



SOUTH DAKOTA FAMILY FORESTS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

February 2021

Semi-Annual

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Foundation



South Dakota Department of Agriculture
Resource Conservation and Forestry

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Paul & Julie Schipke

Bob Burns & Mary LaHood

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SD Program Expands In Membership & Services!!

South Dakota Family Forests Association Volunteers and partners have been working to expand the program and its services.

- Updating existing website
- Advocacy & Outreach to lawmakers & tax representatives
- New Informative Documents and Outreaches
- Facebook Page at “South Dakota Family Forests Association”
- Workshops for Landowners and/or Professionals
- New Inspector Trainings and Outreach
- Welcome New Members (January to January 2021)
 - Doyle & Debbera Hagen
 - Dr. Duane & Laura Pankratz
 - Mark & Sharon Jones—Mark Jones Trust
 - Nicholas Bennett
 - Steve Miller
 - Michael Whalen—SD Land Company LLC
 - Timothy & Sandra Mordhorst (2021)

A SIMPLE “THANK YOU” JUST ISN’T ENOUGH

South Dakota Family Forests Association (SDFFA) is a volunteer organization and its success rests squarely on the shoulders of energetic, reliable individuals who are committed to the principles of managing forestland in a sustainable manner with the major focus on healthy-forest management and wildlife habitat enhancements. One volunteer, Paul Schipke, has decided to “retire” from his SDFFA leadership positions, which he has held since 1999. SDFFA has been blessed to have Paul’s leadership skills, positive energy and reliable character on full display for the past 20 years! Since 1999 when Paul and his wife, Julie, became certified tree farmers, he has continuously served on the SDFFA Board of Directors and on the Executive Committee, with his most recent assignments being Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

Examples where he directly or indirectly represented the SDFFA include:

A ten-year member of the Lawrence County Timber Advisory Committee.

For six years, conducted tree planting and field education sessions for the 4H Club of Belle Fourche.

Testified before the SD House Agriculture committee, in support of a “healthy forest” resolution, targeting Mountain Pine Beetle and Wildfire management initiatives.

Has made numerous presentations, in support of the SDFFA organization (e.g. Dakota Society of American Foresters, Custer County Conservation District).



Since 1999, they have demonstrated a personal commitment to exceptional forest-management principles. The love and passion for the health and well-being of their 300-acre, tree farm is evident from the below actions and recognitions as examples.

- ◆ Received the SDFFA’s “Outstanding Tree Farmers of the Year” award in 2003.
- ◆ Have burned almost 700 hand-stacked brush piles while completing fuel reduction management
- ◆ Hand planted almost 21,000 Ponderosa, pine seedlings after major portions of their property were damaged from the 2002 Grizzle Gulch Fire.
- ◆ Actively mitigated the MPB infestation by using salvage logging and “cut & chunk” treatments affected by Mountain Pine Beetles (MPB)
- ◆ Installed five underground mine-openings to protect wintering sites for bats.
- ◆ Received the Lawrence County / Butte County “Conservation Citizenship Award” in 2013.

So, **“THANK YOU”** Paul and Julie for your SDFFA involvement and the energy you have displayed in support of SDFFA initiatives, for your twenty years of leadership, your continuing role as a member and for your friendship as those of us within the SDFFA family have enjoyed a positive, personal relationship with you and Julie.

Doug Miller, SDFFA – Secretary: Board of Directors.

Thoughts from the Stump (literally)

I would like to wish everyone a safe and rewarding New Year. 2020 is a year that we hopefully do not repeat. From the COVID 19 impacts to our society's health and welfare to the political strife that has affected our nation deeply, it is my hope that our country can begin to heal.

From SFFFA perspective, 2020 had some successes and long periods of inactivity. I am really excited with having a South Dakota "Tree Farmer" named as a "National Tree Farmer of the Year" finalist. The Burns/LaHood family is very worthy. We should find out at the 2022 National Leadership Conference if they win. **Can't wait!**

SFFFA activities will be driven by our efforts to implement 2020-2025 Strategic Plan Goals

Goal 1: Produce a branding campaign that will increase the awareness of SFFFA in the Black Hills region and across the state.

