



# SOUTH DAKOTA FAMILY FORESTS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Summer 2021

Semi-Annual

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## SDFFA 2021 Tree Farmer of the Year Oonagh Wood, Wood Ranch

*“Oonagh Wood embodies what it means to truly be a Tree Farmer. Not only does she actively manage her lands to, in her words, “leave them better than she found them” at great personal cost. She is also an extremely active promoter of conservation and forest stewardship in her community.”* - Matthew Walsh, SD DANR RCF Service Forester & SDFFA Inspector

The property has been actively managing its timber for the last 34 years and has completed a total of 903 acres of precommercial thinning. Mrs. Wood is diligently talking with resource professionals and consultants to ensure the best practices for her established goals are met.

Mrs. Wood’s dedication and commitment to stewardship of the land does not stop at her own property. As a Board Member for the Custer Conservation District she works to promote conservations and forest stewardship throughout Custer County. Each year the Conservation District applies for yearly thinning grants to offer to Custer county’s residents because of her hard work.

Actively encouraging and promoting good forest stewardship Mrs. Wood has encouraged landowners owning a combined 4,000 acres to manage their property since July of 2020 and encouraging them to become SDFFA members.

# Thoughts from the Stump (literally)

A lot has happened since our last newsletter. Probably the most consequential event was the legislation that was proposed by Rep. Chaffee during the last legislative session in Jan. and Feb. 2021. He introduced two bills into the House of Representatives. HB 1085 and HB 1149. Both of these bills, as introduced would have had a significant impact on SDFFA and SD forest landowners in general. Fortunately, we were able to get HB 1085 significantly amended to minimize its impact and get HB 1149 pulled. HB 1149 would have taken private forests out of the ag. tax classification and made the minimum acres for this new classification 160 acres.

SDFFA appreciates all of the members that reached out and contacted the legislators about these bills. Unfortunately it is not over, Rep. Chaffee and Senator Duvall are going to try to make another run with more legislation impacting our members during 2022 Legislature. Several of us are meeting with these congress people and others to discuss the many collateral issues and impacts that changing the current status would impart. Stay tuned.

SDFFA also added two, talented members to our board. The first person is Matt Lottes. Matt is currently the Procurement Forester for Neiman Timber Co. and has been working in the Black Hills since 2013. He brings a bright smile and sharp mind to our organization. The second person that we added to our board is Danielle Wiebers. Danielle is currently the Executive Technical Director for Environmental and Safety Affairs for Pete Lien and Sons, Inc.. Danielle also oversees and guides the management of Lien's properties. Pete Lien and Sons currently has two, going on three SD Tree Farms. Danielle is very sharp and brings with her a great understanding and talent working with federal and state regulators.

Finally I am proud to say SDFFA is running on all cylinders with an active board and sub-committees and on solid financial ground. I am excited and enthusiastic about our future.

Bill Coburn, Society of American Foresters Certified Forester (CF)  
SDFFA Chairperson

## UPCOMING EVENTS

SD DANR—Virtual & In-Person Workshop on Ips Beetles  
July 17, 2021 9:00 AM until 10:00 AM  
Outdoor Campus West, Rapid City, SD or Virtually

Dakotas Society of American Foresters Annual Conference October 21 & 22  
The Lodge in Deadwood, SD  
Forest Management: Navigating a Changing World

For Current and Upcoming Events please make sure and check our Facebook Page & Website

## 2021 SD Legislative Session & Advocacy Committee Update

From the 2021 SD legislative session came two bills, HB 1085 and HB 1149 which, if passed as written, would have had a dramatic effect on the agriculture (Ag) tax classification of smaller acreages.

HB 1085 was born out of assessor frustration and meant to close perceived loopholes used by non-Ag landowners to claim Ag status, and HB 1149 would have removed Ag status from forested land and created a whole new classification for timber.

Strong opposition killed HB 1149 early in the session. There is a chance, however, that it may come back in a future session simply because forestry is a much different type of Ag and it's difficult to formulate rules that apply equally to timber that is harvested on a 20 to 30 year rotation and typical Ag that produces income annually.

