

The New York Forest Owner

A PUBLICATION OF THE NEW YORK FOREST OWNERS ASSOCIATION

For people caring about New York's trees and forests

January/February 2019



Member Profile: Jim Baxter and Dorian Hyland

Volume 57 Number 1



**THE NEW YORK
FOREST OWNERS
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**The New York
Forest Owner**

A PUBLICATION OF THE NEW YORK FOREST OWNERS ASSOCIATION
VOLUME 57, NUMBER 1

*The New York Forest Owner is a bi-monthly publication of The New York Forest Owners Association, PO Box 541, Lima, NY 14485. Materials submitted for publication should be sent to: **Mary Beth Malmshemer**, Editor, The New York Forest Owner, 134 Lincklaen Street, Cazenovia, New York 13035. Materials may also be e-mailed to mmalmshe@syr.edu. Articles, artwork and photos are invited and if requested, are returned after use. **The deadline for submission for the March/April issue is February 1, 2019.***

Please address all membership fees and change of address requests to PO Box 541, Lima, NY 14485. 1-800-836-3566. Cost of family membership/subscription is \$45.



www.nyfoa.org

COVER:

Front cover. Jim Baxter and Dorian Hyland use some of their skills from workshops to inspect plants for invasive insects. For member profile see page 21. All photos courtesy of Jim and Dorian.

From The President

The last several months of 2018 proved to be very active and fruitful for forest related initiatives throughout New York state.

On October 25, NYS held its first Forestry and Wood Products Summit in Binghamton, NY. www.agriculture.ny.gov/AD/release.asp?ReleaseID=3833



The summit identified many initiatives to not only boost the industry but also improve forest health. Both Richard Ball, Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture

and Markets, and Basil Seggos, Commissioner the of Department of Environmental Conservation, co-chaired the summit. NYFOA was one of several organizations that participated in the roundtable discussion. Several actions to assist the forest community were announced. These actions include:

- Grow domestic and international markets
- Increase public awareness and engagement
- Grow maple industry
- Expand the new forest economy
- Further research and development
- Improve forest health

Specific recommendations related to improving forest health include:

- Revise Forest Tax Law 480-A regulation aimed at improving the efficiency and administration of the program for consulting foresters and program participants
- Propose the "Regenerate NY" program to assist forest

landowners in addressing the extreme difficulty in growing NY's next forest partly caused by heavy deer forage pressure and competing vegetation.

Over the past year, NYFOA has been actively engaged with both of these recommendations. The Restore New York Woodlands (RNYW) initiative, chaired by Jerry Michael, is now in its second phase and the preliminary groundwork should synergistically allow for the Regenerate NY program to move forward expeditiously. Also, NYFOA has recently participated in several stakeholder meetings addressing the 480-A regulations and will fully support the new efforts to improve the program. Bruce Revette is NYFOA's representative on The NYS Wood Products Development Council and we thank him for his time and effort.

With 2019 upon us, NYFOA will again participate in The NY Farm Show in Syracuse from February 21 to 23, 2019 (see page 5 for schedule). Kristina Ferrare will be coordinating the event for NYFOA and we will be looking for volunteers to work our display. The show itself is not only educational but also fun. Please contact Kristina (kaf226@cornell.edu) if you can participate.

With the number of initiatives NYFOA will be working on in 2019, we gladly welcome members to participate with our committees. If you have skills in marketing, education, finance, IT, legislation, HR, etc. we can always use more help.

Please let me or your local chapter designated director know of your interest.

Wishing all a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.

—Art Wagner
NYFOA President

Join! NYFOA is a not-for-profit group promoting stewardship of private forests for the benefit of current and future generations. Through local chapters and statewide activities, NYFOA helps woodland owners to become responsible stewards and helps the interested public to appreciate the importance of New York's forests.

Join NYFOA today and begin to receive its many benefits including: six issues of *The New York Forest Owner*, woodwalks, chapter meetings, and statewide meetings.

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The mission of the New York Forest Owners Association (NYFOA) is to promote sustainable forestry practices and improved stewardship on privately owned woodlands in New York State. NYFOA is a not-for-profit group of people who care about NYS's trees and forests and are interested in the thoughtful management of private forests for the benefit of current and future generations.

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Welcome New Members

We welcome the following new members (who joined since the publishing of the last issue) to NYFOA and thank them for their interest in, and support of, the organization:

Name	Chapter
Ken Allein	NFC
William Arthur Jr.	NFC
Sharon Bachman / CCE Erie County	NFC
Thomas & Patricia Benedetto	CNY
Kimberly Casterline	NFC
Christmas & Associates	CNY
Jered Cornell	NFC
Jeff & Shanon Goldwait	WFL
Forrest Hawk	NFC
Fred Hudson	CNY
John C. Kuhn	NFC
Jeff & Robina Moyer	SOT
Matthew Natale	AFC
Michael Porter	SOT
Al Schoonmaker	WFL
John Whitney / USDA	NFC
William Arthur	NFC

Would you like to receive an electronic version of future editions of *The New York Forest Owner*? If so, please send Liana an email (lgooding@nyfoa.org).

You will receive an email every two months that includes a PDF file of the publication. While being convenient for you – read *the Forest Owner* anytime, any place; this will also help to save the Association money as the cost of printing and postage continues to rise with each edition.

Please share this magazine with
a neighbor and urge them to join
NYFOA.

By gaining more members,
NYFOA's voice will become
stronger!

Free programs at the NY FARM SHOW

February 21 - 23, 2019

Free Programs to help landowners get more benefits from their woodlots will be presented each day during the 2019 Farm Show in Syracuse by the New York Forest Owners Association.

Meet with a forester from the State Department of Environmental Conservation, or speak with a Cornell trained volunteer. Visitors are encouraged to bring their questions and pause at the booth area before or after attending a seminar program. The DEC foresters and trained volunteers are there to help with resource materials, displays and expert advice.

Learn More, Earn More seminars are free and open to all. Topics include seminars on New York woodlands, trail creation and maintenance, federal cost sharing for woodlot improvements, white-tailed deer management, and long-term legacy planning for your woodlot, among others. Programs start on the hour and allow time for questions and discussion.

The booth is on the main corridor of the Arts and Home Center, and the Seminars are held in the Somerset Room just steps away on the lower level of the center.

These programs are presented by the New York Forest Owners Association in cooperation with the NY Department of Environmental Conservation, Cornell Cooperative Extension, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, and with special thanks to each of our expert speakers.

FARM SHOW 2019, FORESTRY SEMINARS

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 21 Moderator Kristina Ferrare

11:00 AM-NOON – Insects that Threaten our Woods; Mark Whitmore, Cornell University

An update on the various insects that are invading the woods of New York and what can be done to save our trees.

1:00 PM-4:00 PM – It's Your Legacy: Planning for the Future of Your Land; Kristina Ferrare, Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County and Kimberly N. Rothman, Bousquet Holstein PLLC

Your woodlot can live on after you, but to insure that your wishes are addressed after you are gone, careful planning needs to take place now.

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 22 Moderator Hugh Canham

10:00 AM-11:00 AM – New York's Woodlands: What We Have and Their Importance; Hugh Canham, Emeritus Professor, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry

An overview of how the woods of New York have evolved over the last 200 years and how what happens in our forests affects every New York citizen.

11:00 AM-NOON – Identification and Ecology of Northeastern Hardwoods; Peter Smallidge, State Extension Forester, Cornell University

Principles of tree identification using leaves, twigs, and bark and growth habits.

1:00 PM-2:00 PM- Ecology and Management of Invasive Species; Peter Smallidge, State Extension Forester, Cornell University

How to control common interfering plants(buckthorn, roses, honeysuckle, Russian olive, and barberry) using organic and chemical processes

2:00 PM-3:00 PM-The Future of American Chestnut in New York; Sara Fern Fitzsimmons, Director of Restoration, Penn State University

The American Chestnut tree, once a proud member of our forests is making a comeback thanks to the creation of disease resistant families. Discover when restoration might begin in New York and what you can do to help.

