



Tree Farm promotes well managed forests.

Letter from the Chair: Montana Tree Farm Chooses the Certification Pathway

Dear Tree Farmer,

At the 2012 annual membership meeting in Darby, the Montana Tree Farm Steering Committee initiated a two and a half year process of education, scoping, and dialogue with its membership about the future of the state program regarding one specific question: would Montana Tree Farm choose to retain its status as a third-party certified program, or would it revert to a recognition-based system?

By the end of 2015 each state chapter in the American Tree Farm System (ATFS) will have completed the same decision process, known nationally as “State’s Voice, State’s Choice.” Many states are making the

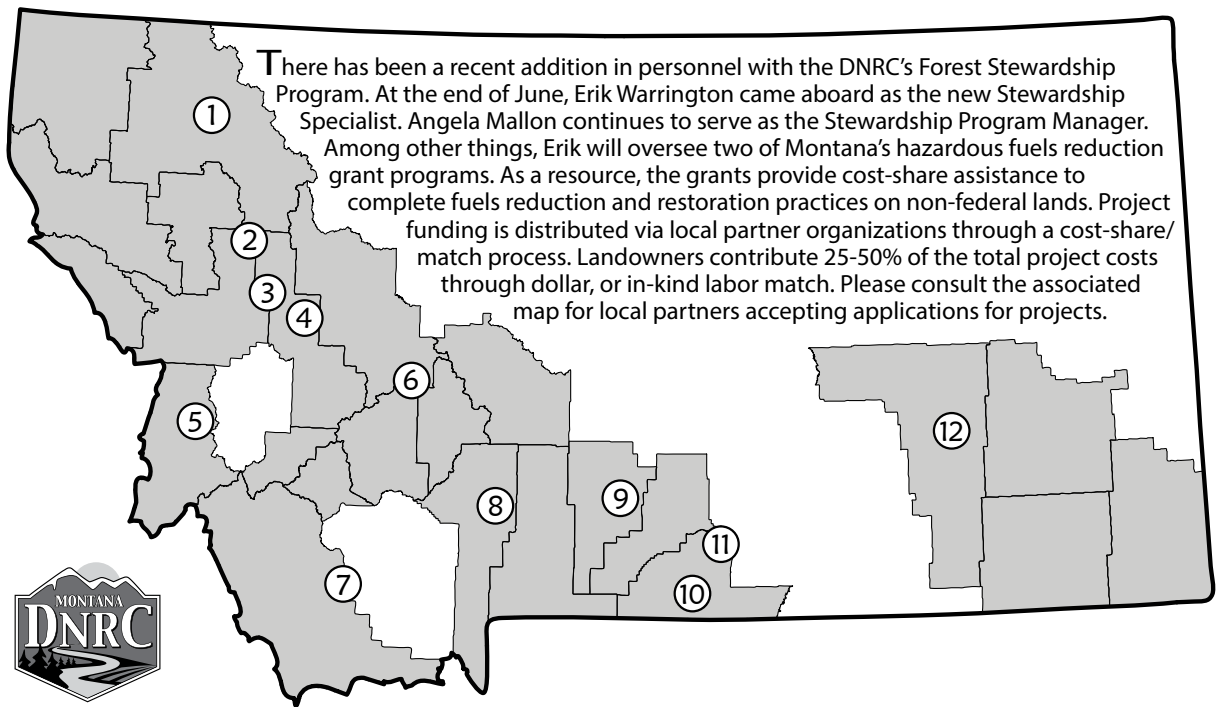
choice at a strictly executive level with little input from membership. Others are soliciting feedback at state or regional meetings before coming to a final decision. Montana’s Steering Committee chose to go a step further, with a four-step process that involved presentations at annual and regional breakfast meetings and the Helena Forest Landowners Conference; written material published in the Fall 2013, Spring 2014, and Fall 2014 newsletters; an on-line survey of mill managers; and a phone survey of 40 members not previously contacted. These methods were augmented by informal conversations with Tree Farmers in the woods, during recertification visits, and at landowner outreach events.