HB 1085, in its original form, would have jeopardized the Ag status of some tree farms as well as many specialty farms on smaller acreages. Through combined efforts, including that of our members' letter writing, calling and testifying at hearings, HB 1085 was amended to a more acceptable bill. An issue still remains for forested acreages below the county minimum, which must show income 3 out of 5 years.

In June, the bills' sponsors Representative Kirk Chaffee and Senator Mary Duvall held a meeting to consider future solutions amenable to all parties. SDDFA chairman Bill Coburn and SDDFA vice-chairman and advocacy committee chairman Bob Burns, county tax assessors, representatives from the SD Department of Revenue, members representing the timber industry, local conservation district representatives, SD Wildland Fire and SD Department of Agriculture & Natural Resources were all in attendance. The meeting was a good opportunity to explain not only the unique issues facing forest landowners, but the value that well-managed forest land provides to the economy and the environment. Continued dialog with policy makers is a priority for SDDFA.

Bob Burns—SDDFA Landowner & Vice Chairman

### BY THE SKIN ON OUR TEETH

Two bills in the 2021 South Dakota legislature posed a grave threat to the future of tree farmers across the state. Had House Bill 1085 and House Bill 1149 passed without amendments, many family forest owners could have lost their agriculture status and ended up owing residential or market value property taxes. For many landowners, this would have forced them to sell as market rate property taxes make tree farms cost prohibitive. The bills would have essentially reduced open space in the Black Hills and threatened the values family forest owners bring to the land in protecting and providing wood, water, wildlife, and recreation.

But it's thanks to the hard work of SDDFA members, who spent many hours writing letters and raising awareness, that we were able to defeat House Bill 1149 entirely and remove much of the worst language from House Bill 1085.

I believe members receive a huge return investment in SDDFA. The \$75 annual dues are more than paid back in the advocacy undertaken by the organization to protect tree farms, reduce parcelization, ensure landowner rights, reduce fire danger, support the local timber economy, protect wildlife and fisheries, and ensure open space in the Black Hills. But, the fight is not over, and we will need to remain diligent in the years to come. For this we need everyone's help.

If you have neighbors who would make great tree farmers, encourage them to join SDDFA, together we can protect the beautiful Black Hills and woodlands all across our state for many generations to come.

Mike Ray—SDDFA Landowner & Communication Committee Chairman

## Wanted—Pine Cones

Doug Hoffbauer from Duluth, MN submitted an opportunity and request to SDDFA Members. The information below was provided to the organization in an email:

*Our family is in the Christmas tree business. Ponderosa pine cones are a vital part of our industry and it's getting harder to find a reliable supply. We need 25-30,000 cones a year (about 100 bushels). We come mid July with the grandkids to spend part time touring and part time cone picking.*

*We would need nothing more than access or directions to a good spot.*

*Thank you in advance.*

Contact: Doug Hoffbauer [Doug@farmerdoug.com](mailto:Doug@farmerdoug.com) (218)721-2011

<https://www.farmerdoug.com/treefarm>



## Family Forests & Open Space in the Black Hills

The Black Hills are at a crossroads.

In one direction, is the front range of the Rockies, where suburban sprawl extends into the mountains for a hundred miles or more.

On the other path we move towards the Tetons, where large tracts of land are kept open, benefiting agriculture, tourism, timber industry jobs, water quality, wildlife, and recreation.

In 2021 two bills were introduced into the state legislature that put the Black Hills on a path toward Fort Collins, Denver, or Colorado Springs. This legislation would have resulted in an increase housing density in the wildland urban interface. It would have impaired water quality, hindered wildlife, limited agriculture, timber production, and recreation – maybe most importantly it would lead to the kind of urban density in the forest that makes wildfires much harder to fight.

These bills were a direct attack on family forests or tree farms within South Dakota. They would have made the production of timber and forest products a large number of private forest lands cost prohibitive by raising taxes on forest landowners so high, that many would be forced to sell – thus the land would be further parceled and developed.