3:00 PM-4:00 PM-White Tail Deer: Too Many or Not Enough; Jeremy Hurst, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

Some woodlot owners want to have more deer for hunting or viewing. Others need to control the deer herd or their young trees will be destroyed. How can we achieve a balance between these two needs?

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 23 Moderator Hugh Canham

10:00 AM-11:00 AM – New York's Woodlands: What We Have and Their Importance; Hugh Canham, Emeritus Professor, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry

An overview of how the woods of New York have evolved over the last 200 years and how what happens in our forests affects every New York citizen.

11:00 AM-NOON- Protecting From Biting Insects and Pesky Plants in the Woods; Mike Burns, NY Center for Agriculture Medicine & Health

As we walk through our woods or work in them we need to be aware of the dangers from certain insects and various plants that can harm us and how to prevent injury.

1:00 PM-2:00 PM –Safe and Useful Trails in Your Woods; Stacey Kazacos, Woodlot Owner, Mt. Vision, NY

How to create and maintain trails and access roads in your woods, from actual experiences of a landowner.

2:00 PM-3:00 PM-Getting Federal Aid for Woodlot Improvements; Michael Fournier, US Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service

There are several programs available to woods owners for financial assistance to improve your property for timber wildlife, and other uses.

3:00 PM-4:00 PM- Woodlot Management and Income Taxes; Hugh Canham, Emeritus Professor, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry

How you manage your property and handle the income from timber sales can greatly affect how much income taxes you pay.

Ask A Professional

DAVID SKEVAL



David Skeval

Landowner questions are addressed by foresters and other natural resources professionals. Landowners should be careful when interpreting answers and applying this general advice to their property because landowner objectives and property conditions will influence specific management options. When in doubt, check with your regional DEC office or other service providers. Landowners are also encouraged to be active participants in Cornell Cooperative Extension and NYFOA programs to gain additional, often site-specific, answers to questions. To submit a question, email to Peter Smallidge at pjs23@cornell.edu with an explicit mention of "Ask a Professional." Additional reading on various topics is available at www.forestconnect.info

Is 480a forest management plan right for me?

Question:

What is the 480-a forest tax law program and how does it work? How much will it save me? (Jim R., Capital District Chapter)

Answer:

Many forestland owners wonder if the NYS forest tax law, Section 480-a, is right for them, and usually realize that the response to this question will always be prefaced with, "It depends...." Since there are numerous variations in landowning circumstances, it is best for the forestland owner to consider some general guidelines and then work with a knowledgeable forester on their specific circumstances. We will provide those general guidelines but, first, what is 480a and does your property qualify?

What is 480a?

Section 480a refers to the NYS Real Property Tax Law that allows for an 80% reduction in property taxes on qualified forest land. It accomplishes this by reducing the

assessment on eligible property by 80%.

Why was 480a created?

480a and the iterations of forest tax law that have preceded it have at their core making it economically feasible to grow timber, especially hardwood timber. It takes 80 to 120 years for a hardwood tree to mature, that means paying 80 to 120 years' worth of property taxes that would have a compounded interest rate applied to the cost. 480a reduces the annual property tax cost. Participants of 480a are subject to a yield tax that is paid upon harvest in lieu of property tax. Thus the cost and revenue arrive at the same time avoiding a compounded cost and helping with cash flow.

What makes a property eligible for 480a?

To qualify you need a tract of land with at least 50 acres of forestland that is accessible. This can be multiple tax parcels so long as they are adjoining. The acreage needs to be capable of producing a forest crop within 30 years. So, subtract out the swampland, and hay fields and

other areas that will not produce an accessible forest crop.

Understanding your property tax bill and assessment

Understanding how property is assessed is important to projecting the tax property cost reduction you can expect from enrolling in 480a. Although assessors follow property tax law, they have at their disposal a variety of assessment tools and approaches. Also understanding the pressures and culture in your town's approach to assessing (and by extension raising tax revenue) is something you need to understand.

Some basics on assessment and taxation; An assessment is supposed to be an approximation of the market value of your property.

When you receive your town and county tax bill, the different taxing entities (town, county, fire district, water, garbage, etc...) will have a line where they assess a tax. Following is an example that uses the town tax; the town will have an operating budget. There will generally be two sources of revenue to support that operating budget of a town; state aid and local property taxes. State aid is subtracted from the town's operating budget and the balance becomes the property tax levy. The combined assessed value of all the real property in the town (building and land) is divided by 1,000 and then that figure is divide into the tax levy. This final number is the tax rate per \$1,000 of assessed value. As shown in Figure 1, if the assessed value of your property is \$180,000 and the tax rate is \$2.12/\$1,000, your tax bill is \$381.60. See the table below to follow the calculations from the town budget to your tax bill.

In this case, your final tax bill is influenced by four factors: town operating budget, amount of State aid to the town, the total

Figure 1. Illustration of the calculation of a property tax for a landowner.

Town's operating budget	\$ 1,672,000	
State aid to town	\$ 348,000	
Local property tax levy	\$ 1,324,000	
Total assessed value of all real property in town	\$ 2,806,880,000	
Total value divided by 1000	\$ 2,806,880	Mill units of value
Total mill units divided by tax levy	\$ 2.12	Mill rate or tax rate
Your properties assessed value	\$ 180,000	
Properties assessed value divided by 1000	180	your properties mill units of value
Town's mill rate or tax rate	\$ 2.12	
Mill rate X's your properties mill units of value	\$ 381.60	Your property tax bill

assessed value of the town and, the assessment of your property. Of all these factors, the assessed value of your property is the most easily influenced by you. You can do a market evaluation of your property to see if the assessed value is close to the fair market value. This can be as simple asking yourself, "What do I think I could sell my property for?" If you think you could sell for \$360,000 and it is assessed for \$180,000.....you probably should keep your mouth shut. If you think you could at most sell for \$90,000 and it is assessed for \$180,000... then you have some work to do.

What about an equalization rate? An equalization rate is used by New York State to compare the property values from one town (or school district) to another for the purpose of distributing State aid. If one town hasn't done a reassessment of property values in 15 years then

chances are the assessed value of the town is low. The State will set an equalization rate that speaks to how far off the local tax assessment is from the current fair market value. This is important to you in that you need to compare the adjusted assessment to what you believe the fair market value to be. The calculation would be as follows (see Figure 2. 77,400 divided by 0.43).

Again, does the current fair market value make sense?

How does the assessor arrive at the assessed value for your property? The assessor will have an inventory list of your property that includes buildings and property type (property class). Some information can be gathered from the tax bill, more from the assessment rolls and, still more from the assessors file on your property. If you believe your property is assessed high, making sure the assessor has

the correct information on your property. Is there a barn included in the assessor's file that was knocked down 12 years ago? Does the assessor have your property as residential when it is vacant swamp land? Properties are assigned classification codes that recognize the properties use. Some examples; 210 is a single family year-round residence, 910 is private forestland and, 321 is abandoned agricultural land. For a complete list, go to; www.propertyshark.com/mason/text/ny_building_classes.html

If you are to pursue 480a, it is a good idea to first work to understand your assessment and, possibly, get it lowered if possible. Knowing the valuation of the various property components will help you project the impact of your potential saving under 480a. Also, understanding how the various components of your property is valued is necessary in

continued on page 18

Figure 2. Assessment with equalization.

Equalization rate	43%	Percent of current fair market value reflected in your local assessment
Property assessment	\$ 77,400.00	
Property assessment / equalization rate	\$ 180,000	Current fair market value

Wild Things in Your Woodlands

KRISTI SULLIVAN

BARRED OWL (*STRIX VARIA*)



John Triana, Regional Water Authority, Bugwood.org

The barred owl is a large bird, up to 20 inches long, with a wingspan of 44 inches. It is gray-brown in color, with whitish streaks on the back and head, brown horizontal bars on its white chest, and vertical bars on its belly. This owl has a round face without ear tufts, and a whitish facial disk with dark concentric rings around brown eyes. Males and females look similar, but females can weigh about one third more than males.