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Hazardous Fuels Reduction: Landowner Assistance



- ① Flathead Economic Policy Center: Flathead, Lincoln, Sanders, & Lake Counties - 406.892.8155
- ② Swan Ecosystem Center (Condon): Upper Swan Valley - 406.754.3137
- ③ Clearwater Resource Council (Seeley Lake): Greater Seeley Lake - 406.210.8453
- ④ Blackfoot Challenge (Ovando): Blackfoot River Watershed - 406.793.3900
- ⑤ Bitter Root RC&D (Hamilton): Ravalli, Missoula, & Mineral Counties - 406.363.5450
- ⑥ Lewis & Clark County (Helena): Lewis & Clark, Jefferson, & Broadwater Counties - 460.442.4873
- ⑦ Beaverhead County (Dillon): Beaverhead, Deer Lodge, Silver Bow, & Jefferson Counties - 406.596.1251
- ⑧ MSU Gallatin Extension (Belgrade): Park, Gallatin, & Meagher Counties - 406.388.3213
- ⑨ Sweet Grass County Conservation District (Big Timber): Sweet Grass County - 406.932.5285
- ⑩ Red Lodge Fire Rescue (Red Lodge): Greater Red Lodge Area - 406.425.3175
- ⑪ Beartooth RC&D (Joliet): Stillwater & Carbon Counties - 406.962.3914
- ⑫ Rosebud Conservation District (Forsyth): Rosebud, Custer, Powder River, & Carter Counties - 406.346.7333

We used the phone survey and one-on-one conversations not only to measure the preferences of a sample of our membership, but also further enhance members' understanding of the differences between third-party certified and recognition status. Of the Tree Farmers contacted during the phone survey, 64% favored retaining certification, while 75% of mill managers who participated in the online survey preferred the certification pathway. **Based upon this input, in May the Montana Tree Farm Steering Committee voted to remain a third-party certified program.**

Although a decision has been reached, the work is by no means over. In the coming months, the Steering Committee will work to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with ATFS to declare its pathway decision. We will conduct a massive update of our state records to verify contact information and status of our statewide membership. We will develop a comprehensive communication plan to make sure that we are effectively reaching our members with the information they want most.

Based upon what we heard from you, this last step – communication – is the most important. During the State's Voice, State's Choice scoping process, we heard one resounding message: the services Tree Farmers value most are recertification visits from inspectors, educational materials, and the chance to meet and learn from other Tree Farmers. Going forward, it is the Steering Committee's primary goal to maintain and expand its outreach and communication to members. This newsletter is one such outreach tool; our annual meeting (see registration and information in this issue) is another. Sometimes, though, the best opportunity for outreach is a simple conversation. I hope those of you reading this feel free to contact me at any time to ask questions about your Tree Farm program, provide insights on how we can make it better, or share a story about your special place. I am at your service.

Sincerely,

Angela Mallon
Montana Tree Farm Chair and
Certification Coordinator



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The Hoiland Family Selected as Western Region Outstanding Tree Farmers of the Year

Angela Mallon, Chair

The Montana Tree Farm Program and the American Tree Farm System (ATFS) are proud to announce that the Hoiland Family had been selected as the Western Region Outstanding Tree Farmers of the Year. Each year, ATFS recognizes Outstanding Tree Farmers from 4 regions: Western, Southern, North Central, and Northeastern. The Hoilands are joined this year by the Boutwell Family of Alabama, Merlin and George Becker of Wisconsin, and Becketts Run Woodlands in Pennsylvania.



Duke and Naomi Hoiland receive their Montana Tree Farmer of the Year Award at the 2014 Tree Farm annual meeting.