In the Black Hills there are approximately 20,000 acres of family forests. These farms are open tracts of undeveloped land – that have a positive benefit for wildlife, water quality, timber industry, recreation, and the tourism industry.

Private property rights are paramount, landowners who wish to develop should always have the right to do so. But landowners should never be forced to sell out to developers because the tax structure allows them no other option. In the Black Hills we need to ask this question. What's better for our future – a 20 acre tree farm or 40 McMansions?

As an SDDFA member I favor open space, water quality, wildlife protection, recreation, tourism, timber industry jobs, wildfire reduction, and private property rights. I hope we can join together with our neighbors across the state, grow a coalition, and advocate for legislation that protects agriculture in the Black Hills of all sizes: from large ranches and farms to small operations that maintain vital local production of our food and timber supply.

Mike Ray—SDDFA Landowner & Communication Committee Chairman

# Understanding SDFFA's Inspectors

Inspectors are just as vitally important as private landowners to the success of the American Tree Farm System along with SDFFA. Even though an inspector visits your property once every 5 years, do you know what the inspectors have to do? How does someone become an inspector and what qualifications do they have to have?

**First:** SDFFA inspectors have to meet a minimum requirement of have a four-year Bachelor of Science or Forestry degree from an accredited Society of American Foresters (SAF) accredited program, or have a SAF recognized two-year forestry technician degree, or having been a Tree Farm inspector prior to 1999 and be grandfathered in.

**Next:** All inspectors must take an ATFS training at least once every five years. They must know and understand the ATFS standards and forms.

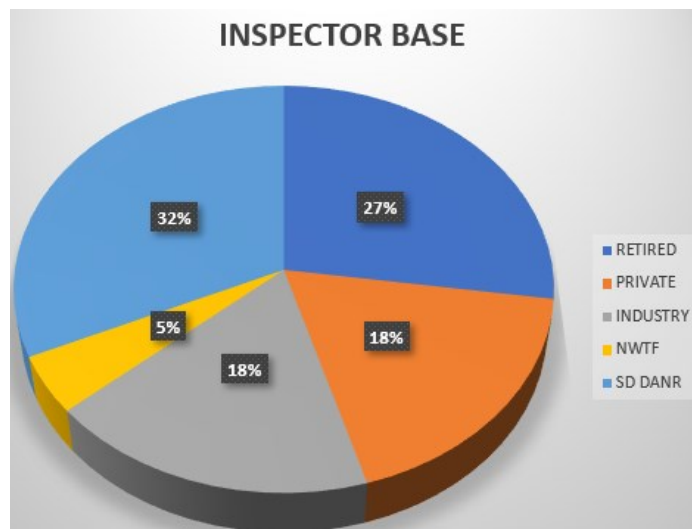
**Then:** The SDFFA database manager reviews and assigns properties to inspectors as their five year inspection comes up. Any SDFFA Inspector can fill out initial ATFS forms to sign landowners up.

With the updating of the ATFS Standards ALL of the SDFFA Inspectors including the database manager were required to complete one ATFS Standards Training, either virtually or in person. SDFFA hosted two workshops in order to adhere to public health concerns and to encourage training of inspectors. The trainings take from 4 to 8 hours to complete in which the inspectors volunteer their time.

ON AVERAGE SDFFA COMPLETES 25  
LANDOWNER INSPECTIONS EACH  
SEASON.

Currently there are 22 inspectors though only approximately 17 perform annual inspections. SDFFA is always looking and in need of more inspectors.

**Thank you, SDFFA Inspectors, without you the program would be a lot different.**



Patricia Weyrich—SDFFA Database Manager, Inspector & SD DANR RCF Forester

## New Opportunities—SDFFA ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

Are you a business or individual that supports the goals and objectives of the SDFFA? Do you have an interest in advocating for private forestland and forest landowners within the state of South Dakota?

You can now be an **Associate Member** of the South Dakota Family Forests Association, even if you are not a certified Tree Farmer. The Board of Directors approved a change in the By-Laws for the Association at their May, 2021 meeting.

You could become an Associate member of the association for a minimum donation of **\$25** per year. Of course, as a nonprofit corporation, we accept any amount that would support the work of our organization.