“Who cooks for you, who cooks for you all?” This is the familiar call of the barred owl defending its territory or attracting a mate. If you live in or near a heavily wooded area with mature forest, particularly if there is also a stream or other body of water nearby, this sound is probably familiar. Barred owls are the most vocal of our owls, and often call early at night and at dawn. They call year-round, but courtship activities begin in February and breeding takes place primarily in March and April. Nesting in cavities or abandoned hawk, squirrel, or crow nests, the female sits on a nest of 1-5 eggs for 28 to 33 days. During this time, the male brings food to her. Once the eggs have hatched, both parents care for the fledglings for at least four months. Barred owls mate for life, reuse their nest site for many years, and maintain territories from 200 – 400 acres in size.

Barred owls are strongly territorial and remain in their territories for most,


if not all, of the year. However, in times when food is scarce, these birds may wander in search of prey. Barred owls are opportunistic predators, eating small mammals and rabbits, birds up to the size of grouse, amphibians, reptiles, and invertebrates, including crayfish. They sit and wait on an elevated perch, scanning the area for prey, then swoop down silently and grasp their prey with their talons. An owl’s stomach absorbs the nutritious parts of its prey and regurgitates the indigestible matter (hair, feathers, bones, claws, insect chitin) as round pellets about seven hours later. These owl “pellets” can be found on the ground under roosts, and dissecting these pellets is a fun way to learn about an owl’s diet.

Barred owls prefer large, unfragmented blocks of forest. They are most often associated with mature and old growth forests of mixed hardwoods and conifers due to a greater availability

of potential nest sites. In addition, mature forests have a lower density of branches in the lower levels of the forest, which may make hunting easier. A closed canopy also provides protection from the elements and from mobbing by other birds.

If you are a landowner hoping to encourage or maintain barred owls on your property, characteristics to pay close attention to are the size (number of acres) of forest, the age or maturity of the forest, and the number of large diameter snags or cavity trees available for nesting. Barred owls are seldom present in areas with tens of acres of forest, but are common in forests that are hundreds or thousands of acres in size. Therefore, if you live in a region with small patches of forest, it is unlikely that you will be able to attract barred owls to your land. However, in heavily forested regions, you can encourage barred owls by maintaining

mature forest stands with two or more trees per acre that are 20 inches in diameter or larger, to allow for the development of cavity trees or snags (dead trees) suitable for nesting. You may also help create a snag or two by girdling a couple of large, live trees. Leaving dead wood on the ground can also enhance habitat by providing cover for amphibians, reptiles, and small mammals that in turn provide food for barred owls. By focusing on just a few habitat elements, you can continue to

enjoy the characteristic sounds of the big woods. To hear the call of the barred owl, visit http://www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/BirdGuide/Barred_Owl.html 

Kristi Sullivan directs the New York Master Naturalist Volunteer Program. Partial support from USDA NIFA. More information on managing habitat for wildlife can be found at <https://blogs.cornell.edu/cerp/wildlife/>

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* Minimum order is 25 signs with additional signs in increments of 25.

News from New York Tree Farm Program

BY MARY JEANNE PACKER



Standards of Sustainability - What's in it for Family Forest Owners?

Tree Farmers in New York State, and across the US, are recognized for their hard work and good stewardship of their woods. The American Tree Farm System Standards of Sustainability are an important tool that Tree Farm Inspecting Foresters use to evaluate and validate good forest management. Every five years these Standards go through a transparent review process before being approved by the American Forest Foundation Board of Trustees. Woodland owners have an opportunity to provide input to the Standards as part of the review and revision process. The 2015-2020 Standards went into effect in January 2015. Work will begin in 2019 on the updated 2020-2025 Standards; and NY Tree Farmers will be encouraged to participate.

The Standards of Sustainability are not a one-size-fits-all prescription, but rather, are designed to accommodate the needs of a wide range of woodlands and woodland owners. Individual Tree Farmers are encouraged to use them in a way that is most appropriate for the size, scale, and intensity of their management activities and their land.

Paul Harwood, the 2015 National Outstanding ATFS Inspector, said, "If you haven't looked at your existing management plan for a while, the new Standards present a great opportunity to bring your plan up to date." Harwood suggests asking yourself: 'Are my goals and objectives still relevant? Has my property evolved to the point where I want to reconsider my approach?'"

Standard 1 is all about developing and implementing a management plan for your woodlands, which represents the road map that will guide you as you work to achieve the goals you

have for your land. The process of developing a management plan helps you define your goals. Then the management plan outlines the activities to sustainably achieve your goals and measure progress as you work to keep your woods healthy and productive. Demonstrating a thoughtful approach through your management plan is what often distinguishes a Tree Farmer.

As a forest landowner, you have a lot of flexibility in managing your land. However, everything you do must comply with all relevant federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and ordinances. Standard 2 outlines what is expected of you as a landowner. You are not expected to know every aspect of every law, but you *are* expected to seek the help you need to comply with the laws and regulations that govern your forest-management activities. Wonder what is legal or not? Ask! Here is where professionals—your forester, a consulting wildlife biologist, hydrologist, geologist, or other expert—will be your closest allies.

Part of managing your forest sustainably involves ensuring that there will be another generation of trees. Standard 3 addresses restocking after a harvest or converting open areas to tree cover. A general rule is to restock harvested sites within five years of a harvest. This Standard also addresses the best practices for reforesting your woodlands with appropriate tree and plant species.

Standard 4 addresses protection of air, water, and soils, generally through the use of the required best management practices (BMPs), a set of specific techniques and guidance that govern forestry activities in NYS. Your

Continued on next page




forester or a NYS-DEC service forester can provide you with a copy of New York's BMP's.

Managing your woodlands sustainably involves more than just managing your trees. A healthy woodland is one that supports diverse tree, plant, fish, and wildlife species, and your management activities should be planned to conserve biodiversity. Standard 5 outlines these objectives.

As a forest landowner, the visual impact of the work you do to maintain your woods is an important testament to your stewardship activities. By harvesting timber *and* having a visually appealing woodland, you make a powerful public statement about the value of sustainable forestry. Standard 6 covers the things you can do to make your woodlands more visually appealing to you, your family, and guests, to visitors who tour your property, and to those who pass your Tree Farm while traveling on adjacent roads.

A "special site" is a place of special value that may be present on your land. Standard 7 outlines what you must do to identify and protect special sites. Examples of special sites are diverse and may include: historical, archaeological, cultural, and ceremonial sites; unique ecological communities such as springs, glades, savannas, fens, and bogs; or sites of importance to you as the landowner, such as a family graveyard, a special tree, or an old mill dam

Standard 8 provides guidance as you plan your sustainable timber harvests and contract with qualified professionals to undertake any management activities outlined in your management plan.

Learn more about the Standards and the upcoming review process from Sarah Crow, Senior Director of Certification, American Tree Farm System®, a program of the American Forest Foundation; scrow@forestfoundation.org 

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How Much Is My Timber Worth?

