

Fall 2012

Idaho Tree Farm Program

204 E. Sherman Ave. • Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814 • (T) 208.667.4641 • (F) 208.664.0557
www.idahotreefarm.org • admin@idahotreefarm.org

2010-2012

Executive Committee:

- Chair – Tom Davis,
North Idaho Forestry
(T) 208.660.4164
- Vice-Chair –
Doug Bradetich,
Idaho Forest Group
(T) 208.772.0505
- Treasurer –
Steve Cuvala,
Idaho Dept. of Lands
(T) 208.245.4551
- Program Administrator –
Jennifer Childers,
(T) 208.667.4641

2010-2012

District Chairs:

- District 1 Chair –
Andy Eckberg,
Idaho Forest Group
aeckberg@idfg.com
- District 2 Chair –
Robert Barkley,
Idaho Dept. of Lands
(T) 208.877.1121
- District 3 Chair –
John Lillehaug,
All About Forestry
(T) 208.630.4076
- District 4 Chair –
Tim Kennedy,
Idaho Dept. of Lands
(T) 208.334.3488

Idaho Tree Farm Program Fall Field Tour

If you missed the 2012 Fall Tour, you missed a GREAT time! Participation this year was outstanding with close to 50 attendees and we were blessed with perfect weather for the day. Gale and Pat Akers, honored as both our "Outstanding Tree Farmer" and "Outstanding Logger of the Year", were wonderful hosts for the occasion. The day started with coffee and refreshments at Gale's shop then a presentation by Tim Kylo, the Akers' nominating inspector, of an overview and history of Gale & Pat's various tree farms. Stops on the tour included examples of conifer reproduction, upland game bird habitat improvements, soil stabilization and

precommercial thinning. Many of these activities involved participation in various cost share programs with state and federal agencies, which was quite informative and of interest to the group. At the close of the tour a wonderful lunch was served by Rustler's Roost and sponsored by Idaho Forest Group. Doug Bradetich, committee Vice-chair, gave a short talk on current Tree Farm programs and activities. Attendees were invited to stay for a casual social hour afterward. All in all a fun, informative and enjoyable time.



Cutting a Wild Christmas Tree; and Leaving a Healthier Forest

For those who want a real Christmas tree, fresher is better. For some, a fresh, real tree means a trip to the woods. But forest-grown trees aren't your only choice for a fresh-cut tree. "U-cut" Christmas tree farms are usually closer to town and have a variety of species to choose from.

But if going to the woods is part of your Christmas tradition, you won't necessarily hurt the forest by cutting a Christmas tree. If you choose the right tree, you can improve forest growth!

First, you have to determine where to find the tree. Many people drive through the forest and presume everywhere they see trees is national forestland. Statewide, the largest portion of Idaho's forests are federal, but that may not be mirrored in your locality. For example, in several northern Idaho counties, the largest portion of forest land is owned by family forest owners. Different ownerships are frequently intermingled, so be sure get permission and maps, so you know whose land you are cutting a tree from. Public agencies and timber companies frequently have a permit system for cutting Christmas trees on forests they manage.

Most agencies also have policies as to which trees you can cut and where, but there are additional factors to consider in choosing your tree. For example, fire exclusion and selective harvest practices have produced much more fir than our forests had historically. As a result, our forests often have more

problems with root disease and defoliating insects. Fortunately, grand fir, subalpine fir (both known as "true firs"), and Douglas-fir are among the most popular native Idaho Christmas trees.

Firs are shade tolerant so they tend to have comparatively full crowns at high stocking levels. Cutting these species where they are growing within 15 feet of a healthy ponderosa pine, larch, or white pine will actually improve the forest, by giving that growing space to species that are ultimately more resilient to insects, disease, drought, and fire.

Even if pine or larch aren't present, cutting a fir within 15 feet of another taller, better-formed tree of the same species gives the remaining tree more nutrients and moisture. On better sites, fir may be growing too fast for the dense crown most people prefer in a Christmas tree. One strategy is to look on poorer quality sites, or stands with more overstory trees. On the latter types of stands, you are also helping the forest by removing trees that ground fires use as a ladder to get up into the canopy and become tree-killing crown fires.

