

The New York Forest Owner

A PUBLICATION OF THE NEW YORK FOREST OWNERS ASSOCIATION

For people caring about New York's trees and forests

July/August 2020



Member Profile: Peter Tonetti and Maureen Sullivan

Volume 58 Number 4



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

A PUBLICATION OF THE NEW YORK FOREST OWNERS ASSOCIATION
VOLUME 58, NUMBER 4

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 Malmshheimer, 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 September/October issue is August 1, 2020.

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. Peter Tonetti and Maureen Sullivan enjoy time in their woods and fields with their labrador, Cooper. For member profile see page 21. All photos courtesy of Peter and Maureen.

From The President

The unprecedented situations of the past several months have created significant change. This lasting change affects many aspects of life, and both individuals and organizations need to adapt. During this time period, I had the opportunity to spend time at the family woodlot with my son and grandchildren.



It was a beautiful spring day as I watched three generations enjoy and experience, in their own way, all that nature had to offer. I realized then that 60 years ago, when I was their

age and running through the hayfields and woods, that nature hadn't really changed. The hay was growing tall, the trees were budding, and the birds were nesting. And, the turbulent 60's were beginning.

Thirty years later, my son was running in the same fields and woods. The hay was growing tall, the trees were budding, and the birds were nesting. And, the turbulent 90's were beginning.

Now, with the grandchildren running the same fields and woods — the hay is growing tall, the trees are budding, and the birds are nesting. And, hopefully, the

turbulent beginning to the 20's will resolve and be short-lived.

This was only a moment in time, but it gave me perspective and a deeper appreciation of what nature — and particularly our treasured forests — can teach us.

Life is precious and living in harmony is essential.

From an organizational perspective, NYFOA has had to curtail a number of woods walks, conferences, and lectures over the past several months. However, NYFOA has continued to provide excellent resources to our members to assist in managing and/or just enjoying our forests. Examples of available resources include:

- *The New York Forest Owner* magazine (published every 2 months)
- The NYFOA website www.nyfoa.org
- The NYFOA Facebook page (updated routinely)
- The NYFOA chapter newsletters (published locally and on website)
- Cornell Cooperative Extension link www.forestconnect.info

Also, be on the look-out for new e-communications from NYFOA. We will be producing a monthly e-newsletter and occasional e-news blasts to further assist in communicating with our members.

Just a word of thanks to Colette and David Morabito from our Western Finger Lakes chapter for the many years they spent representing NYFOA on the NYS Invasive Species Advisory Committee. They served us well. I would also like to thank Hugh Canham for taking on this role — in addition to all his other efforts in support of NYFOA.

—Art Wagner
NYFOA President

Please share this magazine with a neighbor and urge them to join NYFOA. By gaining more members, NYFOA's voice will become stronger!

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.

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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2020 Loggers' Expo | October 16-17, 2020 | Champlain Valley Exposition | Essex Junction, Vermont

For information about attending or exhibiting at the **2020 Loggers' Expo**, visit us on-line at www.northernlogger.com or call toll-free **800-318-7561** or **315-369-3078**.

Did you know there is a land trust seeking to conserve New York's working forests?

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Seeking Member Input

JEFF JOSEPH

As you likely know, NYFOA has run almost entirely on volunteer effort throughout its 57 years of existence. The generous contributions of time and effort by members who care about the future of woodlands across New York State are literally what has made NYFOA viable, and are essential in keeping it (us) relevant in our rapidly changing world. As the primary voice of a member driven organization such as NYFOA, ideally this magazine will serve to educate woodlot owners at all levels of engagement and experience, while also reflecting the diversity of concerns, activities, and interests of our membership. Maintaining this standard requires your input.

What are your interests? If you are a new member, what information do you need in order to best meet your goals as a woodlot owner? Or if you are a long-term member, what have you learned through your years of woodlot ownership (successes and/or failures) that may be of use to the next generation? Do you have any good stories to tell about experiences working in your woodland? Notable wildlife sightings, or successes in creating habitat for desired species? Do you have skills as a nature/wildlife photographer that you would like to share with our readers?

