

The Overstory

New York Forest Owners Association Southeastern Adirondack Chapter

Volume 25

Issue 3

Fall 2014

HIGHLIGHTS

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

*John T. Phelan
Statesboro, GA*

INSIDE

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- Deer enclosure update
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OFFICE NOMINATIONS

At our next annual meeting we will have our membership vote for new officers. A nomination committee will be formed to secure candidates for all offices. We currently have potential candidates for the offices of chair, secretary and treasurer, but all offices are open to any member wishing to become more involved in our organization. At this time we are seeking someone to fill the vice chair position. If you have any interest in any of these offices, please contact Lou Inzinna at (518) 257-2807 or at louinz.sac@gmail.com.

ADIRONDACK STUMPAGE PRICE REPORT

New York State Dept. of Environmental Conservation

www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5259.html

Restoring Sugarbush

Dr. Peter Smallidge, NYS Extension Forester, Cornell University  Photos courtesy Forestry Images



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There are many old farm woodlots with a history of maple syrup production and countless more acres where sugar maple dominates and could be put into annual syrup production. The specifics on how to convert these sugar maple-dominated lots to sugar bushes vary from property to property. The actions you should take on your own property are dependent on the length of time until you wish to start tapping, your production goals at the outset, the current density of your trees, the health and vigor of the old trees, and the number of smaller trees.

Before going into the technical information concerning what to look for on your property, let me share some resources. First, the Cornell Maple Program includes a statewide network of Cornell University Cooperative Extension Educators who can help in many aspects of sugarbush management and know of specific educational resources. You

can find a maple team member on the web at <http://maple.dnr.cornell.edu>. Also, several DEC foresters and private sector foresters have experience managing sugarbushes. Find one who has this experience and invite them to your property.

What's the target?

All management activities have an objective or target. With sugarbush management a goal is to produce abundant sap with high sugar content. Trees that have large diameter crowns and a high percentage of the length of the tree's stem in live crown have better sap quantity and quality. These crown dimensions influence the annual production of new wood, the sap wood, and that influences sap quantity and quality. The quantity and quality of sap influences the efficiency and productivity of the operation. Weather will strongly influence what hap-

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Restoring Sugarbush, continued from page 1

pens in any given year because of the need for freezing nights and sunny days to help the sap run.

Under ideal growing conditions, a sugar maple crown might be 50 - 60 feet in diameter and 80% of the stem height as live crown. In a forest, crown diameter and live crown ratio are half as much. Management in a forested sugarbush strives to increase crown dimensions while maintaining large healthy trees. Typically, competition among trees for sunlight limits crown growth. As trees get older and larger, our ability to influence crown dimensions and maybe to influence sap characteristics decline. We have our greatest influence with management on smaller trees. Thus, management to encourage and maintain full crown dimension should begin when trees are 6 to 10" in diameter. Starting management with smaller diameter trees will allow even greater control over crown dimensions. Allowing a sugarbush to stagnate and close into a dense canopy can have negative long-term impacts on future syrup production.

Knowing Your Needs

The first step, as with all woodlot management tasks, is to know exactly what you want and when you want it. Then, you can determine if your resource can suit your objectives. If not, you can refine your objectives before beginning any activity. A forester can help you evaluate the compatibility of your needs and objectives with your resources.

Because the sugarbush in question is intended for use in retirement, it is important to know the timeline to retirement. While you may in fact need to thin the sugarbush, you want to make sure you retain enough trees to achieve your production goals at the time you retire. A five year horizon will mean retaining more of the old, presumably less thrifty trees. A twenty year horizon will give you a chance to favor the growth of the smaller and younger trees. With 20 years of ample sunlight on good soils, the 10 to 12" diameter trees could be several inches larger and very productive. Thus, with more time you might thin more aggressively in the older trees, but never too aggressively. You need to retain enough stems to produce the desired sap quantity for boiling.

Knowing Your Resource

The first step is to determine the current density of stems in the sugarbush because density will influence the sunlight available for growth. A dense sugarbush will have limited understory development, no brambles, and mortality of lower branches of the large trees. You can also use an increment borer to determine the radial growth rate (radial growth is one-half of diameter growth). You should try to minimally attain radial growth of at least $\frac{1}{16}$ " per year for an 18" diameter tree and $\frac{1}{8}$ " per year for a 10" diameter tree. Thus, your 18" tree is growing almost 2" in diameter per decade and your 10" tree is growing almost 4 inches per decade. These growth rates will allow you to follow maple syrup tapping guidelines and help ensure a vigorous tree. As you assess the density of stems, pay close attention to the presence of diseased or stressed trees, especially those which might fall or otherwise not be productive for sugar. Tree health matches tree density as important criteria to evaluate sugarbushes when planning for future production.