Duke and Naomi Hoiland were honored last fall as the 2014 Montana Outstanding Tree Farmers of the Year, which made them eligible for regional recognition. Montana Tree Farm Vice Chair, Allen Chrisman worked tirelessly with inspector Paul McKenzie to craft a glowing nomination for the regional process, resulting in the Hoilands being selected as finalists for the regional competition along with Tree Farmers from Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. The national selection committee praised the Hoilands' creative use of wood from their Tree Farm in construction on their property, their management which sustains and enhances endangered species habitat – the Hoilands have coexisted with grizzlies for years! – and their one-family campaign to recruit an army of devoted Tree Farmers in their corner of Northwest Montana. In a June visit to review the Hoiland property, ATFS

selection committee members from Kentucky and Alabama enjoyed the Hoilands' famous hospitality on a review of the property, marveling at the complexity of management which prioritizes multiple goals of habitat improvement, self-sufficiency, aesthetics, and timber production in a place so remote and treasured as the tiny North Fork community on the flanks of Glacier National Park. When the July 1st announcement of the Hoilands selection was released, it came as no great surprise to the Tree Farmers and neighbors who know well the Hoilands' legacy of forest stewardship.

As Western Region winners, the Hoilands are now eligible for ATFS greatest accolade – National Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year. Votes have been cast on an online platform by Tree Farmers across the country, and the final selection will be announced at the National Leadership Conference in Seattle next February. We will keep you posted – in the meantime, we congratulate the Hoilands and wish them luck! ♦

Forest Soil Health

Chris Town, Natural Resources Conservation Service

Forest landowners know to look up and evaluate tree crowns for form and vigor...but how often do you look under your boots at the growing medium? This article provides a primer on the basic elements of forest soil health and how they work together.

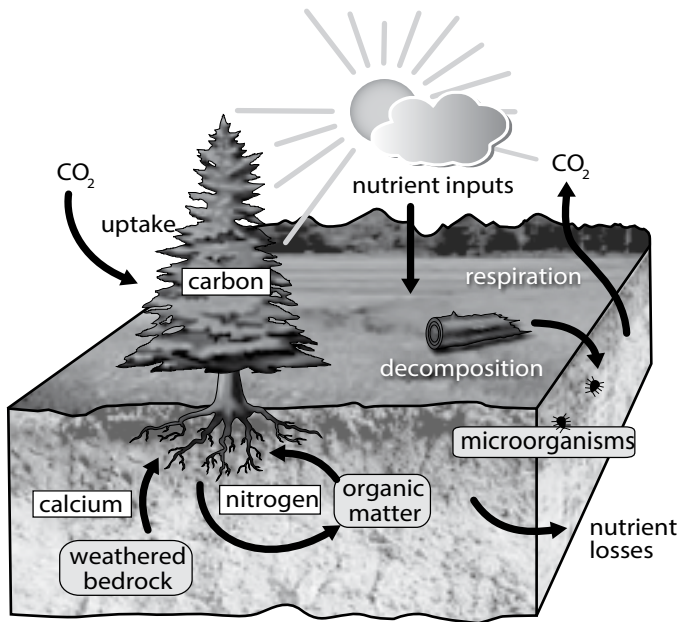
Forest Soil Function

To evaluate the fertility of our forest soil, we need to know how a forest soil functions.

Let's begin with an understanding of the three components of a forest soil; the mineral, organic, and biologic. Forest soils, like any soil, are primarily derived from the decomposition of the parent material; in the Rocky Mountains usually some form of mineral rock, but in some stands ash deposits or even deep deposits of decaying plant materials are the foundation.

The organic component rests on the forest floor and includes the large woody debris, the branches and needles that are still recognizable, and that rich, moist, dark layer of advanced decomposition of plant material. It is in the organic layer that nutrients and moisture are stored and made available for plant use.

The creepy crawlies, the bacteria, and the fungi that help break down the organic component form a third component to forest soils. The depth of the organic layer has a direct proportional relationship with productivity. For example, spruce-fir forests have a deeper organic layer than ponderosa pine types and are therefore inherently more productive.