In short, for this magazine to be most effective at serving our members, and NYFOA's mission, your voice is needed, whether that is through letting us know what you most want and/or need to be reading about in these pages, through submitting content yourself, or by volunteering to be interviewed for the Member Profile. Often we have an overabundance of material to sift through and select from, but occasionally we are beating the bushes to ensure that we have enough quality content to fill these 24 pages every two months, so your thoughtful comments, suggestions, and/or contributions would all be welcome, and appreciated.



Submissions of all types can be mailed or preferably emailed to Mary Beth Malmshemer (see p.2 for contact info) and/or myself for consideration; general comments, questions, and suggestions can be directed to me. Questions or comments for our regular columnists Peter Smallidge (Ask a Professional), Mark Whitmore (Woodland Health), or

Kristi Sullivan (Wild Things in Your Woodlands) can be sent to them directly. Thank you for supporting NYFOA as a member, and for contributing to our collective efforts.

—Jeff Joseph
NYFOA editorial committee chair
jeffjosephwoodworker@gmail.com

Ask A Professional

PETER SMALLIDGE



Peter Smallidge

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

Clearing a woodland understory before planting

Question: I was visiting a friend's woodlot last fall. They had logged much of the ash due to Emerald Ash borer and expanded those openings into patches to allow for replanting with walnut. The understory was mostly buckthorn, ironwood, hornbeam and other scrubby species. They cleared the understory, in anticipation of planting, by either scraping with a bulldozer or cutting followed by spraying. This understory clearing seems excessive... is it? I've attached some pictures from this spring. (Mike S., Western Finger Lakes)

Answer: The establishment of new plants, particularly tree species, requires that sunlight is available at the ground level (Figure 1). Black walnut (*Juglans nigra*) is intolerant of shade. Some species may tolerate less sunlight than other species, but most tree species do best with moderately high light levels. The presence of an interfering layer of ferns, shrubs, and small trees which cast shade can interfere with successful regeneration. Those layers will exist and commonly be dominated by undesired species because of selective browsing by deer.

The majority of woodlands in the northeast and New York originated

after the farms of the colonial period were abandoned in the late 1800's and early 1900's. The understory in these woodlands was initially vacant, but has since developed in recent decades because of increased sunlight to the forest floor. The sunlight at ground level, necessary for plant establishment and growth, has increased because of natural changes in the forest or management activities such as firewood cutting. The mixture of species in



Figure 1. As woodlands mature, or are managed, the increase of sunlight stimulates a subcanopy. Often, due to deer, the subcanopy is of undesired species that create a dense shade and limit other more desired species.

the understory in these woodlands is influenced by deer, which selectively browse the species that owners typically desire and leave behind an enduring understory of scrubby undesired species.



Figure 2. The background of this picture illustrates the upper canopy and subcanopy. The subcanopy was controlled in the foreground, with a significant increase in sunlight to the forest floor.