We are planning on having promotional items with SFFFA made so that these items can be handed out at meetings, seminars and workshops. We are also considering mailing high quality SFFFA pens to all our legislators this year.

We have also created an attractive SFFFA Facebook page that will be managed by Mike Ray

Goal 2: Actively recruit new members to SFFFA leadership positions who have special skills and talents

SFFFA has taken significant steps in already meeting this goal by adding 3 new, exceptional board members. I would like to thank Mike Ray, Sid Goss and Logan Brown for agreeing to join our board. Robert (Bob) Burns has been elected Vice Chair after the retirement of Paul Schipke.

Goal 3: Support the mission of SFFFA through proactive Advocacy Programs

SFFFA has been invited to participate as a stakeholder in an Off Highway Vehicle Summit to represent private landowners in this burgeoning Black Hills issue. This summit is being hosted by the Black Hills National Forest.

We will be evaluating the potential of holding the Tax Assessor's workshop that was postponed last year.

Goal 4: Grow and engage membership through effective events and programs that keep members active.

This is something we are actively working on to try to implement within the problems created by COVID 19.

We are hoping our Facebook page will increase member activity and involvement and also provide a vehicle for getting helpful information to our members

Goal 5: Target and enroll potential non-tree farm owners into SFFFA that may have direct relationships with and/or interest in privately owned forests

We are considering adding an associate membership category for those folks who are not tree farmers to still be members of SFFFA

Goal 5: Ensure that SFFFA has adequate professional staffing to ensure the success of our organization

We are fortunate to have Mary LaHood as our Executive Director and Treasurer. As our organization has grown so has her commitment to make sure our organization properly functions.

In addition, I am also happy that South Dakota Div. of Resource Conservation and Forestry chose Patricia Weyrich to replace Parks Brigman. Patricia has a long history of supporting our organization as a consulting forester and editor of our newsletter. Her enthusiasm and ideas have been very helpful to our organization.

SFFFA continues to improve our presence and leadership as the only nonprofit organization that represents private forest landowners in South Dakota.

Finally, I would like to thank Paul Schipke for his leadership, counsel and friendship over the last 20 plus years. You will be missed, but your legacy will be carried forward. Bill Coburn, CF, SFFFA Chairman, SAF Fellow

VALUE ADDED AGRICULTURE & FAMILY FORESTS

To maintain proof of agriculture income for ag tax status on our small tree farm, we need to maximize profit with the limited amount of dead timber we harvest for firewood each year. We only harvest dead and downed trees for firewood, to reduce the fuel load and wildfire danger. The trees we are harvesting now were killed in the May 2019 blizzard.

In the Black Hills, split stacked firewood averages about \$100 per pickup load. But some local retail stores in Rapid City sell small bundles of mostly out-of-state firewood for up to \$8 each. In my own opinion, it makes little sense that area retailers offer firewood shipped in from hundreds of miles away when there is ample local supply. To better capitalize on this market, we came up with the Camp Fire Kit™. It's a paper bag full of firewood split into various sizes for kindling and longer burning wood. The paper bag can be ripped up and used to start the campfire. The back of the bag has a QR code link to fire safety information and a number of safety reminders.

COVID 19 limited our ability to produce in 2020. The small amount of product we produced sold well in one local retail store. We found Camp Fire Kit sales yield a five-fold increase in profit over the per-pickup load price. We hope to expand sales in 2021.

We think this idea can benefit other members of SDCFFA, and we are willing to work with any members want to use this concept to help their own family tree farms achieve proof of agriculture income. There may be incentives for value added agriculture cooperatives in the state and we are exploring these opportunities.

Please feel free to reach out to me if any members are interested in this idea.

