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**CAPITAL DISTRICT CHAPTER
NEWSLETTER**

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Fall 2021

A Message from the Chairman

Jason Post

As we reflect upon the last couple of years, we realize how important the forest and the human condition are in our overall well-being. NYFOA plays a critical role in keeping both humans and the environment strong and accessible to support whatever comes our way. Our Chapter is looking to improve our membership and leadership health and need folks to step up in a more active way as we reinvigorate the Chapter and have a healthy, action-packed 2022. Please consider playing an active role and [email Carol McDonald](#) with your level of interest. We have roles to fit many talents, and, as the saying goes, many hands make lite work! You can also email Carol if you would like to nominate someone you feel could support our chapter, and we can reach out directly.

Journey to a Young Forest

Gerry McDonald

In early 2018, my wife and I attended the NYFOA Capital District Chapter's annual winter gathering where Tim Russell from the Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA) was the guest speaker. Tim spoke about managing forestland for improved deer habitat and the Young Forest Initiative. The general idea was to cause a disturbance in an otherwise mature forest setting to create patches of early successional habitat. Tim discussed how the change in habitat can create food and cover for not only deer, but many other birds and

small mammals including rabbits, grouse, and woodcock. He discussed the various techniques for assessing and controlling unwanted vegetation, what to cut and what not to cut and cutting techniques.

I used to hear grouse drumming in springtime, but I had not heard any in the past several years, so this sounded like an interesting idea. I thought about the patch of young aspen trees I can see out my window where I used to often hear grouse and how that really grew up in the past 25 years. The connection between the absence of grouse and the loss of good grouse habitat from the lack of young forest made sense.

I spoke with Tim after the presentation and gave him my contact info. That spring, Tim called, and we scheduled a walk of the property to look at possible areas to create a young forest. I suggested we focus on a 5-acre area on a dry flat stocked with mostly stunted oak as a potential site. Tim mapped out 5 acres and connected me to the folks at a National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). There was funding available for projects like this but there was a process. I first needed to update my 1995 Forest Management Plan (FMP) and have the proposed area inspected and approved by a NRCS biologist. When I initially met with the biologist, she suggested a different area that was not so “high and dry” for the cut. We agreed on an area located at a lower elevation and was definitely wetter. The chosen area was primarily stocked with white pine with interspersed oak, hickory, maple, big tooth aspen and other hardwoods including several big “wolf” white oak trees. At the time we did not identify any invasive species of concern. We marked out 7.7 acres on a mostly flat area and some of the adjacent east facing hillside.

With the funding approved for an update of my FMP in 2019, I hired a NRCS certified forester. She identified 16 distinct stands on our 125 acres of forested land and included the 7.7-acre area designated for the early successional forest management plan. My forester also recommended pre-commercial thinning on an additional 20 acres of mostly white pine that qualified for cost sharing. With the updated FMP completed, my application for funding to implement the early successional FMP was approved in 2020.

The early successional forest management plan was specific in its requirements: the work was to be done between November 1 and March 31; no heavy equipment causing soil disturbance allowed in the work area; chop and drop methods were to be used to remove 85% of the canopy leaving 10 to 12 nut and fruit trees per acre (primarily oak and hickory and cherry if present); all woody stems and debris to be left in place to create dense cover that would limit deer browsing and protect the soil while new growth got started; retain existing snags and create new snags by girdling trees; and hinge cut trees where possible to create quick shrubland habitat.

NRCS provided me with a list of contractors who would do this kind of work. My first call was to the Catskill Forest Association located in Arkville NY and after my conversation with John McNaught, my mind was made up. I was confident that John had experience doing these cuts and their fee seemed reasonable for work involved. I provided John with a copy of the plan and the requirements for the cut and we signed a contract and scheduled the work for the first week of December. Prior to the work, John, the NRCS biologist and I met and walked the area, putting up copious amounts of flagging to delineate the area and making clear the expectations of the work plan. During this walk, I noticed quite

a few buckthorn trees in the understory of the proposed cut, they were easy to spot since they were the only trees with green leaves. To limit the spread of buckthorn in the area, I spent a couple afternoons in November cutting the buckthorns and stump treating with concentrated glyphosate. December 1 arrived and on schedule, John McNaught and his partner Ryan showed up to start the cut. I was amazed at the rate these 2 men worked. They completed the cut in 3 ½ days. The place looked like a hurricane had hit and my wife nicknamed the area "Hurricane Ridge." The second week of December, the NRCS biologist performed her inspection and approved the work as conforming with the plan requirements.