If the canopy is fully closed, then some trees are not getting



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A variety of insects and diseases reduce the strength of stems and may reduce sugar concentration. Trees with these conditions should be removed from the sugarbush.

adequate light and the growth of most trees is compromised. Competition for light will limit diameter growth and thus decrease sugar concentration which in turn reduces syrup production. You will want to thin down to a density of trees that retains good production per acre (number of taps) but that provides sufficient light to give ample growth of trees. The specific number of trees to retain depends on the size of the trees. Details of thinning regimes are beyond what can be discussed here. In general though, you would seldom want to remove more than $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$ of the basal area during any single harvest. In the first thinning of an unmanaged stand the "losers" are often easy to select. In managed stands, it becomes increasingly difficult to select trees for cutting if you have left the best trees each time.

Making the Cut

Once you decide that thinning is necessary, the process to select trees to remove from the canopy could follow one of two paths. Use area-wide thinning if your woodlot has a relatively high percentage of good growing stock. Use crop tree management if the growing stock in your woodlot is relatively sparse and widely scattered. With area-wide thinning selection criteria for a sugarbush should focus on removing: (1) trees that are unhealthy, diseased or otherwise unlikely to survive more than ten years, (2) undesirable species and species of poor quality, (3) sugar maple with evidence of significant disease or insect damage, (4) sugar maple with mechanical defects such as broken crowns, and (5) crowded sugar maple with retention of those trees having the highest relative sugar content. With crop tree management, focus on reducing competition to sugar maples with stems that are free from insect and disease and that have vigorous crowns. You will want to remove competitors from at least two side of the crop tree to give the crown full freedom to grow. The goal is to provide at least 4 to 6 feet of space between adjacent crowns. Subsequent thinning should free additional sides of these crop trees. If you are trying to select between two otherwise equal trees, sugar content of the sap is a good tie breaker.

The quantity of syrup you wish to produce when you start will influence how aggressively you should thin. If you don't have specific production goals and there is reasonable stocking of the smaller stems, a more aggressive thinning of the larger trees would help ensure you maintain vigorous growth of the smaller stems.

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The Deer Exclosure Project

John Pokrzywka, Cornell Cooperative Extension,
Saratoga County Intern 🌿 Photo courtesy Forestry Images



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White tailed deer can be a wary bunch, even more so in area such as Saratoga County. As soon as the deer Exclosure went up in our demonstration area, the signs of deer activity went down for a few weeks but eventually came back. There were however, a few plants that had been noticeably browsed most recently. This is great to see in a sense, that we will be able to notice a difference between the two plots, probably within the first complete year.

The surrounding area is full of hay fields, corn fields and other crops, finding food isn't hard this time of the year, and this might be a reason we haven't seen drastic browse on the control plot. Deer also have a summer and winter feeding range and with the change in summer browse, this area might be their winter feeding area. There also isn't a hunting season this time of the year, so the deer may not be feeling the need to stay in that quite spot. There is also evidence that the local turkeys have stopped by the demonstration area and raked the ground while foraging.

The ferns that were disturbed at the site became stressed and were attacked by insects. This left the ferns defoliated and in some cases caused them to die off. Interestingly it was all fern species and not just one in particular. The suspected insect is the sawfly which lays its eggs on a plant and once they hatch, the

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MEMBER'S CORNER

A Heavily Forested Nature Preserve

By Barbara L. Hennig

I am a longtime member of NYFOA and former SAC secretary. I also am one of the three people who, over a period of 47 years, accumulated 750 acres of heavily forested land in Providence. The early purchases cost around \$15/acre (unless buildings were involved). The final purchase, in 1998, cost \$1200/acre and included an A-frame house. Two lots had been purchased at tax sales at minimal cost, in 1963 and in 1969.

All three of us had done much hiking in the Adirondacks and elsewhere, and loved the woods. By 1991, we seriously began looking into a mechanism for ensuring that our property be retained into the future, always as an undeveloped block of land. So after shuffling through the 3 X 5 index cards in the library of Albany Law School, I encountered the national Land Trust Exchange (soon known as the Land Trust Alliance). We three learned about Conservation Easements.