Mike Ray—SDFFA Member & Communication Committee Volunteer



UPCOMING EVENTS (SPRING/SUMMER 2021)

- △ **National Leadership Conference**, February 23-25—To Be Held Virtually
 - △ \$50 registration fee with seminars for Landowners, Leaders and Foresters
- △ **Women & Wildland Fire Home Defense**, March 20, 2021—To Be Held Virtually
 - Following In-Person or Virtual Workshops Planned for Summer 2021
- △ **Custer Conservation District Landowner Training**, May 7, 2021—TBD
- △ **Bennett County Conservation District Planting Workshop**, March 2021
- △ **Lawrence County Training/Landowner Meeting**

SOUTH DAKOTA LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR VISIT

In late August 2020, the Lieutenant Governor SD Department of Agriculture Larry Rhoden, took a tour of the Black Hills logging and forest industry. Hosts of this visit included the South Dakota Department of Agriculture Division of Resource Conservation and Forestry Division, Neiman Timber Industry, and SDDFA. The purpose of the tour was to demonstrate not only the value of the family forests to the timber industry but to forest health in general, and the importance of continued help from the state with professional advice and cost-sharing programs.

The day-long tour started with a visit to Neiman Industry's Spearfish sawmill, an active logging site, Case #1 where the first federal timber sale in the country occurred and ended at the Bob Burns/Mary LaHood Family Forest. This farm has been in the family since the 1800s and is actively managed for last 25 years. Projects completed include: two timber harvests and over 20 other projects were completed including: wildlife habitat improvement, pre-commercial tree thinning, hardwood and meadow enhancements, and spring improvements.



As a Meade County rancher the Lt Governor was well aware of the importance of grass cover and a fibrous root system to stabilize the soil, absorb rain water and improve wildlife habitat. Overcrowded timber stands contain a mat of pine needles and cones that forms an almost impervious barrier to rainwater and creates essentially a biological desert with a few spindly plants trying to survive in the dense shade and dry conditions.

Pictured above, from left to right, South Dakota Service Forester Krista Erdman, South Dakota State Forester Greg Josten, SDDFA Chairman Bill Coburn, Lieutenant Governor Rhoden, SDDFA member Robert Burns, Neiman Forester Jamie Schmidt and SDDFA Board member Ben Wudtke.

SDDFA/ATFS INSPECTORS OUTREACH GRANT

With the shared common goal of engaging more landowners in sustainable forest management and the recognition that increasing and strengthening the inspector community is a necessary component of that, ATFS and SDDFA have teamed up on an Inspector Engagement Pilot Program. Actively working to grow the inspector community and capacity will benefit not only SDDFA, but will serve to provide useful data for other states to develop and model similar programs.

ATFS Updates Its Standards

In response to national certification needs the Forest Stewardship Plan requirements have changed **requiring ALL Inspectors to take a refresher course in 2021** before inspecting any properties.

Current Inspectors & Inspections

Completed Inspections in 2020

- 17 Completed Inspection

Current Inspector Roster (12/31/2020)

- 16 Active Inspectors

THANK YOU INSPECTORS

2020 THIRD PARTY AUDIT RESULTS

In 2020, the South Dakota Family Forests Association was one of several states that participated in a review of the American Tree Farm System through a third-party assessment conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC). These audits are a useful measurement for the American Tree Farm System (ATFS) to identify both areas of success and need for improvement to ensure ATFS is providing landowners with the information they need to manage their forested properties, and subsequently ensure a credible certification system which creates opportunities for family forest owners.

The PWC auditor reviews the organization's records and typically conducts a one-hour visit of randomly-selected tree farm properties who have been notified in advance. This time, due to COVID 19, instead of site visits landowners participated in a phone interview. They shared their stewardship plan goals and objectives, and answered questions pertaining to the 2015-2020 Standards of Sustainability as applied to the practices on their property.