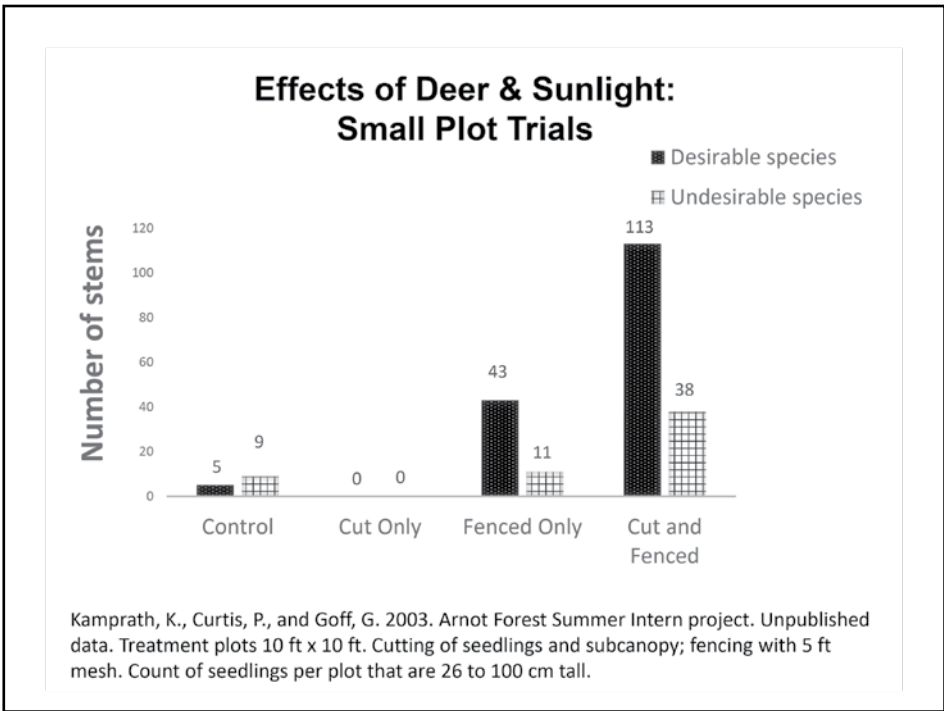


Figure 3. This graph shows the favorable response of desired species when they are given both an increase of sunlight and protection from deer browsing. The understory was similar to Figure 1 before the experiment.

Because of understory development, many of our woodlands now have two or more tiers, or strata, of vegetation (Figure 2). The upper most tier, the canopy, may be 60 to 80 feet tall and dominated by trees that established

when the agricultural fields were abandoned. These trees are typically all the same age, though they differ in diameter and height. Many of these trees have ecological and economic values. The recently established

understory may form a second tier as a head-high to 20-foot tall subcanopy of trees (e.g., buckthorn, ironwood, hornbeam) or shrubs (e.g., bush honeysuckle, barberry, elderberry). These plants have no economic value though maybe some ecological value. The shade caused by the subcanopy, together with deer impacts, must be managed to allow for the establishment of new and desired plant species.

The subcanopy in most eastern woodlands includes and is often dominated by species that are resistant to deer browsing, tolerate shade, reproduce well, and can grow quickly when there is an increase of sunlight. Numerous species benefited when these woodlands changed to allow for the recent increase in sunlight that favored seedling germination, establishment, and growth for those that could tolerate the dappled shade beneath the upper canopy. However, deer selectively browse palatable species, just as we pick our favorite foods at the buffet. As a result, the palatable species are diminished through repeated browsing and through the increased shade of the thriving, non-palatable subcanopy species.

One perspective of woodland management is to focus on controlling which species are able to receive sunlight. Because plants need light, those receiving light are more likely to thrive. Of course plants that require certain soil conditions need to be located on the appropriate soil type. If an owner's goal is to establish new plants, either by planting or natural methods, then control of vegetation that shades the ground layer is essential. Also, unless the impact of deer that originally shifted the subcanopy dominance to undesired species has changed, then deer impact must also be managed. The subcanopy vegetation can powerfully regulate sunlight, maybe more so than the upper canopy. As an analogy, think about the effectiveness of an umbrella to shield you from rain; the umbrella close to your head offers more protection than an umbrella elevated above your head.



Figure 4. A feller-buncher can efficiently clear the understory, although it is most commonly used in harvesting larger trees. The cutting head allows for stems to be bunched at specific locations.

continued on page 18

Wild Things in Your Woodlands

MIRANDA VINSON

BLACK BEAR (*URSUS AMERICANUS*)



The black bear is found across many of New York's forests. Although there is only one species of black bear, color varies among different individuals. At times white markings on the chest may occur. In addition, the fur may have a more blue-gray or blue-black tint to it. Depending on the season, the fur may appear more shaggy or sleek. The black bear is large, with adults ranging from 5 to 6 feet in length. They typically weigh anywhere from 200 to 600 pounds, with males being up to 70% heavier than females. The head of the black bear is a bit disproportionately small to the body but a strong neck supports it. Their eyes are small, with a long snout on the front side of the head. Ears on a black bear are typically small and rounded on the top. Their long, sharp claws are curved and nonretractile. Black bears walk on the soles of their feet, otherwise known as plantigrade locomotion. Cubs are often born with blue eyes, which turn brown within a year.