When you get the tree home cut one half inch off the base of the trunk and place it in some water. If you aren't ready to put it in the house yet, put the base in a bucket of water, preferably on the north side of the house or in your garage. Finally, have a merry Christmas! *Chris Schnepf, Area Extension Educator – Forestry, University of Idaho*

Support the *Keep the Forest in the Family* Campaign

Keep an eye out for our latest letter, which you'll find in your mailbox in a few weeks! This letter outlines the key tools and resources we provide to Tree Farmers and the work we are doing to fight for better policies in Washington, on behalf of Tree Farmers. ATFS is fighting for a fix to the Estate Tax, so families across the country won't be faced with tax burdens that force their children and grandchildren to sell their land or harvest timber prematurely. We have already raised more than \$75,000 to sustain the research component of our *Keep the Forest in the Family* Campaign, but are relying on your support to reach our \$270,000 goal. With your help, we can ramp up our coordinated lobbying, media outreach, grassroots, and research efforts when Congress is debating this issue post-election.

And we've already had success—last month, Representatives Diane Black (R-TN) and Mike Michaud introduced H.R. 6439, the "Keep the Forest and the Farm in the Family Act of 2012," to help provide additional estate tax relief to Tree Farmers, farmers, and ranchers. So far, 21 members of Congress have agreed to support H.R.6439, and you can visit www.familyforestation.org to ask your House member to cosponsor.

Support our campaign today by sending your reply slip and contribution to the American Tree Farm System. If you prefer to make an online donation, visit our website at www.treefarmssystem.org/donate. Please contact Jenna Swirsky-Sacchetti, Individual Donor Coordinator, at (202) 463-2745 or jswirsky@forestfoundation.org if you have any questions. – *American Forest Foundation* News Release

Status of Defoliating Insects in northern Idaho - 2012

The last several years have seen an increase in the number of acres defoliated by the Douglas-fir tussock moth (*Orgyia pseudotsugae*) and the western spruce budworm (*Choristoneura occidentalis*) in northern Idaho. Both species feed on Douglas-fir, true firs and sometimes Engelmann spruce, though they have very different life cycles and population dynamics. Douglas-fir tussock moth (DFTM) has explosive outbreaks that build up over several years, cause highly visible damage and then subside due to natural mortality agents. Western spruce budworm (WSBW) on the other hand can occur over wide areas, often for many years and the damage is usually less severe. The good news is that both outbreaks are declining in northern Idaho.

Douglas-fir tussock moth

While both species are capable of killing trees, DFTM is usually more aggressive in this area and outbreaks have occurred in the Palouse region of northern Idaho every decade going back to the 1940's. Defoliation from this insect tends to occur on state and private lands in the same areas. The current outbreak started in 2010, defoliating forested areas south of Post Falls and in the Coeur d'Alene Indian Reservation and McCroskey State Park. The outbreak peaked in 2011 with over 68,000 acres of defoliation in this area. There was also approximately 40,000 acres of defoliation east of Grangeville in the Nez Perce National Forest (NF) in 2011. Preliminary aerial survey numbers for 2012 determined that the defoliated acreage on the Coeur d'Alene Reservation and McCroskey State Park was approximately 31,000 acres. Most of the defoliation was centered in the Benewah Creek area and in McCroskey State Park. Egg mass surveys (which determine the

potential for defoliation the following year) conducted in fall 2012 indicated that the DFTM populations have crashed, and there will not be defoliation in 2013.

Western spruce budworm

Defoliation from this insect started in the Kaniksu NF near Priest Lake in 2003 and moved southward into the Coeur d'Alene NF by 2005. By 2007 there was extensive, light defoliation in the Coeur d'Alene and St. Joe National Forests which continued through last year. In 2012 the defoliation was much less extensive in the Coeur d'Alene NF while there are still pockets of defoliation in the Silver Valley and over the divide into the upper St. Joe River valley near Avery. Throughout the outbreak area, defoliation has been generally light, mostly confined to the new growth. Heavy defoliation and mortality which are more common in southern Idaho have not been reported in this area.