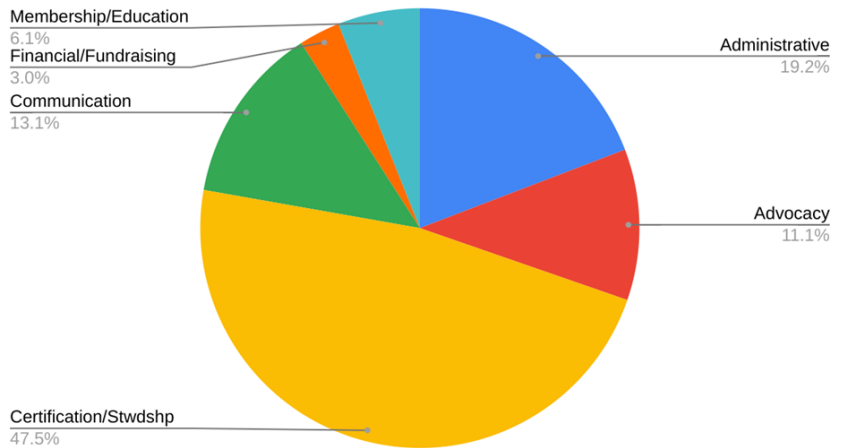
# Financial Page

## Committee Tasks:

**Advocacy:** Represents family forest landowners at Legislative event in Pierre, conducts tree farms tours for officials, advocates with policy makers on behalf of family forest landowner interests, conducts workshops for county and state assessors, monitors SD Legislative Session for issues pertinent to forest landowners.

**Membership:** Organizes workshops & field trips, host social events, distributes information on educational opportunities & resources of interest.

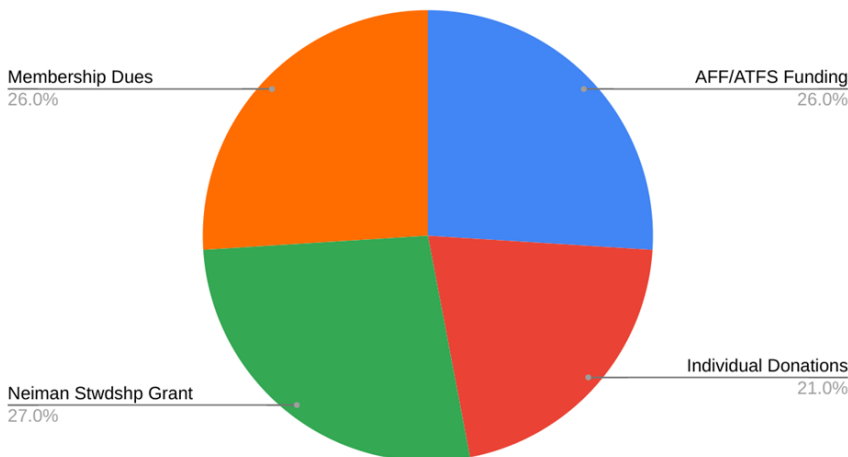
## 2020 SDCFFA Expenses



**Certification:** Administers Stewardship Cost Share Grant with SD DANR RCF, Organizes professional foresters to conduct 5-year inspections of members to maintain ATFS standards for certified tree farms, recruits/trains inspectors (foresters), manages 3rd party audit/assessment, reviews & recommends Tree Farmer of the Year or Inspector of the Year to SDCFFA Board

**Communication:** Maintains website, provides networking & conveys relevant information through Facebook, SDCFFA website while promoting family forests & forest landowners, handles press releases & publicity.

## 2020 SDCFFA Income



## SDCFFA New Members

SDCFFA would like to welcome our New Members!! It is great to see the organization growing and connecting landowners throughout South Dakota!!

James Lanctot—  
Pennington County

Paul & Penny Svenkeson—  
Custer County

Outlaws II LLC—  
Pennington County

## 2020 & 2021 Inspectors of the Years

2020 was a struggling year with the global public health situation known as COVID-19. This organization doesn't get very far without our outstanding inspectors, though, our 2020 inspector of the year was not identified or congratulated. So the SDCFFA Board would like to congratulate the following 2 inspectors for Inspector of 2020 & 2021. Their dedicated service to this organization is what helps us be a strong program.