The Nutrient Cycle

We now have a rudimentary understanding of the forest soil components, with just a hint toward nutrient cycling, so let's dig into that a bit further. In a conifer tree, more than half of the nutrients are found in the small branches and needles. Allowed to sit on the forest floor, those nutrients leach into the soil. Large woody debris (LWD) serves a moisture sink, wildlife habitat, and medium for fungi. Of the aforementioned fungi, mycorrhizae may be the most important. These microfilaments, which resemble a sort of subterranean web, form a symbiotic relationship with tree roots, increasing the surface area and facilitating nutrient and water uptake.

By now we have an appreciation that the forest floor is a complex, dynamic living system that serves an all

important function to the well being of our trees and the ecosystem they support. We can imagine some catalysts that can alter the functionality of forest soil. Wildfire and forest management activities come to mind. Both can be either catastrophic or beneficial. Both can be mitigated and even used to enhance the functionality of the forest floor. Fuel hazard reduction will reduce the severity of the impending burn. Seasonal timing, harvest method, and silviculture can all be optimized to foster forest soil health.



Fire on the landscape.

Next time you're in the woods, be sure to kick around in the duff and assess what the trees have to work with. Does the ground feel compacted or is it spongy? Are there large areas of bare ground and signs of erosion? Is there a fair amount of large woody debris?



Assessing duff conditions.

- Much has been written on any and all of the points in this article that may have peaked your interest. An internet search or visit with a forester will provide in depth discussion to satisfy your curiosity. ♦

Montana Tree Farm Annual Meeting Agenda and Registration

Saturday, October 3, 2015

Bridger Canyon Fire Hall, 8081 Bridger Canyon Road, Bozeman, MT 59715 (directions follow)

Transportation: Meet at the Bridger Canyon Fire Hall. We will load a bus there for the tour.

- 8:00 – 8:30 am Meet at Bridger Canyon Fire Hall, coffee, pastries, browse silent auction items
- 8:30 – 9:00 am Travel to Mike and Jody Christianson Tree Farm.
- 9:00 – 10:00 am Visit Christianson Tree Farm
- 10:15 am Board buses, depart to Hahola Tree Farm (or Battle Ridge Campground)
- 10:45 – 11:45 am Visit Hahola Tree Farm (or Battle Ridge Campground)
- 12:00 pm Depart to Bridger Canyon Fire Hall
- 1:00 pm Return to Bridger Canyon Fire Hall, serve lunch, present Awards
- 2:00 pm Business Meeting. Suggested Items:
- Certification Pathway Decision
 - Tree Farm Financial Report
 - Open Forum on Fundraising Strategy
- 3:30 pm Adjourn



Registration Form: Tree Farm Tour and Luncheon

Saturday, October 3, 2015

Pre-registration is necessary to get an accurate meal count. **Registration due to Montana Tree Farm by September 18th.**

Registration fee is \$25 per person (Children under 16 are \$12.50). Attendance is limited to 100.

*If tour is filled, late applicants will be notified ASAP.

Name(s): _____

Postal Address: _____

Phone *: _____ e-mail: _____

Please indicate how many of your preferred lunch option: _____meat _____vegetarian
(entrees include salad, drink, and dessert)

of persons attending: _____ Amount enclosed: \$ _____

Please send this form and your check to:
Montana Tree Farm Program
PO Box 17276
Missoula, MT 59808

Directions to Bridger Canyon Rural Fire Department

(There is no cell phone service at the fire station.)

If driving from the west (Butte, Missoula, etc., to Bozeman)

1. Exit I-90 at N 7th Avenue in Bozeman. Turn left on N 7th Avenue.
2. Turn right in about ¼ mile at the second traffic signal. The street is Griffin Drive.
3. In about one mile, at the traffic signal, turn left on Bridger Drive/Rouse Avenue.
4. Note: Your cell phone will not work once you pass the “M” on the mountain (which is at road mile marker 4).
5. Proceed north on Bridger Drive (it becomes Bridger Canyon Road) for about seven miles. Watch the mile markers on the side of the road. At mile marker 8, the fire station is on your left.
6. Park behind, or beside the fire station, but NOT in front of the building. Enter at the rear.