Damage

Defoliation from these insects occurs on the new growth first, and is most noticeable in the tops of the trees and in the outer branches. Western spruce budworm mainly limits its feeding to the new growth and covers it with webbing. Douglas-fir tussock moth begins its feeding in the new growth, and as the larvae develop, feeding progresses to older needles. Heavy infestations can strip almost all the needles from trees. In this area both species prefer true firs, especially grand fir, though Douglas-fir is also defoliated. In northern Idaho mortality from WSBW is rare, though continued feeding can cause top kill. Trees that are lightly defoliated usually recover. Top kill and mortality from DFTM is more common, though it is usually restricted to trees that have been heavily defoliated (>75%) for several years.

Defoliator Management

Both of these species have been controlled using insecticides, though the best long-term management is through silviculture. Since Douglas-fir and grand fir are the preferred hosts, management that favors non-hosts such as pines and western larch offers the best long term option to minimize damage. Dense stands with a high percentage of host trees usually experience more damage from defoliators because larvae can easily move from tree to tree. Two storied stands are especially susceptible. Thinned stands with a larger proportion of pines and western larch are less favorable to these defoliators and will also have fewer root disease issues.

Trees that are defoliated by WSBW or DFTM are not necessarily killed, and care must be taken when selecting trees during sanitation or salvage operations. If the trees have set buds for the winter and the cambium under the bark is green, the tree will develop new needles the following spring. Look for dormant buds and refrain from cutting any trees until June after needles flush. Trees that were defoliated by DFTM in 2010 and 2011 have recovered in 2012 in many parts of Benewah County. It is important to remember that bark beetles such as the fir engraver and Douglas-fir beetle can kill trees weakened by these defoliators. Trees showing top kill or those not flushing out after defoliation should be removed. *Tom Eckberg, Forest Health Specialist, IDL*

Conservation Easements

Most studies of family forest owners reveal a wide array of values motivating their forest ownership, ranging from income from timber harvest, to recreation, to preserving nature. Such values are often not mutually exclusive, but they can all be threatened by steady development pressures. Inadequate planning for estate taxes and wills can compound the pressure to split forest properties into smaller and smaller units.

Small management units are not necessarily bad for forests. On a per-acre basis, some 5-20 properties are among the most intensively managed I have seen in Idaho. This is because smaller acreage forest owners often have more time (per acre), to plant blister rust resistant white pine, maintain road drainage structures, thin to favor better species, and implement other forest stewardship practices.

But in broader landscapes, fragmented ownerships often make it harder to manage for threats to ecological values that cross property boundaries, such as noxious weed invasion or cumulative sediment impacts to streams. Even if the majority of the landowners in the basin are conscientious land stewards, there are more people to get to the table on shared issues, and a larger number of roads are typically created to reach the larger number of ownerships.

Landowners all over the country have seen the effects of suburban sprawl, and many hate the thought of all their careful efforts at protecting long-term forest sustainability being diminished. For this and other reasons, there is a growing interest in conservation easements.

A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or government agency that limits uses of the land to protect conservation values outlined in the

agreement. The land remains in private ownership, but the easement provisions are permanently tied to the land, and require all future owners to adhere to the terms of the agreement.

Conservation easements have grown in popularity in recent years, as landowners seek to protect forests, wetlands, wildlife habitat, farmland, and other values from development. When you donate or sell a conservation easement to a land trust, you give up some of the rights associated with the land. In exchange, you can

- continue to own and use your land (often including timber harvest and grazing) and to sell it or pass it on to heirs;
- permanently protect important conservation resources;
- save on income and estate taxes; and
- make it easier for heirs to keep the land intact.

Conservation easements got their biggest start in the non-governmental sector. Many people have heard of larger organizations that set up conservation easements (e.g., the Nature Conservancy, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation), but a whole host of smaller, local land trusts have sprung up in recent years as well. There are at least 11 such land trusts operating in Idaho.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture also offers conservation easement programs. The primary program for forest lands is the Forest Legacy program, administered by the Idaho Department of Lands. There are also agricultural land and wetland conservation easements, administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

For more information on conservation easements and land trusts, and links to land trusts in your area, the Land Trust Alliance has an excellent web site (<http://www.lta.org>). UI Extension is also offering a couple of evening programs on conservation easements in February, 2005. These 2½ hour evening programs will feature a short introduction to conservation easements followed by a panel of representatives from public and private institutions that set up conservation easements and landowners who have enrolled in them. The program will be held in Lewiston on February 9 (for more information call 476-4434) and in Sandpoint on February 16 (for more information call 446-1680).