Black bears are opportunistic feeders, consuming various food based on the availability of the season. For example, in the spring and summer seasons fruit dominates the black bear's diet, unlike their carnivorous winter diet. During the spring and summer however, bears do kill young mammals such as fawns. Black bears are of course hibernators, meaning that they are dormant in the winter. In order to survive winter sleep, black bears must accumulate a rather large amount of body fat during the summer and fall. That means in these upcoming summer months black bears will be more active than ever extensively foraging for food. Black bears are not territorial and

can adapt to living near humans. Despite this, it is important to steer clear of bears foraging for food. Black bears prefer to avoid people, so avoiding surprise encounters is the best way to prevent conflict.

These summer months are also black bear mating season. The breeding season typically starts in May/June and can even continue into late August. Males, referred to as boars, and females, known as sows, often mate with several individuals in their lifetime. As is the case for most courting in the wilderness, males actively pursue females, and typically engage in physical competition with other male black bears. Females are able to reproduce at around 3 to 4 years


old, while males typically wait an extra year. The gestation period for a female black bear is around 32 weeks, meaning that while mating occurs in the summer, cubs are born during winter months. Females can have as many as one to five cubs in one reproductive period. The cubs will live with the mother from that winter throughout the next fall, so keep your eye out for some cubs this summer. Remember to keep your distance however, because mother black bears are extremely protective of their young.

In New York State the black bear population is estimated to be around 6,000-8,000 bears. Fifty to 60% of these bears inhabit the Adirondack region, 30-35% inhabit the Catskill

region, and 10-15% inhabit the central-western region of New York.

Black bears can live for over 20 years in the wild. In areas with humans nearby, black bears typically live a shorter life due to hunting, poaching, nuisance removal near campgrounds, and vehicular accidents. Black bears are intelligent and curious creatures, meaning they will quickly become accustomed to handouts given by humans. This leads to a lack of fear of humans, and often conflict. Therefore, it is best to avoid feeding wild black bears. The intentional feeding of black bears is illegal in New York State, reminding us of the importance to remain conscious about the safety of people as well as bears.

New York has a new citizen science project for those interested in contributing to conservation and management efforts for the black bear. The project, created by the

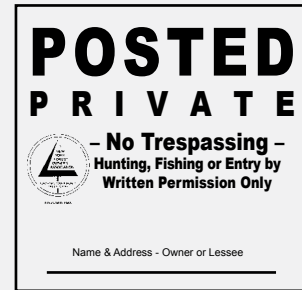
New York Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit at Cornell University and NYSDEC, collects data to help researchers determine the distribution and size of the black bear population in New York. Data is collected on the presence or absence of wildlife from observations, hikes, trail cameras, etc. With more than 50% of New York woodlands being privately owned, citizen volunteers play a huge role in the success of this project. To learn more, visit <https://iseemammals.org>. 

Miranda Vinson is a Program Assistant for the New York State Master Naturalist Program, directed by Kristi Sullivan at Cornell University's Department of Natural Resources. More information on managing habitat for wildlife can be found at <https://blogs.cornell.edu/nymasternaturalist/about-our-program/>

Photo Source: Thomas Fuhrmann / CC BY-SA (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>)

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

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	Name	Chapter
Michael Cesari	LHC	Kris Gilbert	SOT
Omar Al-Farisi	CDC	John Moscati Sr.	AFC
Jamie McKillop	SAC	Michael Palermo	WFL
Karen O'Connor	CNY		

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Maple Producer 2020 Season Highlight: *Mapleland Farms*

BY ERIC JENKS



2020 has been a year of challenges and changes for most of the world, as Covid-19 reshapes how we interact on a daily basis with others. While being out in the woods can help remove yourself from some of that stress, producers of all kinds have had to react to changing markets and sales in the face of economic downturns and upswings this year. For maple producers, Covid-19 is just another challenge to tackle, as the weather is the main fickle and unpredictable

part of the business. For Mapleland Farms (MLF), a maple producer in Salem, NY, with over 18,000 taps and hundreds of acres to manage, the 2020 season has been about adapting to new market conditions and keeping up with a growing woodlot. “Covid-19 has certainly changed what we’re selling the most of right now,” said Dave Campbell, co-owner of MLF. “Liquid Syrup sales are up for home delivery, and candy sales are down because restaurants and other businesses have

been closed up. That’s starting to change as businesses reopen and place orders again. Covid-19 has changed the way that we’ve been marketing our product for the past few months quite a bit. We’re lucky that we’re diversified enough in different markets that we’ve been able to adjust and keep moving products, unlike some other producers that may only have a retail operation for their own products that have had to shut down.