I've had mixed feelings since the cut was completed. Some of the trees that now lay on the ground are trees that I've watched grow over the past 25 years, a few relatively straight stemmed oaks that might have been of timber quality in another generation or 2. Lots of 10" to 20" white pine stems and crowns now litter the ground, and it is nearly impossible to get through the cut area in most places. On the bright side, I've seen the damage deer browsing has caused to oak and maple regeneration throughout the property and I've seen where oak and maple saplings have been able to "get up" in the canopy shadows of overturned trees. I look forward to observing the successional march of habitats in the cut area, watching to see what wildlife moves in and to see the procession of the decay organisms breaking down the woody debris in hopes that Hurricane Ridge turns to a nicely stocked hardwood forest if I'm around long enough. I hope to provide updates on the changes I see as time rolls on. Stay tuned.



Aspen regeneration 1 year later.

In The Borders

Dick Gibbs

Hidley Farm and Forest is comprised of 50 acres of hay fields and 70 acres of woodlot. The fields are leftover from horse farming 250 years ago, leaving seven different fields, each bordered by hedgerows. I attempt to keep fields and woodlot in balance by brush-hogging perimeters to cut back the ever-creeping

hedgerows. Even with good equipment, this is a difficult task. Low hanging limbs from tall trees reach out far into the hayfield, Multiflora Rose clumps send new growth into the fields, and cattle and horses don't eat this towering nuisance, cutting farm production. Buckthorn brush quickly grows to small trees with spikes and propagates into fields from their prolific berry production. Then there are vines, Bittersweet and Woodbine. At times in the annual hogging I will lose sight of the whole reason for engaging this exercise as my tractor is scratched, tires flat.

Taking a more positive perspective, I see these borders as alive with Nature writ large and not found on either a bare field or in a contiguous woodlot or a sharp border: The hedgerow is where it all happens. Myriad bird species thrive in hedges. Wild turkeys abound. Coyotes, Foxes, Vultures, woodchucks, and all sorts of small game coexist in the hedge. Deer are the farms biggest "crop". Pollinators love the hedge ecosystem. Nature's diversity elicits numerous human connections. Hedgerow habitats are repositories of stones from 250 years of farming. Now secreted within the hedgerow, the rocks are twisty trails for mountain bikes and snowshoeing. There is a natural harmony between humans and the manifest beauty of all of nature here. Will I hire an excavator to clear the hedgerows to create bigger open fields? October's color palate in the hedge suggests leaving things alone and yearly brush hogging.

Note from the Secretary Carol

In an effort to update our membership files, we will be calling and writing to you to add/update email addresses, mailing addresses, and phone numbers. We want to ensure we are reaching all of our members in an efficient and timely manner as it relates to chapter events. We would also like suggestions or ideas about how we can bring meaningful content to our members.

Got an idea? Share it – happyinthehollow@gmail.com or write
Carol McDonald 249 Stanton Road Coeymans Hollow, NY 12046.

Walks and Events Held

(We did get out some this summer/fall)

- Draiss Property Walk & feast provided by the Draiss Family
- Annual Picnic at Thatcher Park with a presentation by Thom Engel on the park's geological history
- Rheinstrom Hill Audubon Sanctuary Center with Suzanne Treyger, Forest Program Manager, and Dave Decker, Land Steward, Audubon NY

- Tick Education with Joellen Lampman, NYS Integrated Pest Management Program and Albany County Parks and Recreation – Lawson Lake County Park

Upcoming Events

Early Summer 2022 Drones and the role they play in Forest Management

[Click here to Follow our CDC activities](#)

**Please have a happy and
safe holiday season!**