Conservation easements are a valuable tool to manage forestlands more effectively. The specific requirements of the agreement can be quite varied. Timber companies are looking closely at the possible benefits of these programs, and many family forest owners would be wise to take a look as well. - *Chris Schnepf, Area Extension Educator – Forestry, University of Idaho*

Fall Inland Lumber Update

Our domestic lumber market continued on a moderate upward trend through the summer. The seasonal downturn of late summer/fall came a little earlier than usual this year, but does not appear to be as severe or long lasting as we would normally expect to see. This is mainly attributed to continued demand in the marketplace coupled with reluctance from retailers to load up their inventories. The cyclical recovery appears to be overriding normal seasonality in the marketplace at this time.

Housing starts have been revised upward once again for the year. Originally forecast at 660,000 they were adjusted to 750,000 in mid-summer and now appear on track for 870,000 by year end. This puts September 2012 levels 35% higher than the same time in 2011.

Export is still quite strong in all the Asian markets as well as parts of Europe and expected to continue so into the foreseeable future. Forecast for the repair and remodel sector to grow another 10-20% remains unchanged from previous estimates.

One thing which bodes well for our Inland timber is that appearance grade customers are looking more to U.S. domestic sources for their supplies. The sound, tight ring, second growth from the Idaho Panhandle forests lends itself well to these products, especially with the abundance of insect and disease killed timber currently being harvested in Canada and other areas. *Idaho Forest Group*



District Chair Spotlight – Robert Barkley, District 2

The 2012 Inspection Year has been busy for Idaho's District 2. The District includes the landowners of five counties; Idaho, Lewis, Nez Perce, Clearwater and Latah. Consisting of 136 certified and pioneer Tree Farm members and a total of 61,406 acres, the annual tree farm recertification load can be daunting for the district's nine active Tree Farm Inspectors. This year 43 landowners were due for their regular optional reinspection and ten new Tree Farmers were certified into the program for a total of 35,530 acres. This is a third of the total Tree Farm landowners and over half of the Tree Farm acres on the District! The inspector cadre has done an excellent job in completing inspections. They also work hard trying to contact all the landowners to arrange the on-site inspections as required by the American Forest Foundation's certification requirements.

Typically initial contact with the landowner is made by mail early in the year. It is important to take advantage of the full year to be able to complete all the recertification inspections needing to be done each year.

Tree Farm landowners need to respond to these attempts to contact them in a timely manner as a lack of response can be interpreted by the contacting inspector as a lack of interest in the program. Remember, these inspectors are volunteering time and can't spend a lot of valuable time trying to make contact with the Tree Farm landowner. You, the landowner, are responsible for your membership in Tree Farm. After a few attempts to make contact with no response from the landowner the result is often decertification from the program! The biggest concern I hear from Tree Farm Inspectors relate to this issue of landowners not responding to the inspectors' attempts to make contact. They don't want to decertify the Tree Farm but if the landowner isn't interested enough to respond and make arrangements for an

inspection what is the inspector to do?

Decertification of a Tree Farm occurs for many reasons; sale of the land, death and inheritors declining to continue in the program, and lack of interest. Lack of interest is either directly stated by the landowner or by their failure to respond to contact attempts. By the numbers, District 2 averages over 31 recertification inspections each year. Of these approximately eight Tree Farms are decertified each year due to the various reasons previously noted. About two new Tree Farms are added each year although the rate has increased in the past two years.

Remember! One of the benefits of being a member in the Tree Farm program is the free visit from a professional forester at least every 6 years as part of the recertification inspection. Yes, the inspector is there to ensure that the performance standards of the program are being met but it is also your opportunity to learn about your forest, stewardship skills, and recommendations for future action on your forest.