Beyond Covid-19, MLF has dealt



with a changing mark for when the season begins due to weather fluctuations. “We started the earliest ever for us this year,” said Campbell. “We made syrup on the 12th of January. We’ve had more wind and tree damage this past year than normal as well. The vacuum that we were drawing on our lines to get the sap from the trees was lower than normal at the beginning of the season due to all of the damage. Once we repaired the lines though, the vacuum levels held up for the season, and the taps stayed clean throughout what was a longer and more drawn out season than normal. Overall the season’s crop was down from the last couple of years though. The sugar content was lower than average even though we handled just about the same volume of sap as normal.”

This was also MLF’s third season as a NY Grown and Certified producer. “It’s not something that we did to grow our brand, people pretty much already knew who we are,” said


Campbell. “But I think it’s important to make consumers aware of what a quality brand does to be considered NY Grown and Certified, and that it shows that we’re taking care of our woods and waste water in the right ways. This year we’ve actually been talking with NY Audubon to develop a pilot program to create bird friendly woodlots. They came out last summer to scout one of our woodlots and again surveyed it during the winter. We haven’t heard much about the progress on the project currently, but we’re excited to be part of it. They were pleased with the diversity of birds that they found on our woodlot.”

For those that are interested in scaling up, Campbell had some tips. “It’s taken us a lifetime to develop our marketing,” said Campbell. “You have to look at how to do things efficiently if you’re going to try and sell in bulk. Quebec had a record crop up there this year and they make 80% of the world supply, so there’s a lot of bulk on the market driving prices down right now. If you take the time to invest in making value added products, and can find a market for it, there’s a lot more profit in that end of the business.” 

Eric Jenks is a freelance writer with Morning Ag Clips, LLC. Morning Ag Clips is now managing the Tree Farm column.

Would you like to receive an electronic version of future editions of *The 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.



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From the Archives: 25 Years Ago

Thanks to the generous efforts of our webmaster (and former NYFOA president) Jim Minor, the entire 57 year collection of *New York Forest Owner* newsletters and magazines are available for public viewing on the NYFOA website. To find the archive, go to www.nyfoa.org, click on "Resources" on the home page, where you can then click on "Archives of *The New York Forest Owner*." The archive can simply be browsed, can be searched by year, or by topic with keyword searches. It is an incredible resource, as well as an historical document of changes in our forests, forest practices, management objectives over time, and of course of the evolution of NYFOA itself. The two following articles reprinted here first ran in 1995. Thanks (again) to the respective authors.

The Tao of Woodstacking

PATRICIA KAY

*Thirty spokes share the wheel's hub;
It is the center hole that makes it
useful.*

Shape clay into a vessel;

*It is the space within that makes it
useful.*

Cut doors and windows for a room;

It is the holes which make it useful.

*Therefore profit comes from what is
there;*

Usefulness from what is not there.

—Lao Tsu from the Tao Te Ching

I started stacking firewood for the first time when I moved to the Northeast ten years ago. Since burning wood is the primary source of heating that my husband and I use during the winter, I have had much practice and have committed many hours to the Tao of woodstacking. Tao! You might be saying. What does Taoism have to do with woodstacking? Isn't Tao an Eastern philosophy?

Taoism teaches balance and harmony within one's entire self to the divine order of all things. Everything has a place and a purpose, profit and usefulness, yin and yang — opposites that can harmonize together. Woodstacking, when done properly, is all of these things. While woodstacking

I have had the luxury of wandering thoughts; I have come to realize that the piecing together of firewood is similar to the piecing together of humankind as related to the spirit — to Taoism.