HUGH CANHAM

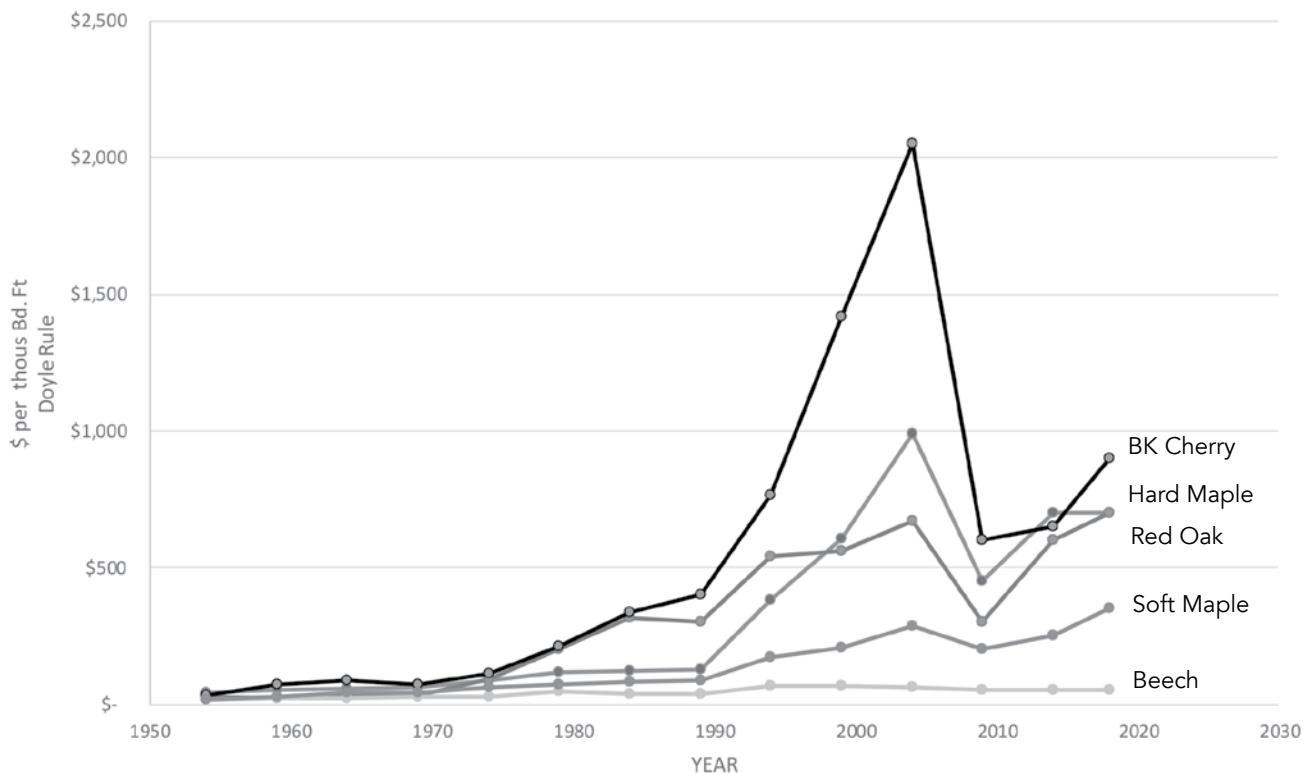
Should you sell timber now or wait? Why do you want to sell? How much should you harvest? These questions lie at heart of woodlot management and affect what you consider your timber to be worth. In some ways timber is like stocks, you hold it and when you sell it you receive income. As you hold the stock, or timber, it will hopefully increase in financial value. People hold stocks, or mutual funds, for various reasons. They also own timber and woods for

various reasons. A major difference is that most of the reasons for holding stocks can be directly related to financial goals whereas with timber and woods the major reasons for owning are often the non-financial goals: you want a place to hunt or enjoy the outdoors; the woods are part of your home, etc. If you sell all your stocks you have nothing for the future unless you buy other stock. If you sell all your merchantable timber but hold the land you will eventually have

future trees. However, in either case, if you want some financial return it might be better to just sell, or harvest, some of your investment. Mutual fund managers put the fund's investments into a variety of specific companies. In many ways the typical woodlot here in New York is like a mutual fund. You have many different species and growing conditions, often within just your 50 or 100 acres. By carefully selecting trees to harvest you can alter the "forest portfolio" for the future.

Your trees, if harvested, will be cut into logs, transported to a sawmill, cut into boards, dried and shipped to secondary manufacturing firms who might make kitchen cabinets, furniture, pianos, bowling balls, housing components, or any one of hundreds of other items marketed to consumers. Alternatively, some of the

Stumpage Prices for Selected Years:1954-2018
for western New York
(from NYSDEC Stumpage Price Reports)



trees might be converted into chips for paper, building materials, or biomass for energy production. All these end products are subject to the interaction of supply and demand which in turn filter down to the “derived demand” for your trees and the “stumpage price” a company will pay for your timber.

A good overview of current average stumpage prices by species and region across New York State can be found at the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation website (www.dec.ny.gov) by searching for stumpage price reports. The graph on the previous page shows the prices for a few species over time for western New York, derived from the stumpage price reports.

Consumer tastes and preferences change, some quickly, others over a longer time span. When my wife and I remodeled our kitchen in the early 1990’s black cherry, lightly stained, was in fashion for cabinets. Several years later fashions changed, and lighter woods were more in vogue or those that could easily be painted, such as soft maple. In the 1970’s the Japanese society took up bowling, raising the demand, and price paid, for hard maple. During the 1950’s and early 1960’s oak timber stumpage prices were very low, and much oak timber was not harvested. Then the demand rose for Mission-style furniture and oak stumpage prices soared. Currently the tariffs being imposed on hardwood lumber from the United States that is imported into China could seriously decrease demand as Chinese firms seek lower cost hardwood lumber from other countries. We face global markets for wood and small actions by other countries can reach back to your little woodlot in upstate New York.

Mills receive orders for various species and grades of lumber and produce accordingly. What they can afford to pay for logs delivered to


their mill depends on lumber prices and the costs of operating the mill. For example, increases in electric prices or changes in health insurance premiums for employees will decrease profitability and may decrease prices paid for logs. Mills also need to keep an inventory of logs available at the mill, especially during the spring “mud season” when timber harvesting operations are often shut down. Before this season, log prices might be up to encourage loggers to supply material.

Timber harvesters, “loggers,” may be part of a more integrated company or may be a separate entity. In either situation, they face many variable costs. A rise in interest rates increases the cost of loans on machinery. Fuel costs can vary week to week and have a huge effect on overall operating profit margins. For your woodlot many other costs enter in. Will roads need to be built from the woods to a public highway? Are stream crossings with permits required? Is logging restricted to a time of year, perhaps not in hunting season or during summer vacations? How far must logs be skidded to a landing? Are skid roads or landings to be reseeded or just graded after the sale is completed? All these conditions can affect stumpage prices.

Characteristics of your trees also affect the price a buyer is willing to pay, with species probably the most significant factor, as reflected by what the mill will pay. Within individual species, quality of the timber is important; more branches producing knotty lumber decreases the value, except where specialty material might be produced as in “knotty white pine paneling.” The bigger the average diameter of a tree, the more valuable it is, other things being equal. Also important is the mix of species. Perhaps you have some high-quality white pine or black cherry but also require that much low-quality beech is removed. The amount of timber harvested per acre can also affect what

a logger can afford to pay, as can the overall total volume that you have put up for sale. Smaller individual sales mean more frequent movement of equipment from property to property which increases overall costs.

Why family forest owners sell timber covers a wide spectrum of reasons. Some want to harvest timber now since it is either biologically or financially mature (financial maturity means that the tree, for financial returns, is not predicted to earn your desired rate of return in the future). In other cases, the owners want money to pay for education, a new car, or other planned expense. There are also emergencies that arise, and the woods can be viewed as an insurance policy for meeting these. After consulting with your professional forester and perhaps even after receiving bids from prospective buyers you and your family might decide, “It’s not worth it.” “We don’t want the mess associated with logging.” “I want my woods to stay the way they are.” Whatever the reasons for considering a timber harvest, it is wise to think of the alternatives and always seek the advice of professional foresters.

Owners should realize that a carefully planned and supervised timber harvest operation can enhance many of the other values of your woods. The forest industry in New York recognizes the value of sustainable harvests and wants to maintain a good reputation. They would like to return to your woods again in the future. Finally, it is important for anyone who owns a piece of New York’s great woods and forest resource to pay attention to what is going on in the world around you. Our woods exist in a complex mix of biological, economic, and political realities. 

Hugh Canham is a long time member of NYFOA and Professor Emeritus at SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry.

Clark Homestead: The Forest That Never Stops Giving

SHELDON CLARK

Almost every day I sit for long periods of time gazing out of my living room windows and I never grow tired of witnessing the graceful dance of the leaves in the wind, or tracing the lines in the tree bark with my eyes again and again, to see if a pattern or an image might become apparent. Just relaxing and observing. And remembering.