Placing an easement on the property took nearly 10 years, and actually one owner died before the process was completed. There had been only one disagreement in our goals for the land. On my mother's side of the house there was a long history of logging, she the grandniece and granddaughter respectively of Benjamin and Nathan Weston, successful business men in the logging industry in Somerset County, Maine. Even my father, raised a Cape Coder, had grown red pine and spruce seedlings in our backyard in western Massachusetts, for transplanting to my mother's 25-acre portion of the Maine homestead. I helped plant those seedlings in the summer of 1937.

I would have allowed selective harvesting of some trees on the Hennig land. But the opposition to doing any harvesting came from the other two owners, city folks from the mid-west, Bob and Mally Sue Hennig. I gave in. The strong common goal was maintaining intact and undeveloped this large acreage, as a wildlife preserve. A local land trust in Saratoga Springs, then called the Land Trust of the Saratoga Region, accepted responsibility for the easement.

In late August 2010, 600 of the 750 acres were donated to the land trust, now enlarged and called Saratoga PLAN (Preserving Land and Nature). Excluded were three houses and their acreage of 16, 16, and 100 acres. The easement continues with the land, however.

The Hennig Preserve was opened to the public on August 20, 2011. Today, there are nine miles of trails on the combination of Hennig and contiguous Saratoga County Homestead Forest. On the Blue Trail on Hennig, you can walk along a high long esker, the visible and impressive remains of the Last Ice Age.

For more information on the preserve go to: <http://www.saratogaplan.org/HennigPreserve.htm>. For printable trail map: <http://www.saratogaplan.org/images/trailmapJuly2013.jpg>.

This member's corner is open to anyone willing to share something with the other members. Submissions can be mailed or emailed to Kristie Edwards at edwardsk922@gmail.com or 411 Beech Street, Mayfield, NY 12117.

Deer Exclosure, continued from page 3

larvae start feeding on the plant material. Once they're done with that stage of their life cycle they become flies, fly off and do their thing somewhere else. There are still a large number of ferns left in the area surrounding the exclosure as well as some still left within the exclosure. The ferns will come back and hopefully they won't get raided by sawflies in the next growing season.

The exclosure was built at a time where basically what was going to grow, had grown; as the exclosure was constructed the first Saturday of June. The fiddleheads of the ferns were up and already tall, the Virginia creeper had already sent up its new shoots and the saplings were already tall and leafed out. During the summer the ferns may have gotten a little taller but not much else. This summer was wet and hot, ideal for blooming so the ferns had that going for them. The saplings also benefited from the wet and warm climate and the protection of the fence. There may not be a measurable difference but the health of the saplings shows that the fence helped.

If all goes well with the exclosure fence, next year's growing season should show even better results, and an even greater dif-

ference between the two plots. We should have a thick patch of plants next year because the area will be all on its own relatively undisturbed. At this time it will be a wait and watch as the seasons go, and make repairs to the fence if needed.

Part of working with Cornell Cooperative Extension is working with other organizations; fortunately working with NYFOA SAC has been a wonderful experience. First hand field experience was gained from the inventory as well as the building of the exclosure, which are great resume builders. Additionally, writing an article for the chapter newsletter was another good resume builder; not many interns get items published. However, the deer exclosure demonstration could use someone to monitor it, promote it and keep invasive plants out as well. It would also be good to see NYFOA SAC help give another intern a chance to gain valuable field experience, for next year and maybe for a third year as well.

In cooperation with New York Forest Owners Association, Southeastern Adirondack Chapter, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Saratoga County and the Capital/Mohawk PRISM

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With either approach to thinning, you might want to retain some high value trees of other species if they are located on good soils and not competing with sugar maple that have good form and quality. You can culture these to become sawlogs and supplement future income. Your willingness to retain other species depends on the specifics of your objectives.

Do not necessarily try to make the sugarbush a pure stand of sugar maple. Most sugarbushes aren't big enough to impact the landscape or other ecosystem process if they are a monoculture. However, there is enough soil variation in most sugarbushes to allow some diversification that favors other species on thin dry or poorly drained areas. Sugar maple performs best on well drained productive soils. Other species will do better on wetter or dryer soils. The variety of trees will benefit a variety of wildlife, simplify the task of keeping your maples healthy, and improve the aesthetic of your sugarbush.

Final Thoughts

Use great caution in cutting the larger trees. It isn't the tree stem you are felling it is a large crown you are trying to squeeze down among your residual stems. Cut smaller diameter undesirable stems first to help open gaps to allow the larger crowns room to drop. Hone your skills in directional felling with Level I and II in Game of Logging.