Twenty-three instances of exceeding the standards were recognized. Some of them included: extensive record-keeping; utilization of GPS mapping system; having an MOU with the fire department for fire mitigation thinning training; re-seeding slash piles with native grasses and wildflowers; creating fuel breaks to protect adjacent neighborhoods; constructing a pedestrian-only gate for hikers; requiring contractors to wash equipment prior to coming onsite to prevent the spread of invasive species; working on research for game studies, prescribed burning, shelterbelts and new grinding equipment; arranging permission to clear beetle trees from USFS property near landowner's property line; working jointly with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation; and conducting tours for SD Secretary of Ag, tax assessors, church and environmental groups.

Kudos to all the SDFFA landowners who participated!

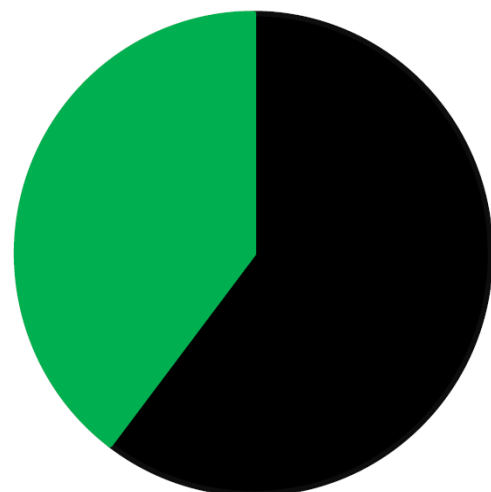
Forest Stewardship Program

SDFFA Stewardship Cost-Share Program

In partnership with SD Division of Resource Conservation & Forestry (SD RCF) and Neiman Enterprises, SDFFA offers a cost-share program to

assist landowners in hiring private consulting foresters to develop a Forest Stewardship Plan.

The foresters must qualify under SD RCF requirements and the landowner must agree to become a member of SDFFA



■ Grant Used ■ Grant Remaining

SDFFA MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

Doyle & Deb Hagen

Members that lease property to cattle producer and decided to encourage quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) to regeneration. Management paths used included cutting and removing all competitive tree species such as ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) and any dead or dying quaking aspen. To discourage wildlife browsing of regeneration the area was fenced.

Submitted by:

Lynn Kolund
Consulting Forester
Dakota Forestry, LLC



NATIONAL TREE FARMER OF THE YEAR FINALIST

Mary LaHood and Bob Burns of the LaHood-Burns Family Forest advanced to the final eight selection in consideration for American Tree Farm System (ATFS) National Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year. The country is divided into four regions and two tree farms from each of the four compete for the regional and national honors.



The family was featured in the Woodland Fall 2020 magazine where the selection process as well as the steps forward was explained. "America's family forests are vital for clean water and air, wildlife habitat, and sustainable wood supplies. The American Tree Farm System, AFF's signature program, is the country's largest sustainable woodland program, with a network of more than 70,000 family forest owners managing 19 million acres of forestland. To be considered for the ATFS National Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year

award, nominees must exhibit exceptional forest stewardship to protect and improve forest resources and promote forest stewardship within their communities. This year, the global COVID 19 pandemic put a pause on the 2020 selection process. After much discussion and input from the Review Committee, inspectors, and finalists, the judging process and field visits with the current eight finalists will be held in late spring 2021 to ensure a safer, more equitable outcome."

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 & 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 State Forester
- Ben Wudtke: Black Hills Forest Resource Association Executive Director
- Jamie Schmidt: Spearfish Forest Products Forester
- Mike Ray: Tree Farmer
- Sid Goss: Tree Farmer
- Logan Brown: SD Department of Agriculture Wildland Fire Division Urban Interface Specialist State Forester Wildland Fire

Committee Members

Communication and Public Relations

Mike Ray—Chairperson
Patricia Weyrich, Chuck McLain, Mary LaHood

Advocacy

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

Financial & Fundraising

Bill Coburn - Chairperson,
Mary LaHood,

Certification

Patricia Weyrich— Chairperson,
Logan Brown, Mary LaHood

Membership & Education

Lynn Kolund - Chairperson,
Jamie Schmidt, Geri Konenkamp



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ACCEPTING VOLUNTEERS IN ANY/ALL CAPACITIES.

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