If driving from the east (Billings, Livingston, etc. to Bozeman)

1. On I-90, pass the exits in the town of Livingston.
2. Before you get to the city of Bozeman, exit I-90 at exit 319, Jackson Creek Rd. Turn right on Jackson Creek Rd.
3. Drive about seven miles until the stop sign at Bridger Canyon Road.
4. Turn left on Bridger Canyon Road.
5. Drive 1 ½ miles on Bridger Canyon Road. The fire station will be on your right at mile marker 8.
6. Park behind, or beside the fire station, but NOT in front of the building. Enter at the rear.

Short List of Places to Stay while in the Bozeman Area:

Camping:

- Sunrise RV Campground: <http://www.sunriservcampground.com/>
- Bozeman KOA: <http://koa.com/campgrounds/bozeman/>

Cabin Rentals:

- Battle Ridge Cabin: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/custergallatin/recreation/camping-cabins/recarea/?recid=5636&actid=101>
- Bozeman Ranger District Cabins and Campgrounds: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/custergallatin/recreation/camping-cabins/recarea/?recid=5568&actid=101>

Lodging (Near North 7th Ave Exit on I-90):

- Comfort Inn: (406) 587-2322
<https://www.choicehotels.com/montana/bozeman/comfort-inn-hotels/mt029>
- Fairfield Inn: (406) 587-2222
<https://www.marriott.com/hotels/hotel-photos/bznfi-fairfield-inn-bozeman/>
- Hampton Inn: (406) 522-8000
<http://hamptoninn3.hilton.com/en/hotels/montana/hampton-inn-bozeman-BZNMTHX/index.html>

Many other Motels are available in Bozeman and the surrounding vicinity. **Please make your reservations early – there is a large concert in Bozeman the same weekend and lodging is at a premium.**

Selecting a Logging Contractor

Bryan Lorengo, Montana Logging Association

The Montana Logging Association's primary mission is to enhance the professional status of Montana timber harvesters.

How do you select a logging contractor? And how will that logger meet your forest management goals? What logging system will be needed for your harvest: conventional, mechanical and/or skyline logging, or a combination of several systems?



Manual Delimiting and Bucking

There are many similarities to selecting a contractor, whether it be a plumber, an electrician, or a logger. Finding the right one can be difficult especially when many contractors typically don't advertise but rather work off referrals and references. Ask around: when you start getting the same name referral repeatedly, you know you're on the right track.



Truck mounted knuckle boom loader prepares a load for haul.

You could also work directly with a mill or a consulting forester who can assist you in selecting a logging contractor. Another option in searching for a contractor would be to see if that contractor is affiliated with a professional organization. In our state, the Montana Logging Association has an Accredited Logging Professional program, and anyone

can search for a contractor in a specific county (www.logging.org).

After selecting a contractor, it is important that a contract be signed between you and the contractor before the work begins. This working legal document binds and protects both the contractor and the landowner and spells out the description of work that will be done. If you're needing a contract template or advice in regards to your trees and/or harvest, you can visit your local [Montana DNRC Service Forester](#). They will have a template specific to logging contracts and will be a good reference for your timber sale contract. The Montana Forestry Extension offers a template online at: <http://www.msuxextension.org/forestry/Resources/pdf/SampleTimberSaleAgreement.pdf>.



A DNRC Service Forester visits a project site.

Finally, it is imperative that the landowner asks the contractor to provide proof of insurance before work can start. The contractor will need to provide you with proof of coverage for general liability and workers compensation. This holds true for the contractor and any subcontractors that will be working on your property.

If you are careful and conscientious about choosing a logging contractor, both parties and your forest will benefit in the end. Do your research, enter into a contract once you have chosen a contractor, and make sure to get their proof of insurance before work starts. Best of luck with your harvest, and thank you for being good stewards of your timbered property. ♦

One Size Doesn't Necessarily Fit All

Rich Blaney, Resource Specialties Inc.