See article on this subject by Dr. Chris Nowak in the *Forest Owner* issue 43:1, the January/February 2005 issue.

Response prepared by Dr. Peter Smallidge, NYS Extension Forester with Cornell University, Department of Natural Resources. Peter works with the Cornell Maple Program and conducts research on sugarbush management. Contact Peter at pjs23@cornell.edu or (607) 255 4696.



Give a Gift

ACCEPT THE NYFOA MEMBERSHIP CHALLENGE!

The Challenge: Can we, as a NYFOA-member team, create 360 gift memberships by February 28, 2015? That's an immediate 20% jump in membership, which we need to fulfill certain key stewardship objectives in 2015.

**Perfect holiday gift for your next-door neighbor.
Potential for contiguous management.**

**A hand up. Great for the young couple
just getting started in town.**

**Appropriate gift for the landowner that lets you
hunt her land. You care deeply about her land.**

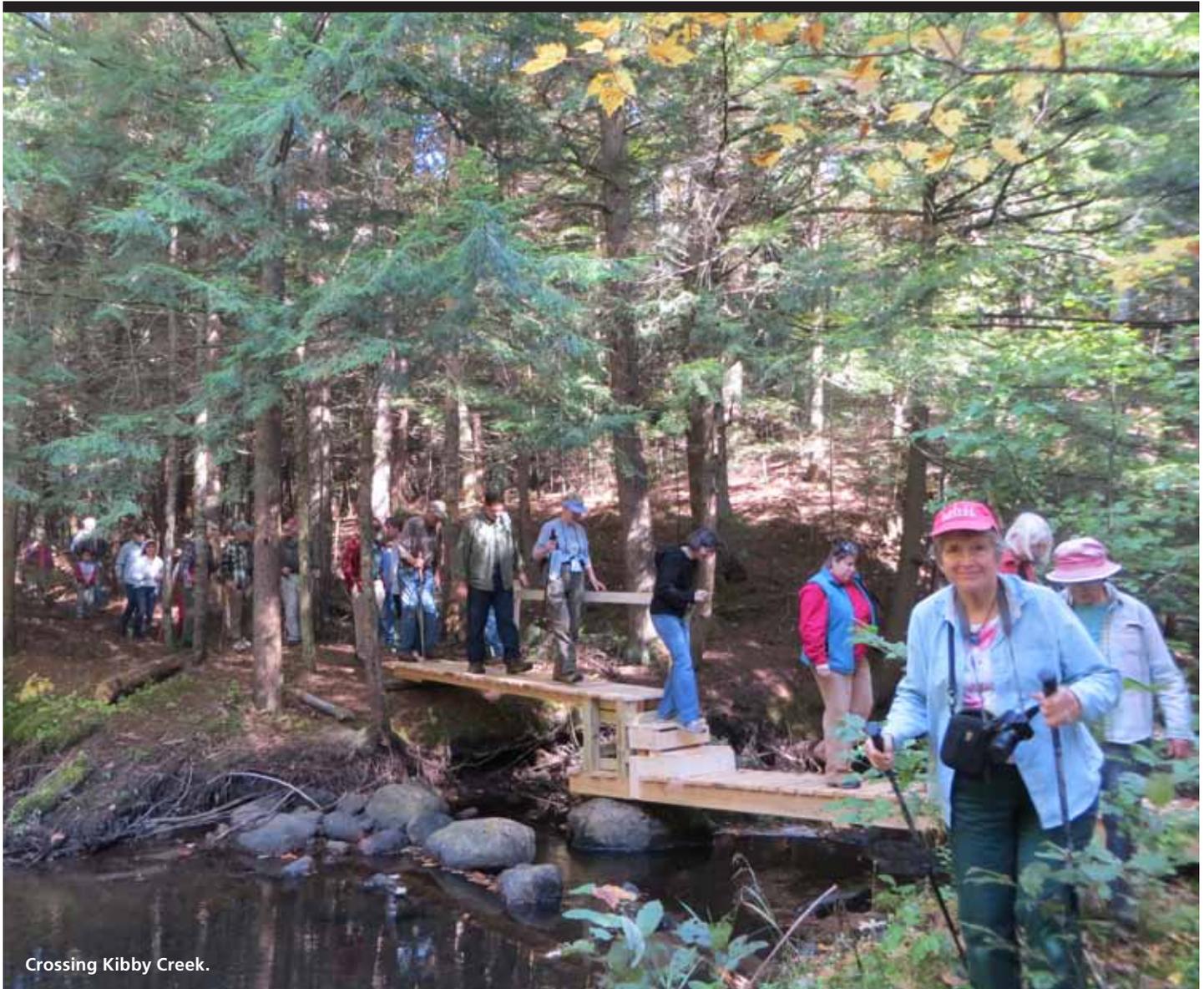
**Thoughtful gift for a friend, that's heard
about NYFOA from you.**

