

Spring 2026

Idaho Tree Farm Program

P.O. Box 581 • Rathdrum, ID 83858 • (T) 208.691.5933
www.idahotreefarm.org • admin@idahotreefarm.org

2025-2026 Officers:

- President –
Hailey Frank
Idaho Dept of Lands
hfrank@idl.idaho.gov
(T) 208-859-4309
- Vice President –
McKenna Smith
Idaho Dept of Lands
msmith@idl.idaho.gov
(T) 208-245-4551
- Treasurer –
Madeline David
madelinedavid0909@gmail.com
- Administrator –
Colleen Meek
ID Tree Farm Program
admin@idahotreefarm.org
(T) 208.691.5933

2025-2026 District Chairs:

- District 1 Chair –
Phil Dipofi
Idaho Forest Group
philip.dipofi@ifg.com
(T) 208.500.8988
- District 2 Chair –
Robbie Easley
Idaho Dept of Lands
reasley@idl.idaho.gov
(T) 208.877.1121
- District 3 Chair –
Samantha Buys
Idaho Dept of Lands
sbuys@idl.idaho.gov
(T) 208. 271.7691
- District 4 Chair –
Rodney Cochrane
Idaho Dept of Lands
rocochrane@idl.idaho.gov
(T) 208.682.4611

2026 Idaho Outstanding Tree Farmers of the Year

Packard Family Tree Farm – Viola, ID

Our 2026 annual meeting of our Idaho Tree Farm Program was very well attended, with over 70 Tree Farmers, friends, and supporters joining us. As in past years the award ceremony was held the Monday evening of the Family Forest Landowners & Managers Conference in Moscow the end of March. The event kicked off with a social hour hosted jointly by Idaho Tree Farm and Idaho Forest Owners Association (IFOA). Reports of various events of the preceding year, and recognition of several individuals & organizations that were helpful to our program started off the evening as we headed into our “Outstanding” awards.

We are pleased to announce the Packard family of Viola as our 2026 Idaho Outstanding Tree Farmers of the Year! This tree farm was formed in 1966 by Cecil and Joyce Packard and has been continuously managed by succeeding generations of their family to this day. Current acreage of the Tree Farm is 630 acres, with 523 of it in forest. The nominating Inspector, Robbie Easley of Idaho Department of Lands, cites the following as some reasons for putting their name in consideration for this award. The family performs active harvest regularly throughout the property utilizing a mix of selective cut, overstory removal and shelterwood. In addition, reforestation and precommercial thinning operations have been undertaken as well. In 2003 a wildfire took place adjacent, burning 200 acres with 17 acres on the Packard Family Tree Farm. It was salvaged logged 90 days later and planted the following spring. Their solid stewardship is evident all across the Tree Farm and we are proud & pleased to recognize their dedication!



Packard family receiving their IOTFOY award

(awards night recap continued page 2)

2026 Idaho Tree Farm Program Annual Meeting (continued from page 1)

Our award for Idaho Outstanding Inspector of the Year went to John Lillehaug of McCall. John has been a long-time and tireless supporter of our program, and this award was very well-deserved. He served 46 years as our District 3 Chair, making sure all the needs of the south end of the state were met. A few years back, feeling the folks in the Mountain Time Zone needed a bit more attention, John started the “Forestry for Southern Idaho Field Day” and has looked after this well-attended event ever since. Also, at the start of each legislative session John would help staff the Tree Farm booth at “Forestry Day at the Legislature” in Boise. John was presented with his award, which included a plaque and an embroidered button up shirt, by his District 3 Chair successor Sam Buys.

John - As you step down from your role as District Chair, please accept a deep and heart-felt thank you from all of us for your fine work through the years!



Dist. 3 Chair Sam Buys and John Lillehaug



Program Chair Hailey with the Schlepp family

Our Idaho Outstanding Logger of the Year award went to Paul and Sandy Schlepp. Hailey Frank-Bennett, our Program Chair and the nominating Inspector, had this to say about the Schlepp family – “*The Idaho Tree Farm Program is pleased to announce that Paul and Sandy Schlepp of Forest Farming LLC have been named the 2026 Idaho Tree Farm Outstanding Loggers of the Year. As a husband-and-wife team, Paul & Sandy exemplify a strong commitment to stewardship on private forestlands.*

consistently demonstrating professionalism, integrity, and sustainable forestry practices. During the annual meeting, they accepted their award alongside their daughter and granddaughter, highlighting the family-centered operation they proudly represent. Their dedication extends beyond individual projects, as they play a vital role in advancing the mission of the Idaho Tree Farm Program”.

Hat’s off to their entire family for the fine work they do caring for our Idaho timber heritage!

(awards night recap continued page 3)



2026 Idaho Tree Farm Program Annual Meeting (continued from page 2)

In addition to all our annual “Outstanding” awards, a few other recipients were honored as well. Our Idaho Tree Farm Scholarship was renamed this year in memory of Janet Funk, who we lost this past January. She was a great supporter of our program and an active committee member for many years. She and her husband Steve won Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year honors on the state, regional and national levels (she and Steve being Idaho’s only National winners). The State Committee is pleased to announce Walker Steele as our 2026 recipient. He impressed the scholarship committee quite a bit in his application and we wish him the best as he moves forward in his forestry journey!



Members of the Funk family presenting Walker Steele with the Janet Funk Memorial Scholarship



Idaho Chair Hailey and Doug Bradetich

Idaho Forest Group was also recognized for their long-standing support of our program. Many of their forestry staff are also active Tree Farm Inspectors and several have served as officers at the District and State Committee level. Past Idaho Chair Doug Bradetich accepted the award on behalf of IFG, thanking our program for the recognition and relaying praise from them for the good work we do in promoting active and beneficial stewardship of our forests.