You see, the majestic, enormous maple trees that surround my home along with the berry bushes, apple trees, and

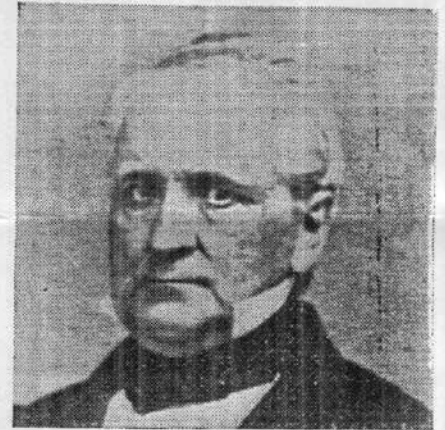
flower beds that have been added to our yard, and lovingly cared for by my wife over the years, remind me of my heritage. And, like the deep, long roots of those beautiful maples that surround me, my ancestors were solid, rugged individuals that carved a beautiful story that has led me to these moments. The moments that I cherish. Where I can gaze out of my windows and soak up the essence of nature. I seem to think such thoughts as, how does one begin to

express the gratitude and thankfulness that I feel for this beautiful land that surrounds me? And how can I ever show my appreciation to my ancestors for all that they have entrusted to me for these many years?

This land helped sustain their family and my family for decades. My thoughts seem to always drift back to the only way that feels right to honor this beautiful place on earth that I call my home.

I shall share my story, the story of my heritage with others. You see, the story that I've heard and researched since childhood makes me proud. It is a story that exemplifies how intelligent and industrious my ancestors were. And

The wise choice of land by a pioneer has been justified. Careful husbandry over a period of nearly 150 years has maintained the productiveness of this farm and turned it over to coming generations in as good or better condition than when it was first cleared.



Captain Jesse Clark, a Revolutionary soldier, was a pioneer settler at Groton City.



Pictured left to right are three generations of Clarks: Sheldon (73), Garret (10), and Shaun (43). Forester Bob Demeree, shown on the right, has been working with the Clarks on their homestead for 52 years.

it's the story of the American dream. I'm so thankful to have the opportunity to continue to pass the story on to my children, grandchildren, and now, several great grandchildren. It is my hope that they too, one day, will be able to experience the beautiful sights and sounds of nature that surround us with the same wonder and excitement that I see.

And, so the story begins in the year 1793. Captain Jessie and Sara (Foot) Clark moved to the little hamlet of Groton City, Tompkins County, NY with 11 children from Lee, Massachusetts. They settled on a parcel of 640 acres on the east side of the trout stream still known as Fall Creek. It seems that the Federal Government considered the parcel of land adequate compensation for Jessie's service in the Revolutionary War. The little hamlet of Groton City soon boasted a saw mill and grist mill, a woolen mill and a general store. Jessie's family built a small plank home and a dairy barn. However, the barn was eventually replaced with a different barn made of beech lumber from the 100-acre woodlot on the parcel. We believe that

this might be the first silviculture in the woodlot which would then have made room for the maple, cherry, and ash trees to multiply.

That was six generations ago for me. Now, sometimes when I'm gazing out of my windows and watching the trees, I think of my father, Franklin Clark, tapping the maple trees for many years once spring arrived. I remember during those times that our family and friends enjoyed some of the best maple syrup in New York. However, Franklin was a forward-thinking man and when he discovered that regeneration in the woodlot needed to be a high priority, since many of the trees were of veneer quality, the practice of tapping the trees stopped in the early 50's.

Franklin and his wife, Marlea (Hatfield) Clark had also cut and skidded their saleable timber and firewood for many years with two draft horse teams. It was during that time that they realized that the labor intensive sugaring process could not compare to the profits from the log sales. They depended on the funds to keep their small farming enterprise going.

In 1960, Mr. Robert (Bob) Demeree, a DEC Forester, came onto the scene. Bob had just graduated from the State University College of Forestry in Syracuse, NY. Franklin hired Bob to provide guidance with the 100-acre woodlot so that a strategic, sustainable system of harvesting saleable logs in 3-acre strips could be implemented. Each year, Bob would strategically mark the trees to be removed, which allowed for ample sunlight into the woodlot. Harvesting the trees in this way optimized the potential for regeneration and rapid regrowth in each area.

In the meantime, I had graduated from high school and was ready and eager to learn more about their system and start harvesting the trees with my father, feeling completely honored to be the next generation to take on this project. Bob introduced me to Timber Stand Improvement (TSI) and he continued to mark our woodlot until his retirement in 2015.

The Clark Homestead received the Tree Farm award in 1963 for forest management and continues to be one of

the best woodlots in New York State. It was also awarded the New York State Century Farm award in 1971 by then Governor Nelson Rockefeller.

We were blessed to have help from a young brother-in-law, Wayne Eldred, who took an interest in our family farm. Wayne, his wife Sandy, and their family dedicated themselves to making sure our farm succeeded. They shared our farm life for 33 years until we discontinued the dairy side of the operation.

After we had learned more about harvesting in 3-acre strips, Franklin, Wayne, and I worked as a team, covering the entire woodlot, cutting beech, ironwood, and damaged trees in the early 1960's. I enjoyed every opportunity that I had for gaining knowledge and certainly had plenty of hands-on training with all of the selecting, marking, and cutting that had to be done over the years. I often think back now with a silent chuckle that we sure have learned a lot since then. For example, in the beginning we didn't know that we should have more than one bid on a log sale.

Each year we harvested approximately 50 trees from one 3-acre strip. We have continued the practice of carefully harvesting each strip in a rotating fashion for over 60 years now and we are proud to receive multiple competitive bids for the log sales each year.

Over the years we tried to make wise decisions with the income and were able to reinvest in our small dairy operation to support and update things until we discontinued the dairy business in the 80's. My wife Sharon and I raised four great children: Shelly, Sherry, Shelby, and Shawn.

In 1996, my current wife, Barbara and I were able to build our dream retirement home with 100 larch trees that Franklin Clark planted when he was 14 years old. We harvested and milled the logs on the property,

stacked the lumber in a barn to dry for three years, and built our home on the outskirts of the farm property. As we look back we realize the income from the sale of logs has been a lifesaver for us to cover the high property and school taxes experienced in New York State.

So you see, starting with Jesse Clark and continuing to this day, this land and our trees have sustained our family. My son, Shawn Clark, who is the 7th generation of the Clark Family, and his son, Garret Clark (8th generation), will take over the ownership and management of the Clark Homestead woodlot once I retire. When I sit for long periods of time now just gazing at the land and the trees that surround me and my home, I feel proud to share my story. 🌲

Sheldon Clark is the 6th generation Clark to live in the farmhouse built in 1793. During his youth he worked with his father, Franklin Clark, on the farm milking cows, doing field work, and managing the timber lot with the help of Bob Demeree. He is a member of the Southern Finger Lakes chapter.

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Woodland Health

A column focusing on topics that might limit the health, vigor and productivity of our private or public woodlands

COORDINATED BY MARK WHITMORE

AMERICAN BEECH IS THREATENED

BY MARK WHITMORE

The thought of American beech, *Fagus grandifolia*, being threatened by new pests will bring smiles to the faces of some of my friends trying to manage their forests for timber production. They have been battling the seemingly endless numbers of root sprouts that grow so thick they choke out any other tree species. This situation was exacerbated when beech bark disease moved through the state, killing large stems, allowing in light and enhancing growth of the root sprouted saplings. There were many time consuming and even some creative attempts to rid the forest of beech saplings, but for the most part the saplings won the game. Well, now there are two pests of beech emerging that could do all that work for free: beech leaf disease and European beech leaf weevil. Unlike beech bark disease, both of these pests kill beech saplings as well as mature trees. This brings up a question that many of us have probably only glossed over: What would our forests look like without this common forest tree? This sounds bleak, and I hope it will never come to pass, but the thought could help bring perspective and fuel our pest management efforts. Just to mention one important ecological benefit, consider the value of beech mast to wildlife in northern forests where other mast species, like oak, are uncommon.