**Meaningful gift for your long-standing client
that owns forest land.**

**Encouraging gift for your friend that dreams of
owning forest land someday.**

IF YOU BELIEVE IN NYFOA, GIVE A GIFT OR TWO!

**Gift memberships are only \$25 (a \$45 value)
To apply on line or download a printable application
visit the NYFOA website at www.nyfoa.org.**



Crossing Kibby Creek.

In the Midst of Autumn Splendor

By Tom and Diane Denny 📷 Photos by Kristie Edwards and Diane Denny

Nature put on a spectacular display for our September 27 woodswalk, providing cloudless blue skies, Indian summer temperatures, and dazzling fall colors. Twenty-seven NYFOA folks gathered at “Crane Mountain Retreat and 70s Museum,” our 74-acre Johnsbury property. Following coffee with pastries and bagels, the group spent nearly two hours walking a network of foot trails that we have created in the last few years.

We had a great crew of experts leading the walk: retired DEC foresters Steve Warne and John Hastings, retired DEC ranger Lou Kurtz, and Laurel Gailor of Cornell Cooperative Extension. As the group stopped periodically to consider dif-

ferent forest types along the trails, Steve provided most of the commentary, while the other experts chimed in with additional (and only occasionally contradictory) perspectives about the possible strategies for managing this diverse slice of forest.

Kibby Creek cuts right across our property. Roughly 20% of the property sits on the house side of the creek and has direct access to the road. The remaining 80% lies across the creek. Any timber management on that side would require either crossing the creek or gaining access to Garnet Lake Road by crossing a neighbor’s property.

The property was developed around 1970, when it was subdivided from an old

farm property. There are still some signs of its agricultural uses, including barbed wire fencing, farm or logging roads, and a few wolf trees whose spreading form was not created in the forest. The family that built the current house used the property almost exclusively as a vacation home, a base for skiing and relaxation in the Adirondacks. They did not take any active interest in managing the forest and had only minimal knowledge of the land across Kibby Creek.

We have been owners (in partnership with a friend) of the property since 2005. We did not buy the property with any intent to manage the forest. But we did enjoy exploring the whole property and

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Woodswalk, continued from page 5

we have gradually opened up hiking and snowshoeing trails on both sides of Kibby. We have done some targeted thinning of trees, removing trees that affected the view from our living room and deck. And we have also done thinning to liberate selected trees; red oaks have been given particularly preferential treatment but we have also liberated one or two good specimens of most of the species. A few years ago, Ed and Donna Welch visited us, took us on an informal woods walk that was limited to the near side of Kibby. This led us to join NYFOA.

As our explorations have gained us greater access, we have begun to understand more about the character of our little forest. We are only now beginning to consider possible options for active management. It will likely take some convincing to get our partner on board.

The September 2014 woodswalk with the chapter was an important next step for us as we progress along this unanticipated journey. Steve (and the others) addressed many topics along our walk. He described most of our property as “under-harvested” forest while noting that our neighbor’s was “over-harvested.” We visited several quite different ecosystems, including a creek-side hemlock and pine area, a mixed upland setting, several acres littered with wind thrown balsam firs, and a section of classic northeastern hardwood forest. At each location he discussed various possible goals and the type of management that would achieve those goals. He spent some time discussing the pros and cons of manual logging versus mechanized logging. And he confirmed my hunch that a recently discovered black cherry tree, perfectly straight and with a dbh over 20 inches, was our most valuable tree. We ended the woodswalk with the recommendation that our next step would be to contact Rich McDermott to get a written Stewardship Plan and I have arranged that for a date in December. Perhaps this will lead us to a full management plan from a forester.

The woodswalk was followed by the traditional potluck lunch and raffle. The food was great and the raffle was full of interesting items. This was our first raffle and it was really exciting to see that many of the items were created by our talented chapter members.



A group photo before heading into the forest.