Robert Barkley graduated from Michigan State University in 1984 with a B.S. in Forestry. After working with Michigan Partners for the Americas in the Dominican Republic and the Peace Corps in Honduras he came to Idaho to continue with post graduate work at the University of Idaho, College of Natural Resources Department of Forest Resources. During his studies in forest mensuration he worked for the University of Idaho Experimental Forest. Robert began working for the Idaho Department of Lands in 1992 managing an endowment forest unit of the Ponderosa Area. In 2001 he became the Private Forestry Specialist for the Ponderosa Area providing private landowner forestry assistance and enforcing the Idaho Forest Practices Rules on private lands. At the same time Robert became the Idaho Tree Farm District 2 Chair.

Events to Highlight

ITF Committee Meeting-
January 17th, Idaho
Department of Lands
Office, Coeur d'Alene

ITF Annual Meeting-
March 25th, University Inn,
Best Western, Moscow

**Family Forest Landowners
& Managers Conference-**
March 25th- 26th, University
Inn, Best Western, Moscow

We're on the Web!

Learn more at:

www.idahotreefarm.org

Save the date!! Idaho Tree Farm Program Annual Meeting

Be sure to mark your calendars for **Monday, March 25th, 2013** to attend the Idaho Tree Farm Program Annual Awards meeting held in conjunction with the two-day Family Forest Landowners & Managers Conference & Exposition at the University Inn-Best Western in Moscow. Our Tree Farm meeting will honor a 2013 Idaho Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year, 2013 Idaho Outstanding Tree Farm Logger of the Year, and 2013 Idaho Outstanding Tree Farm Inspector of the Year. In addition to hearing the latest information on developments within the American Tree Farm System, we can all enjoy discussions with old friends and new acquaintances, and hear the latest on family forest landowner issues from both a state and national perspective. We hope to see all of you there for a fun and rewarding meeting.

Family Forest Landowners and Managers Conference

If you are either a landowner or a forest professional (or perhaps both), you will want to set aside this coming March 25 – 27 for the 2013 Family Forest Landowners & Managers Conference & Exposition. This next session is titled “Forest Owners at Work: A Blueprint for Successful Stewardship” and will be held as in previous years at the University Inn in Moscow, ID. The first two days are set up with group sessions on issues such as management plans, market trends, tips for networking, and forestland taxation. A portion is set aside with breakout sessions on specific topics for you to choose between and the final day with a “Ties to the Land” workshop aimed at family transition of your Tree Farm.

For additional information or to register, contact info@idahoforestowners.org . Hope to see you there!

Chairman's Corner

This year, the Idaho Tree Farm Committee has been busy fulfilling the requirements from the two grants received from the National office.

About Our Organization...

The purpose of the Idaho Tree Farm Program is to promote better forest management among nonindustrial forest owners. The vehicle for achieving this aim is the American Tree Farm System® (ATFS), sponsored nationally by the American Forest Foundation (AFF), regionally by the Idaho SFI Implementation Committee, and statewide by the Idaho Tree Farm Committee (State Committee).

The Capacity Building Grant helped the ITFP in three ways. It helped to offset the travel expenses by allowing one additional Committee member, Janet Funk, to attend the National Leadership Conference in Portland, OR in March. In addition to the Leadership Conference the Grant also paid to retain the services of a professional website manager to help us set up and improve our existing State Tree Farm Website, www.idahotreefarm.org. In the near future our website will have the capability to use an email “Tree” for automatic email mass mailings to State Tree Farm members who have access to email for any “Action Items” that need to reach our members immediately for timely response from ATFS. The Grant also helped offset the costs of designing, printing and mailing of the quarterly newsletters to our membership this year and we are hoping to have the same opportunity next year.

An Education Grant was awarded to provide monies to help fund a portion of the Idaho Best Management Practices Booklet for landowners and operators specifically to help cover the costs to print and distribute them to the public. This project was being managed through the University of Idaho – Kootenai Co. Extension and other partners. Printing is expected to be completed sometime in 2013.

Tom Davis, 2010-2012 Chairman