To recap, beech bark disease (BBD) is a complex of an introduced scale insect along with native and introduced fungi. The insect, *Cryptococcus fagisuga*, or beech scale, feeds on the bark, and produces small tufts of white waxy wool. Feeding by the scale insect creates a wound in the bark that allows the fungi (*Nectria* spp.) to enter and infect the bark, growing and creating large spots of dead tissue which will eventually kill

the tree. BBD was first introduced to North America in Halifax, Nova Scotia around 1890 and spread southwestward,

moving through New York in the 1960's, 70's, and 80's, and continuing to spread westward through the range of beech. When BBD moves through a stand it will kill a majority of the larger stems, opening the canopy, and stimulating growth of the root sprouts. So, basically stems die but the roots persist. Some of the stems can look pretty gnarly from BBD impacts but there are also some that look pretty good and appear to be resistant (about 1%). The result has been the persistence of beech in a stand but in smaller size classes, and many more stems.

Beech leaf disease (BLD) appears to be a different story, killing young as well as older trees, and no infected tree has been known to recover. In 2012, symptomatic



Figure 1. Dark stripes formed by beech leaf disease in Ohio. Photo by Jim Chatfield, Ohio State Univ.



Figure 2. Larval and adult feeding damage by beech leaf mining weevil, *Orchestes fagi* in Nova Scotia. Photo by Jon Sweeney, Natural Resources Canada.

trees were noticed within just a few blocks in an area east of Cleveland, Ohio. At first, thinking was that it was just a short-lived disease related to the unusual weather that spring. However, the next year it was detected in a six county area, and is now found in nine northeastern Ohio counties, Pennsylvania, New York (Chautauqua and Cattaraugus Counties), and Ontario. This rapid spread seems to be unabated and with mortality mounting BLD is drawing substantial concern. The crazy thing about BLD is that researchers still have no idea what is causing the symptoms.

Symptoms of BLD first appear on leaves and buds in early spring and persist through the growing season with little premature leaf drop. The leaves first appear with dark stripes between the veins (Figure 1). The striping is most apparent when looking up into the canopy with the sky as a backdrop. As the disease progresses in a tree the leaves become shriveled, discolored, and deformed as well as buds being small and loosely attached to twigs. Decline can be rapid in sapling sized trees with mortality occurring within just a couple years. Progression of

the disease is slower in larger trees with lower leaves infected first then moving into the upper canopy.

This all sounds rather bleak but the recent discovery of nematodes feeding on infected leaves by researchers in Ohio is a potential lead that is being investigated. It turns out that this species of nematode is new to North America, previously known from New Zealand and may be the same species recently found on beech in Japan. Research is planned for this spring to determine if the nematodes will cause BLD symptoms but there is some doubt that nematodes are the only cause of BLD. However, it is the first break in this frustrating who-done-it for forest pathologists. For now the important thing for forest owners is to watch for this disease and report any sightings to NYSDEC.

As if this isn't enough, there was another recent introduction into the Halifax, NS area that has been causing mortality of beech. The beech leaf-mining weevil, *Orchestes fagi*, (BLW) is a common pest in Europe and was found near Halifax in 2007. Since then beech mortality has

been mounting and the Canadian Forest Service has been ramping up research to manage this damaging pest. The life cycle is well known in Europe where it will cause defoliation for only a year or two before coming under control by natural enemies. Adult BLW is a small weevil, about 2.5mm long, black in color with golden hairs, and long legs. The hind legs are especially long and allow the beetle to hop. BLW larvae are white with black heads and can get up to 5mm long. Both adults and larvae feed on beech leaves. Adults will emerge from overwintering sites in bark crevices and feed on the fresh foliage. Females then lay eggs along the leaf midrib. Emerging larvae mine inside the leaf making a tunnel that gradually gets larger as they make their way toward the edge of the leaf where they pupate and emerge as adults in early summer (Figure 2). This feeding activity causes leaves to dry and brown towards the end of the season. Adults will feed on leaves until retreating to cryptic hiding places to overwinter.

Because there are no natural enemies in NS, BLW populations have been found to continually defoliate beech stands with tree mortality gradually mounting. Management research has focused on two approaches: the use of systemic insecticides and implementation of classical biological control. The systemic insecticides being evaluated are injected into the stem and are costly but appear to help control BLW for at least one year. There are other less costly insecticide alternatives available in the US yet it is still infeasible to treat large numbers of trees across the landscape. As with other forest pests, biological control is really the only long-term option and work is underway in Europe to identify and evaluate potential natural enemies.

I hate to be the continual bearer of scary news with new and emerging threats to our forests, but it's important to be aware and not ignore what is happening. By paying attention to your forest and noticing when things are not normal, much like the early detection of BLD, we can hopefully catch emerging problems and find management solutions before they become too big to handle. 🌲

Mark Whitmore is a forest entomologist in the Cornell University Department of Natural Resources and the chair of the NY Forest Health Advisory Council.

Ask a Professional (continued)

case, after enrolling in 480a, the assessor attempts to increase the valuation of the property components not allowed in the 480a enrollment.

Guidelines making your decision

First, whether it is a 480a forest management plan or a private management plan; have a plan! Yes, a plan costs money but it is the single greatest investment you can make in your property. A plan will limit the spontaneity of bad decisions and maximize your landowning objectives.

How long do you plan on owning the land?

Your plans for how long you will be owning your land is a major factor in deciding whether or not to enroll your property in 480a. The minimum commitment to manage under the properties approved 480a plan is ten years. After you enroll your land in 480a, you will need to file an annual commitment form with your local assessor to maintain your tax reduction. You have the option not to file and to opt out of 480a, however, you will be obligated to follow the 480a management plan for the next ten years while paying the full property taxes. So, it follows that the longer you plan on owning your forestland, the more sense that 480a makes. There is no magic number but it seems like 30 years of ownership would be a good consideration.

Do you need flexibility?

Enrolling in 480a will mean that you will be following a harvest schedule as detailed in your 480a plan, regardless of your life circumstances. Not following your harvest schedule (and other treatments) will be a violation your 480a agreement which means paying

a substantial penalty (your tax savings plus interest). If you enroll in 480a, be sure you can afford to have your capital tied up for a period of time.

How's your back?

Along with a harvest schedule will come a schedule for thinning immature stands. If a stand is ready for thinning, it will be thinned at a rate of ten acres per year. You can either do the thinning yourself or you can pay to have it done. Depending on the stems per acre, thinning will cost between \$120 and \$200 per acre.

Initial cost and ongoing cost

The initial cost of the enrolling your property will be the cost of the management plan and delineating your property lines and, possibly, some internal lines. The cost of the management plan will depend on several factors but, \$15 to \$20 per acre would be a good estimate. The initial plan will cover 15 years and there will be a required plan update every 5 years. The cost of the update will vary. As mentioned before, you may have to do required thinnings. If you can't do this work yourself, you will need to pay for it. You will also be paying a 6% yield tax on any forest products harvested from your property at the time of sale.

Selling the land

If you are planning on selling the land and it is enrolled in 480a, the 480a plan and requirement to follow the plan for a minimum for ten years will be passed on to the buyer. So the question is, "how difficult will it be to sell your land with the 480a obligation?" If you opted to pull your property out of 480a and you had paid full taxes for five years, the buyer would only be left with a five

year obligation. There is always the option of violating the 480a plan and paying the penalty. In this case the buyer would have no obligation.

Aversion to government control

Some landowners decide not to enroll in 480a because of an aversion to having their management plan subject to government approval and a fear of changing regulations.

An example

Let's say that your land qualifies, you are going to own it for 30 plus years and, although you might think government is a bit overbearing, you are still willing to work with it. See Figure 3 for an example of the cost and benefit of considering property for 480a.

This is a very simple example considering future values, but let's be hopeful and say the cost and revenues increase at the same rate. In this example you would benefit by enrolling in 480a.

Summary

When doing an analysis on a 60 acre property with exclusions, a variety of stands, thinning, staggered harvests, and paying a 6% yield tax, the 480a tax law provides a definite economic benefit when property is held for 30 years.