Note from editor: I asked logger Rich Blaney of Resource Specialties, Inc. what he would like forest landowners to think about when considering a harvest and working with a logger. I left it to Rich to prioritize his message. His first thought was of choosing the right suite of harvest systems to accomplish the desired result. Here's what he wanted to convey.

We are fortunate in Montana to have a wide array of logging contractors, and just as important, a wide array of logging systems. Yarders and helicopters for harvesting steep terrain. Mechanized systems including harvester-processors and feller-buncher/stroke delimiters for high volume projects.



Log Loaders like this can be used to pile treatment residue for burning.

Conventional systems include all manner of hand felled operations utilizing large and small equipment, horses, and hand crews and are appropriate for small volume or sensitive projects. When planning a harvest a forest landowner should consider not only cost and profit but also the desired end result. Each logging system is unique in capability and efficiency. Keep in mind, "one size does not fit all." The most cost effective way to achieve your desired end result may be the application of multiple systems.

A project I completed near Philipsburg is an example of this integrated approach. My particular operation or system is conventional, small equipment - low impact. The project was to harvest a 20-acre recreational property with a newly constructed cabin. The parcel was heavily timbered, primarily mature lodgepole pine with mountain pine beetle activity and scattered Douglas-fir. The landowner's desired end result was an aesthetically pleasing landscape with reduced hazardous fuels and improved forest health.

To achieve this goal the land owner and I mapped the viewshed from the approach to the cabin and from the cabin itself. I then expanded this area taking into account topography and ingress/egress in case of fire. In all we identified just over five acres as sensitive. I completed a low impact harvest of this area as well as pruning, mastication, and a high degree of clean up at a cost of approximately \$1000 per acre. For the remaining 15 or so acres I subcontracted a mechanized system that was harvesting an adjoining property. Using a feller-buncher, grapple skidder, and stroke delimeter, we removed the standing dead and beetle infested timber. The remaining lodgepole was clumped to break up the canopy while at the same time attempting to maintain stand integrity. The Douglas- fir component was preserved. The mechanized portion of the harvest paid for itself with revenue generated by product recovery.



Stroke Boom Delimeter

By integrating the two logging systems, I was able to reach the land owner's desired end result at a cost of about \$5000 or about \$250 per acre - far more cost effective than using my low impact conventional system alone. Also, the mechanized system could not have satisfied the aesthetic aspect of the project on its own. A consulting forester or your DNRC service forester can assist you in determining the best system or systems available to help you reach your desired end result in a cost effective manner. ♦

Bureau of Business and Economic Research

Steve Hayes and Chelsea McIver, Bureau of Business and Economic Research

The Forest Industry Research Program at the Bureau of Business and Economic Research is one of the largest departments of its kind in the country. Its research focuses on the forest industry's size, timber usage, diversity, along with tracking local economic impacts. For over 35 years the Bureau has been collecting data and producing detailed reports on the operations of the forest products industry throughout the western United States. The Bureau makes the resulting information available to the public through summary data tables, General Technical Reports and Resource Bulletins published through the US Forest Service, and also responds to individual data requests from policy makers, planners, managers and the general public.

Work with our long-term cooperators, like the USDA Forest Service, as well as with new ones, are increasingly related to carbon sequestration, woody biomass for fuel and energy, and the economic and community benefits of timber harvesting, wood product manufacturing and restoration.

Montana's forest landowners have a valuable and easy to use resource available to them. The BBER's Forest Industry Research Program offers a website and periodic newsletter highlighting news and research of interest (www.bber.umt.edu/fir). The web-site houses a collection of new and ongoing studies and reports addressing many topics of interest to Tree Farmers and Timberland owners. There are PowerPoint slideshows from conference presentations, talks and webinars along with posters of projects archived. One that may be of interest to Montana landowners is a poster analyzing the ever changing cost for the logging and hauling of timber. This study provides an estimate of what it might cost for a landowner to harvest timber on their tree farm.