Idaho Tree Farm Inspectors

Last, but most certainly not least we want to recognize all the active Idaho Inspectors that make our program possible. As in past years, each of those that completed inspections this past year were named and given gifts from an appreciative Idaho State Program. Thanks to all for their unfailing help in getting the work of Tree Farming done every year!



Project Learning Tree Update (Sandra Staff-Koetter, ID Tree Farm State Committee)

Project Learning Tree events report to Idaho Tree Farm Committee April 21, 2026 Arbor Day 2026

- IFPC is distributing thousands of White Pine and Douglas Fir seedlings directly to educators across the state.
- We have completed our annual Student Photo Contest with over 160 entries. We chose 4 winners and 14 honorable mentions. Check idahoforests.org/photocontest soon to view these entries.
- The state celebration will be held at the Idaho History Museum on Friday, April 24, at 10 am. Open to everyone.

2026 Sustainable Forestry Tour

- Planning is underway for this year's SFT. 20 educators have been selected to attend the tour, which will be in Moscow, June 22-26.

PLT Workshops

- Haven led workshops with BSU pre-service educators in the fall and spring Elementary science methods courses.
- She has a Tree Talkers workshop on April 28 for forest professionals.

Inland Northwest Forest Products Curriculum

-The Inland Northwest Forest Products curriculum is a semester-long, industry-reviewed program developed to support the new Forest Products Career and Technical Education (CTE) Pathway, as well as educators teaching general science, environmental science, agriculture, and natural resources across the Inland Northwest.

Made possible through a USFS Wood Innovations Grant, the curriculum spans eight units, from tree biology to product manufacturing. It currently aligns with the Next Generation Science Standards and Idaho Science Standards, and CTE alignment will begin soon now that those standards are finalized. Alignment to English Language Arts standards will also occur in the near future.

All eight units have undergone review by industry professionals and are currently being piloted by a dedicated cohort of Idaho educators representing Sandpoint High School, St. Maries Middle School, Calder Elementary/Junior High, the Joshua Institute, and Cole Valley Christian School. This small but mighty pilot team has been an invaluable source of feedback. Early response has been overwhelmingly positive, with particular praise for the hands-on, authentic nature of the lessons. Their input is directly shaping final revisions, including new end-of-unit summative assessments and formatting refinements, to ensure the finished product is as teacher-friendly as possible.

Mini-unit pilot

Haven also created a mini-unit on trees and air pollution for the Boise School District. Teachers are currently piloting the lessons. Once finalized, they will be shared on idahoforests.org for all educators to access freely.



Frank Curtin – americanforests.org

My name is Frank Curtin, and I serve as the Director of Private Lands Reforestation for American Forests. My work focuses on supporting non-industrial private forest landowners through every stage of post-disturbance recovery—from identifying funding opportunities and developing reforestation plans to implementing climate-adapted planting strategies tailored to each landowner's stewardship goals. Across the western United States, forest ecosystems are facing increasing pressure from wildfire, drought, insects, and disease, and for many landowners, recovering from these impacts can feel overwhelming given the technical, financial, and logistical challenges involved in reforestation.

Recognizing these challenges, American Forests launched its Private Lands Program and developed ForestSupport.org to help landowners navigate the complexities of post-disturbance reforestation. Our Private Lands Reforestation Program connects landowners with the technical expertise, resources, and funding opportunities needed to successfully restore resilient working forests for future generations. Healthy private forests provide far more than timber value; they protect water resources, improve wildlife habitat, support rural economies, and help sustain landscapes and communities. Our goal is to ensure landowners have practical, science-based support to successfully reforest their land and build forests that are more resilient to future disturbances. For more information, or to work with American Forests, landowners can contact me at 509-800-3726 or fcurtin@americanforests.org



Forestry for Southern Idaho – (Samantha Buys, District 3 Chair)

June 26, 2026 – New Meadows, ID

The tour this year will be in New Meadows area with an indoor presentation session at the Community Center 102 Peterson Memorial Ave in the morning. The afternoon field session will include site visits to County funded fuels management projects around New Meadows and a tour of the Tamarack Mill.

Cooperators and donators include
The Idaho Tree Farm System
Adams Soil and Water Conservation District
And Idaho Department of Lands

For more info contact sbuys@idl.idaho.gov



Events to Highlight

May 14, 2026, Idaho State Forestry Contest, Farragut State Park, Athol, ID

June 26, 2026, Forestry for Southern Idaho, New Meadows, ID

July 18, 2026, IFOA Family Forest Field Day, Cedar Mountain Farm, Athol, ID

July 21, 2026, Idaho Tree Farm Committee Meeting, CDA, ID

Oct 20, 2026, Idaho Tree Farm Committee Meeting, CDA, ID

Stay Informed....

In case you are ever wondering what is going on at the committee level, our Minutes are now being posted on the Idaho Tree Farm Program website. Just log onto our website for Minutes of previous sessions, contact information, upcoming events, and other news of note to help you in your Tree Farm endeavors.

We're on the Web!

Learn more at:
www.idahotreefarm.org

About Our Organization...

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

Welcome New Members!

The Idaho Tree Farm Committee extends a special welcome to the newest Idaho Tree Farm Program's certified members. Thank you to the District Chairs and Inspecting Foresters for promoting membership in the Idaho Tree Farm Program through the American Tree Farm System®.

As a current member, and a steward of the land, we appreciate your current support of the program and your management of the forestland for pride and pleasure. Thank you for your continued commitment to protecting watersheds and wildlife habitat, conserving soil and, at the same time, producing the wood America needs and uses.

Tree Farm Member	Acreage	County	Inspecting Forester
William Graning	21	Lewis	Frank Luther

Congratulations once again to our 2026 Idaho Outstanding Tree Farmers of the Year

The Packard Family!