Some additional advice: it is very tempting to pocket the 80% reduction in tax savings. Don't! Take your tax savings and use it to fund a property maintenance account. This will assure that you have the resources to pay for thinning, boundary line maintenance, and plan updates. Once you get a sense of the ongoing needs to support your forest management, you can adjust accordingly.

Also, a word about our NYS DEC foresters. We are very fortunate

Figure 3. Example of a full 480a calculation and assessment.

Property Assessment	
State equalization rate	100%
House and barn	\$ 180,000.00
60 acres of land	\$ 120,000
Total assesstment	\$ 300,000
Town and county mill rate	\$ 8.50
School mill rate	\$ 20.00
Town and county tax bill	\$ 2,550.00
School tax bill	\$ 6,000.00
Total property tax	\$ 8,550.00
Exclusion from 480a	
House and barn and one acre	\$ 180,000
5 acres of pasture	\$10,000
Assessed value of exclusion	\$ 190,000
mill rate T&C and school	\$ 28.50
Tax bill	\$ 5,415
Eligible land for 480a	
54 acres current assessed value	\$ 108,000
80% reduction in assessment	\$ 21,600
mill rate T&C and school	\$ 28.50
current tax bill	\$ 3,078.00
reduced tax bill	\$ 615.60
Annual tax savings	\$ 2,462.40
Savings over 30 years	\$ 73,872
Costs	
intitial 480a plan	\$ 1,080
5-year updates	\$ 2,000
6% yield tax (assuming \$150,000 in sales)	\$ 9,000
Thinnings	\$ 2,000
Boundary maintainence	\$ 500
Paper work	\$ 500
Total cost	\$ 15,080
Net savings over 30 years	\$ 58,792

in New York State to have talented and hardworking public foresters. Building a good relationship is as important as building a good relationship with your own private consulting forester.

One more emphasis on forest management plans. Whether you enroll in 480a or not, invest in a plan. A plan will cost about the same for a private plan versus a 480a plan. Having your stands mapped out and described will provide you not only a great basis for decisionmaking but will also provide you with an immense amount of pleasure as it helps you to understand and appreciate your forestland.

Best of luck in making a decision. Be good to the woods and the woods will be good to you. 🌲

Response by: By David Skeval, Executive Director of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County, Syracuse NY (das546@cornell.edu; 315-424-7056). Dave is a former private consulting forester who used to work with landowners who enrolled in 480a. Support for this column is provided by Cornell's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Cornell Cooperative Extension and USDA NIFA. Edited by Peter Smallidge.

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Member Profile:

Dorian Hyland and Jim Baxter

PETER SMALLIDGE

Dorian Hyland realized after years of living in a city, “I wanted to walk outside my door into the woods.” For years she thought about what she wanted most if she and husband, Jim Baxter, were to move back east from careers in Arizona. A creek, a pond, a long distance view were all on the list of wants, but the hiking through woods, uphill and down, seemed to offer a kind of peace and connection to nature they didn’t have living in Tucson, Arizona.

Dorian and Jim met in Tucson while doing service work for their faith. Jim had always been in one kind of service or another, with experiences as a fire captain at age 25, then a paramedic, then nurse and eventually nurse practitioner. Dorian’s background was as a writer and included teaching as an instructor at a community college teaching remedial english, writing, literature, and business writing. She wrote for local newspapers, served as an editor, did free-lance work, and helped students prepare their senior thesis and dissertations.

After spending most of her adult life in Arizona, Dorian felt it was time to return home. She knew of the Catskill Mountains from trips between NYC and her father’s home in Troy. The family would visit friends and relatives via the Taconic Parkway a couple of times a summer. The Catskill landscape became fixed in her heart. She always wanted to return.

Jim was not so sure he wanted to return east and shovel snow for the rest of his life. His family comes from old Pennsylvania stock, around Allentown, the kind that cleared the land before the revolution; they faced challenges and overcame them with hard work, understanding, and virtue. Jim still has those qualities. He continues that tradition of hard work by doing most of the cutting of wood, and digging for the trees. And in working on the land and taking himself, the dogs, and the cat on long walks through the woods, he finds himself standing at a certain place up the hill behind the house, and thinking, “Wow. I live here.”



Wild blueberry, buttonbush, and maple leaf viburnum are the only common native shrubs thanks to an abundance of deer impact.

Jim and Dorian own 27.75 acres of mostly wooded land on the outskirts of Catskill in Greene County. They share in the decisions about how to restore and revitalize the woods which they were told were pretty healthy. Despite that assessment and after the MFO training, they recognize there is the opportunity to reduce over-competition and crowding among the trees, to remove unhealthy trees, to protect seedlings from deer browse, or to replace what had been destroyed during its much earlier stint as a farm. These activities will fall to the work schedule of the plan they will prepare this winter.

Probably the most prevalent tree is the chestnut oak. When Dorian first saw the leaves she was excited to think they had (true) chestnut trees. Marilyn Wyman from Cornell Cooperative Extension helped her learn these were chestnut oak. Maybe not as exciting as American chestnut, these were still interesting because they don’t grow everywhere. The other name for chestnut oak, rock oak, reveals the habitat where it is commonly found, growing on their rocky soils.

Dorian and Jim have, perhaps, an overly ample supply of white pines and probably

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Jim has completed the first two levels of Game of Logging training, and hosted a training on their property. As he says, don’t work in the woods without the right training and the right personal protective equipment.



Jim and Eli work the auger to prepare a site for planting seedlings they buy from the DEC Nursery or dig from the property.

eight kinds of oak that mix among some red and silver maples, tons of hickory, sporadic cherry, and serviceberry. Along the property line on the edge of the ridge they have an endless supply of birch and white pine that started 16 years ago after a micro-burst touched down and cleared the trees. They still find pieces of the farmer's aluminum barns tossed up there. They call the pieces in the trees "tornado art." A few oaks are nearly 36" in diameter, though they are dying. The only shrub on the woods, besides the swamp buttonbush and the native highbush blueberries, is maple leaf viburnum. These don't get much chance to grow tall because the deer eat those that they can't protect.

Dorian's son, Eli, is Jim's energetic and enthusiastic helper. He helps Jim cut down trees, whack invasive species, and dig holes for planting new trees. They purchase their trees through Greene County Soil and Water or through the DEC Saratoga Tree Nursery. The three of them clear old paths and attack the seemingly endless supply of invasive species that were planted by the previous owners and colonized their land.

A favorite part of the land is the swamp, located about two thirds of the distance from the house. They originally called it a marsh, not knowing the difference between swamp and marsh until their farmer neighbors to the west laughed and said, "it's a swamp." They were right. There are native high bush blueberries around the edges, which they

are trying to rehabilitate and rejuvenate as the trees grow to the edges.

Since they arrived on the property, the nearly acre-sized swamp has evolved from open to half full of buttonbush. Wild iris grows along the edges if the water isn't too high. Woodland ducks stop over making Jim and Dorian feel like they are their motel. They declined a hunter's request to shoot the ducks who overnight there. "It seemed rude to shoot overnight guests when they're on their way trying to survive the winter" (no matter how tasty).

Keeping track of how weather and flora change the swamp, the reflections of the new growths, and the natural loss of other plants is fascinating. They are ever vigilant for the tracks of animals they never see, whether because they are nocturnal or shy, it's another delight to know they have passed through. Just knowing the animals are there makes Dorian and Jim feel like they are part of something rather than imposing their will.

Dorian's sons come up to hike, and slide on the ice when the swamp freezes over. They snowshoe or cross country ski on the property. "We have one young hunter from Brooklyn who loves to hunt the woods; we call him our weeder. He supplies them with enough venison for the year and to share. Our first year we had an eight point buck with five huge does, six fawns of varying ages, plus two young bucks who wintered in the hummocks of the hemlocks. All the

neighbors knew that the herd hunkered down in the snow. Then our hunter got the buck."