Online Forestry

NYS DEC: State Takes Action To Prevent The Spread Of Emerald Ash Borer On Firewood In Ulster County

Destroy Infested Firewood and Ash Logs at Firewood Producer/Dealer
<http://www.dec.ny.gov/press/98100.html>

NYS DEC: Find a forester

Click on the link to find the cooperating forester list
<http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5230.html>

NYS DEC: Timber Harvesting

Stewardship of forest land
<http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5242.html>

NYS DEC: Additional Topics and Resources for Forest Owners

This page contains information on important private forestry issues, topics, and news
<http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/93912.html>

Master Forest Owner Program

This program provides private forest owners of New York State with the information and encouragement necessary to manage their forest holdings wisely
<http://www2.dnr.cornell.edu/ext/mfo/>

Friend NYFOA on Facebook

Have you checked out NYFOA's facebook page?
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-New-York-Forest-Owners-Association/481274978599327>

RNYW

Information about NYFOA's Restore New York's Woodlands initiative
<http://www.nyfoa.org/education/rnyw/index.php>

Reflections from the Chair

I hope this past Summer treated you well. As I write this the colors are changing and the firewood is being stacked. Our chimney is still waiting to be cleaned. I hope you all are preparing for winter as well. If you have the opportunity to heat with firewood, care should always be taken to be safe. Maintenance should be done on fireplaces, woodstoves, wood furnaces and chimneys. Using seasoned wood is also very important to prevent creosote buildup and potential chimney fires. These tasks are just one of the great things we deal with living and being part of the Great Northeast.

The Fall is also a time for hunters planning their favorite deer hunting spot. However many of us deal with deer all year round. As great as it is to see deer in the wild many landowners dread their appearance in yards eating their shrubs, and in their forests eating the new growth. The deer enclosure project our chapter started this past June will hopefully be a good demonstration of how to keep deer from reducing regrowth. Our summer intern John Pokrzywka closed out his internship this summer by putting together a good summary of the plants within the enclosure at the 4H forested site in Ballston Spa. This is summarized elsewhere in this issue.

The SAC Steering Committee thought it would be useful to pole the membership about their interests and direction for future chapter activities. A survey committee was formed early in 2014 to come up with questions for the survey.

The link to the survey was put out on-line to the membership in June 2014. There were 23 respondents of the approximately 189 SAC members (~12%).

This effort was a learning experience for our Steering Committee. We believe it can be a worthwhile effort for obtaining

member interests and where they would like our chapter to go. Participation in surveys can sometimes be a chore thus actual participant numbers can be low. However the data collected can be a very useful tool in taking the pulse of the membership. This information along with one on one discussions at woods walks, meetings and other chapter events will certainly help our Steering Committee with future planning.

Many thanks to the survey committee and all members that participated in this survey.

This past Summer our chapter once again participated in the Saratoga County and Washington County Fairs. We had good support by our members manning our booths. We connected with the public and hopefully got our message out. We were awarded the Outstanding Exhibit: County Bounty Building at the Washington County Fair. Many thanks to Bill Burke and Jane Jenks for coordinating these booths as well as all the volunteers that helped man them.

Elections are coming up in January at our annual meeting. We are still in need of a Vice-chairman and other offices are up for election as well. Your participation in our organization is encouraged.

As always if members have any questions, concerns or suggestions please feel free to contact me. Our chapter is always looking to recruit new members. A good way to do this is to let your friends, neighbors and family members know the benefits of being a NYFOA member.

Thanks and enjoy the Fall!

Lou Inzinna

Watch for these coming events

SAC ANNUAL MEETING

Usually scheduled for late January.

Our annual business meeting paired with a presentation by a guest speaker.

WINTER WOODSWALK

We are working with new members in Warren County to complete plans for a snowshoe event in February or March.

When these events are finalized they will be posted on the NYFOA/SAC webpage at www.nyfoa.org/chapters/sac.php and details will be emailed/mailed to our members.

**New York Forest
Owners Association**



PO Box 541
Lima, NY 14485
1-800-836-3566

Chair: Lou Inzinna
Vice Chair: Vacant
Secretary: Bill Burke
Treasurer: Bob Manning

**NYFOA/Southeastern
Adirondack Chapter**

Kristie Edwards, Editor
411 Beech Street
Mayfield, NY 12117

This edition had been prepared by:
Kristie Edwards, Editor
Jill Burks, Graphic Design

To submit articles for publication
please e-mail Kristie Edwards:
edwardsk922@gmail.com