service Centers located in the Black Hills area:

Belle Fourche (605) 892-3368

Sturgis (605) 347-4952

Rapid City (605) 342-0301

Hot Springs (605)745-5716

SD TREE FARM COST SHARE

In 2007, the South Dakota Family Forest Association applied for a grant from the South Dakota Department of Agriculture to assist landowners with hiring consulting foresters to prepare management plans for their property. The state division of Resource Conservation and Forestry (RC&F) provided a grant of \$3,500 which was matched by the Black Hills Forest Resource Association (BHFRA) along with funds from the Family Forest Association. Over time, additional funds have been granted from RC&F and matched by other partners, including Neiman Enterprises. Interestingly, the funds donated by Neiman come from fees assessed to trucks that are overweight when they arrive to the mills. Since 2007, there have been over 30 landowners covering nearly 4500 acres that have received financial assistance through this grant. Over \$24,000 has been granted for management plan assistance.

In order to qualify for grant funding, landowners must own at least 40 acres of forest land and pay at least 25% of the cost of plan preparation. The amount of cost share received is based upon the qualifying acreage. Any landowner that receives grant funding agrees to implement a management plan in accordance with ATFS standards. They may then apply to become a tree farmer. Plans prepared as part of the grant are actually titled, *Forest Stewardship Plans*, which are approved by RC&F and written in accordance with standards set by the US Forest Service. Landowners benefit from this process by having a management plan that is recognized by multiple agencies and organizations in the State of South Dakota, and the American Tree Farm System.

Anyone interested in the program, or wanting more information on the grant process should contact Parks Brigman. Parks is the state administrator for SD Tree Farm and works for SD RC&F. He is the Forest Stewardship Coordinator and is based in Rapid City. He can be reached at 605-394-2395 or via email (john.brigman@state.sd.us).

NEWS AFFECTING YOU

PROPERTY TAX & AG LAND (SB3)

Cory Tomovick, *SD Tree Farmer*

Senate Bill 3, signed into law in March 2016, revised the income criteria for determining if property is classified as agricultural land for property tax purposes. You are still required to meet two of the three criteria, but required income has changed. The new income criterion is as follows. In three of the previous five years, a gross income is derived from the pursuit of agriculture as defined in subdivision (2) of this section that is at least ten percent of the taxable valuation of the bare land assessed as agricultural property, excluding any improvements. Furthermore, at least two thousand five hundred dollars of gross income is annually derived from the pursuit of agriculture from the land. If there is a crop share arrangement, the gross income from the land of both the landlord and tenant shall be combined and used to meet this criterion.

What does this mean? Each county sets the acreage criteria. But it is now possible that if you have less than 20 acres, but you still produce \$2,500 of gross income from the pursuit of agriculture, then your property can potentially qualify as agriculture. You must go through the Department of Equalization in your county to determine the assessed value of your property as Ag land to know what ten percent of the taxable valuation of that acreage actually is. The minimum income requirement would be \$2500.

Another change is that landowners who have properties that are not adjacent to each other, but within 20 air miles can now be lumped together under a "management unit."

These changes make sense. However, it is almost impossible for producers of timber to earn \$2500 three out of five years on less than 160 acres because harvesting does not happen annually. In the end we continue to rely on county commissioners to keep the acreage requirement for Ag unchanged. If this makes landowners nervous, the other option is to diversify our forested lands to accommodate other forms of agriculture in an attempt to make the income requirement.

FIRE SEASON IS HERE!

Stay informed of wildfire activity through the Wildfire Incident Situation Report updated regularly.

<http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/>

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE NEWS RELEASE

June 28, 2016

Media Contact: Jim Strain, 605.393.8114

Be Safe with Fire this Independence Day

RAPID CITY S.D. — The South Dakota Department of Agriculture's Wildland Fire Division is reminding people to use extreme caution when shooting off fireworks in areas of the state where conditions are dry.

Fireworks are prohibited within in the Black Hills Forest Fire Protection District, which is located in west central South Dakota.

In the Black Hills area, local, state and federal agencies have combined fire restriction information on one website at: <http://www.blackhillsfirerestrictions.com>. Contact information and website links can be found for each agency if questions arise.

Anyone who causes a wildland fire intentionally or through negligence can be held accountable for damage and suppression costs.

South Dakota Wildland Fire can be found on Twitter @SDWildlandFire and on Facebook by searching SD Wildland Fire.

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 - Consulting Forester
- Frank Cross - Consulting 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 Advocate

Subcommittee Members

Communication and Public Relations

Cory Tomovick - Chairperson, Frank Cross, Tracy Sigdestad, Patricia Turbiville, Ben Wudtke, Brian Weidemier

Financial & Fundraising

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

Certification

Parks Brigman - Chairperson, Bill Coburn, Bob Burns

Membership & Education

Doug Miller - Chairperson, Paul Schipke, Frank Cross, Parks Brigman

Contact Information:

Executive Director – Dennie Mann
P) 605-939-8156
Email: SDtreefarm@gmail.com



P.O. Box 9576

Rapid City, SD 57709