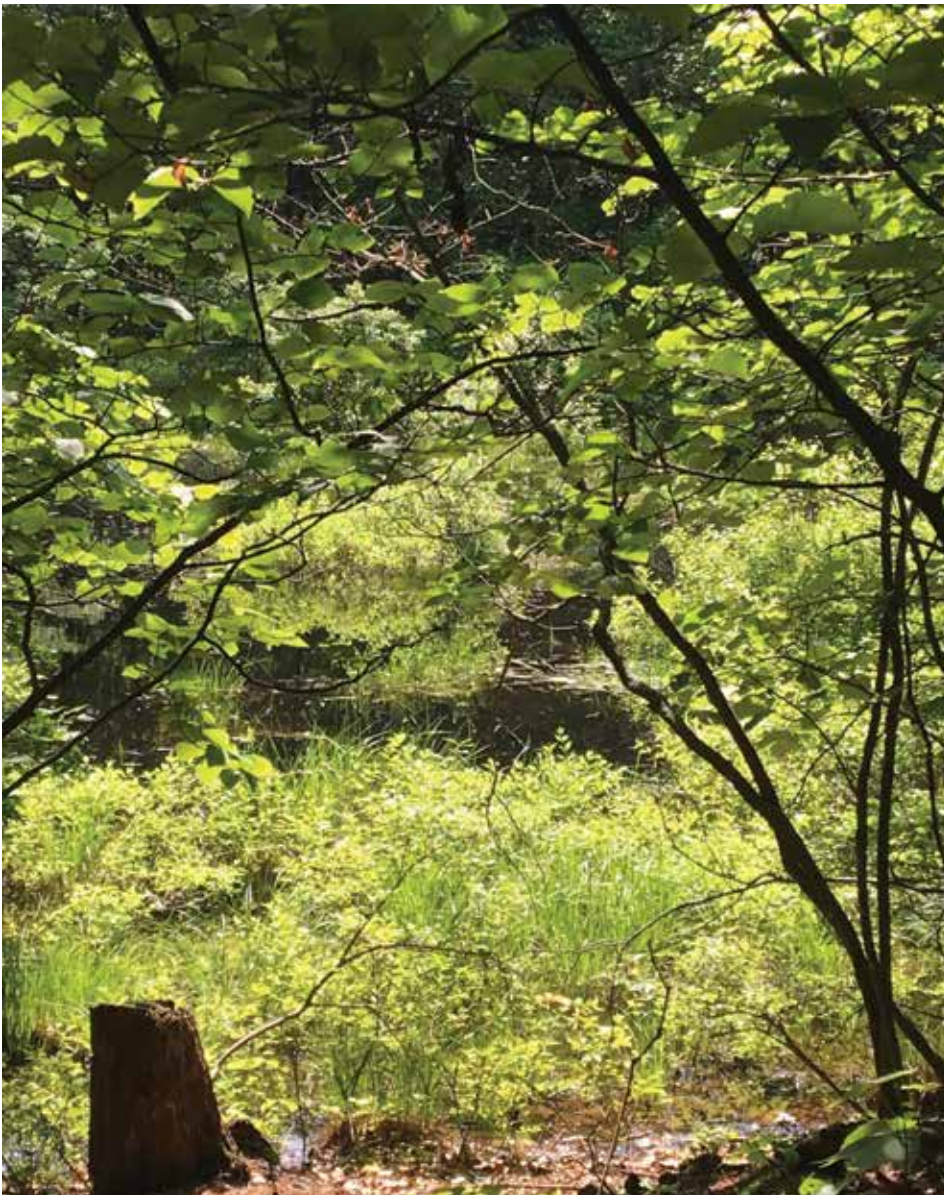
Once the big buck was gone, they have had less damage to seedlings, though remaining deer were able to destroy newly planted, poorly protected trees. Now they have become more deliberate and calculating, building wire cages for each tree and shrub they plant. Jim and Dorian check for young trees that sprout in areas which they clear, and cover them until they are old enough to fend for themselves. Along the edges of the woods they plant shrubs and understory trees which they hope will multiply on their own someday, and move deeper into the woods.

They have had some success planting elderberry, which multiplies, and a large caged patch is set aside as food for the birds. In the two acre open area there's a vegetable garden and some fruit trees. Most of their shrubs and plants are natives that they planted. They surrounded plantings and open areas last year with an eight foot high fence covered at the base with branches to protect their investment and efforts. Then they saw the research plot at Cornell's Suislaw Forest where the black mesh fence was only five feet high around a small patch and was able to dissuade deer from devouring new growth. They say "live and learn; black mesh will be on our list to protect any new growth we plant from here out."

It turns out that clearing, planting, and protecting is an ongoing process. Dorian thought they would be able to do this in "Oh, 5 to 10 years and be on our way." Now, she says, "my sons expect to continue the process we've hardly started."

Jim and Dorian mostly use the land simply to appreciate it. Upon arrival, they wondered if they would become used to it. Instead they find that each season changes the look so that they always discover something new, like after a heavy rain or snow.

Their best discovery was at a talk Marilyn Wyman of CCE gave which mentioned striped maples as a native invasive species. Since they are invasive and ever self replenishing, we use striped maple as fence posts — they last about six years before becoming kindling. She also told them the way to check for Hemlock Woolly Adelgid is to look for small branches broken off the top of trees by wind and storm. Turning them over might



The almost acre-sized swamp has changed over the years as the vegetation has grown around the edges. The shoreline is a great place to look for signs and tracks of wildlife.

help identify whether their hemlocks have been infected.

Their greatest challenge has been to create a good forest management plan. They watch the ForestConnect webinars, and check the Cornell site for research about whatever they are doing. In addition to working with Marilyn Wyman they also talk with the CCE natural resources and regional manager Ron Frisbee, as well as the CCE horticulturist, Tracey Testo. So they keep themselves from doing less effective improvements.

A few years back, while Jim and Eli were cutting trees that blocked their paths — dead hanging trees called “widow-makers” — Dorian was considering the potential

for injury. She convinced Jim to take the Game of Logging. He enjoyed it so much, he finished the second course, and got his certification. They hosted a Game of Logging training session two years ago, and may be ready for another. The woodchipper they bought helps mostly with the garden and with new plantings, relieving them of the need for buying products whose history they cannot confirm. The flame thrower helps reduce the annual weeds they couldn't remove by hand.

As MFO volunteers, Jim and Dorian note that most neighbors have lived there for decades and aren't interested in things like wood walks or joining NYFOA . So Jim and Dorian mostly talk to those who have

recently moved there, and offer suggestions about where they can find information about their woods or to check the resources available like soil and water offerings.

They haven't felt educated enough to make a formal plan, but their experiences have given them a sense of how long a process they face. That said, this is the winter they will get their goals on paper. And their slow progress has allowed them to learn things that ultimately will benefit wildlife. From one webinar, we learned that creating shelters for small animals to escape predators gives those animals a greater chance of survival. They implemented that activity this past summer while a young friend helped Dorian clear paths, which were covered by downed branches by last winter's storms. They put the branches around divots created next to a stump. Making places like this wasn't a high priority in their plan, but that plan isn't set in stone.

“We love inviting children to discover the small joys of the woods,” Dorian said. A friend of theirs, who they hired to pull weeds in the garden, said she almost never got to wander in the woods, having grown up in towns in Greene County. “We sent her into the woods with paper and books to identify flowers and mushrooms. She was gone for over an hour and came back to get us so she could show us what she had found and identified. She was so excited! Each summer she returns to help us clear paths, work in the woods, and then go searching again by herself.”

Membership in NYFOA lets Dorian and Jim know that their closest neighbors may not share their dedication to preservation or restoration. However, Jim and Dorian have learned from other NYFOA members, and been able to deepen their understanding and knowledge. Their experiences have become richer, they better grasp their goals, and now know how they can contribute. It all seems daunting because there is so much to learn. The first time Dorian walked in the woods she thought, “I have to learn everything. I think I'll feel that way for a few more decades.” 🌲

Peter Smallidge, NYS Extension Forester and Director, Arnot Teaching and Research Forest, Department of Natural Resources, Cornell University Cooperative Extension. Support from the Cornell University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and USDA NIFA.

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