2020—Allyssa Gregory

2021—Matthew Walsh

Thank you for all of your hard work even through a national health crisis.

## STANDARD 4.2: PESTICIDES

Standard 4 is made up of multiple parts and is titled as the Air, Water, and Soil Protection Standard. Each part of the standard is important and will be addressed including Pesticides and their role in this standard (4.2).

**Pesticides** are any substance or mixture of substances intended for preventing, destroying, repelling, or mitigating any pest ([EPA website](#)). It can also be any substance or mixture of substances intended for use as a plant regulator, defoliant, desiccant, or can be any nitrogen stabilizer. For forested properties this means that a pesticide is the insecticide, herbicide, or fungicide used on the property.



**Pesticides are federally, state, and in some cases locally regulated and monitored.** It depends on the type of product utilized and size, scale, and scope of a project. Products such as a gallon of Round-Up can be purchased over the counter, by any individual, and be used on the property as directed. Unlike, a product like Carbaryl 4L can only be purchased by a licensed pesticide applicator who has been certified through the South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (SD DANR).

What does this mean for you?

The ATFS standard **requires that all applicable laws be followed including federal, state, or local pesticide laws.** Know where you utilized products, what year products were used, how was containers dealt with, what contractors you utilized, and/or any other pertinent information is kept with your property records.

For more information you can contact SD DANR [Pesticides](#) Perrie Office at 605.773.3296 or by contacting the United States Environmental Protection Agency ([EPA](#)).

Patricia Weyrich—SDFFA Database Manager, Inspector & SD DANR RCF Forester

## WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT!!

If you would like to volunteer for a specific project or task please contact [sdtreefarm@gmail.com](mailto:sdtreefarm@gmail.com)

Projects that Committee's are working on:

- ◆ Forestry/Timber TV Commercial
- ◆ New Membership Brochure Update
- ◆ New/Non-Member Outreach
- ◆ Additional Informational Handouts  
(White Sheets) on Organization
- ◆ Semi-Annual Newsletter Articles, Ideas, or Help
- ◆ Agricultural Classification Landowner Workshop
- ◆ Member Directory
- ◆

What projects would you like to see committee's work on? Email suggestions to [sdtreefarm@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:SDtreefarm@gmail.com)

## South Dakota Family Forests Association Board

- Bill Coburn: Chairman & Black Hills Forestry Inc.  
Forestry Consultant
- Bob Burns: Vice Chairman, Tree Farmer
- Mary LaHood: Tree Farmer  
- Executive Director & Treasurer
- Doug Miller: Tree Farmer & Secretary
- Greg Josten: SD Department of Agriculture  
and Natural Resources—State Forester
- Ben Wudtke: Black Hills Forest Resource  
Association Executive Director
- Matthew Lottes: Spearfish Forest Products Forester
- Mike Ray: Tree Farmer
- Sid Goss: Tree Farmer
- Logan Brown: Wildland Fire Division  
Urban Interface Specialist
- Danielle Wiebers: Tree Farmer
- Lynn Kolund: Dakota Forestry LLC  
Forestry Consultant

## Committee Members

### Communication and Public Relations

Mike Ray—Chairperson  
Patricia Weyrich, Mary LaHood

### Advocacy

Bob Burns - Chairperson,  
Sid Goss, Greg Josten, Ben Wudtke

### Financial & Fundraising

Bill Coburn - Chairperson,  
Mary LaHood, Danielle Wiebers

### Certification

Patricia Weyrich— Chairperson,  
Logan Brown, Mary LaHood

### Membership & Education

Lynn Kolund - Chairperson,  
Geri Konenkamp, Mary LaHood



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**ACCEPTING VOLUNTEERS IN ANY/ALL CAPACITIES.**

**PLEASE CONTACT ANY OF OUR MEMBERS IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING.**