One of the most visited pages on the web-site is the quarterly delivered log prices in Montana. This information is updated four times a year by the BBER. Surveys are sent to major purchasers of logs in Montana, asking them what they are paying for delivered logs categorized by species and in some

cases size. Purchasers are also asked what they expect the demand is for these logs in the next 60 days. Fair market prices may vary a great deal based on log sizes, length, quality, contract size and terms, and a number of other factors.

Although it is just a snapshot in time, delivered log prices can help landowners see what is happening in the general log market. A historical view of delivered log prices displayed along with Random Lengths historic composite lumber prices (Figure 1) is a good representation of the relationship of log and lumber prices in Montana over the last 15 years.



Figure 1 Lumber and delivered log prices in Montana 2001-2015 (sources: Random Lengths; BBER).

This is one example of what BBER tracks and makes available on the web-site for Montana's forest landowners. Feel free to contact us for further information on delivered log prices or other forest industry issues you might have questions about and be sure to sign up for our newsletter on our website. ♦

Steve Hayes is a Research Forester and Chelsea McIver is a Research Specialist at the University of Montana- Missoula, Bureau of Business and Economic Research. They can be reached at steve.hayes@business.umt.edu, chelsea.mcliver@business.umt.edu or (406) 243-5113.

Timing is Everything: Upcoming Events in Your Forest

Chris Town, Natural Resources Conservation Service

As with most business endeavors, planning and timing are crucial factors of success in forest activity planning. Here's a few things to consider over the fall and through the winter months:

- **Pruning** – While conifers can be pruned any time of year, scheduling pruning in early fall or early spring is best. Late fall pruning a few weeks prior to the hard frosts allow the cut “harden off” before the severe weather. Finish early spring pruning long before buds break but after the extreme cold weather.
- **Pile burning** – Fall slash pile burning is the safest. Any large debris or stumps can smolder for a month; a scary thought in July! Still, slash piles of smaller diameter material will burn completely and safely in the spring. Oh, and if you're in a ponderosa pine forest, those piles may be harboring the pine engraver bark beetle (also known as “Ips”) and the sooner you've eliminated that preferred habitat, the better you'll sleep.



A large slash pile awaits fall burning.

- **Logging** – Winter logging is an excellent option for reducing ground disturbance, keeping in mind of course that some trees (e.g. Western larch) regenerate best with ground disturbance. It's almost never too early to meet with a professional logger to schedule a potential harvest. Spring break-up is the time it's too soft and muddy for logging and hauling – a good time to catch a logger with time to visit your forest with you.

- **Weed control** – Many counties offer cost share assistance for weed control. These grants are usually announced deep into winter so the funds can be awarded in time for spring weed control activities. Many of these grants will require a weed management plan. The time to complete such a plan is prior to snow cover so you can make an accurate assessment and map. A call to your county weed department will help guide you through the plan and subsequent grant process.

Even though we often think of chemical application as our primary tool for weed control, re-vegetation of disturbed ground and burn pile spots should be a priority. Grass seed spread immediately following harvest activities or in late fall will be ready to take advantage of ideal spring germination conditions.



Seedlings at the DNRC Conservation Nursery

- **Planting** – Spring planting of seedlings will do best when soil temperatures reach the low 50s. Too early and the moisture is not available for uptake and the roots can desiccate. You'll need to place your seedling order early. February isn't too soon. Wait too late and you'll find your options dwindle. Containerized stock is the easiest to handle and plant correctly. It is critical that the seed source of your seedlings is adapted to your site and elevation; your nursery can offer assistance with this determination.

So, forestry teaches, among many other things, patience and planning on a multi-generational timeline. I know you have a plan – how's your scheduling? ♦


Montana Tree Farm News
TREE FARM PROGRAM
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