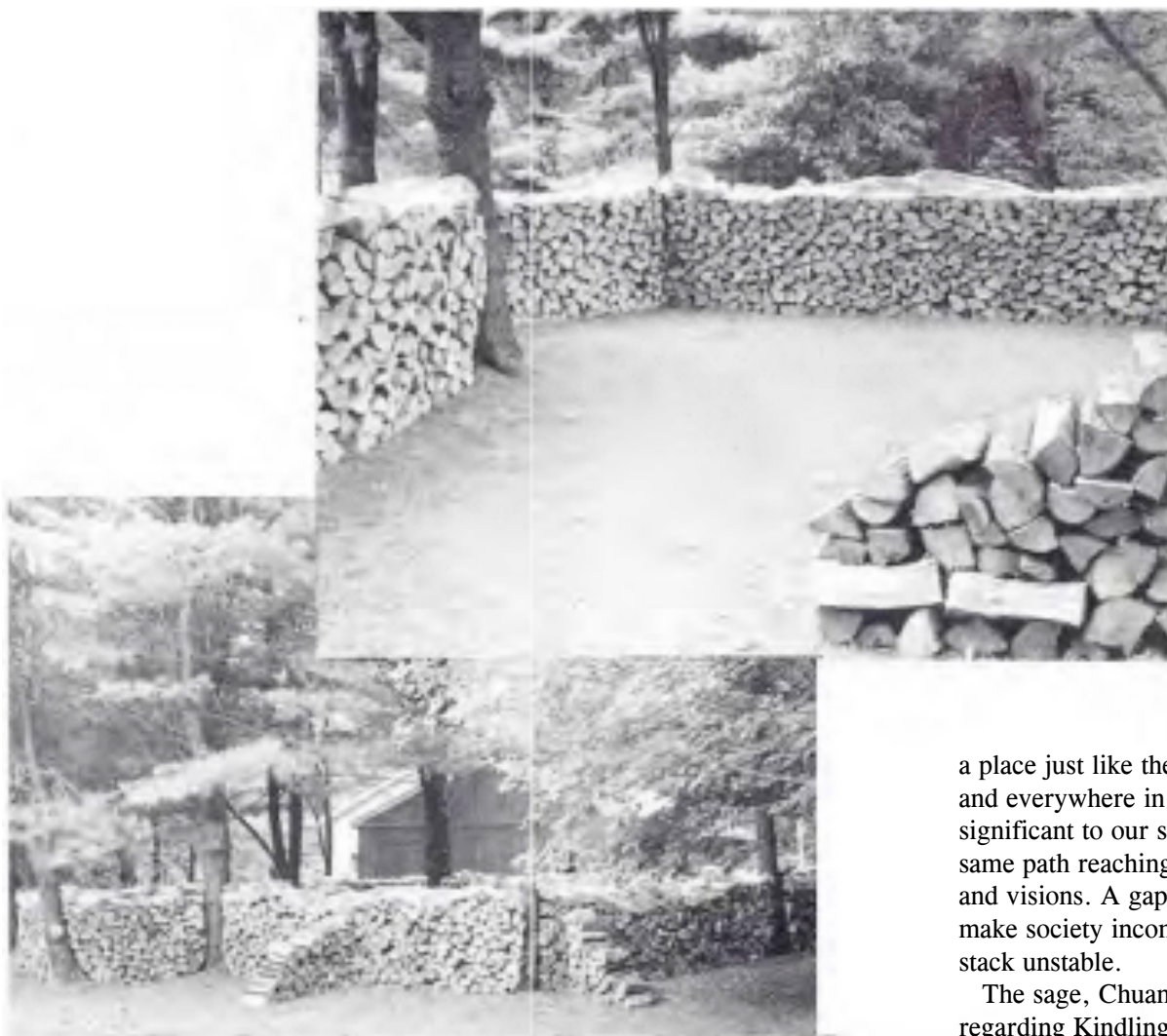
Woodstacking needs to begin with a solid foundation. The base needs to be strong and stable. Therefore, it is best to place big, precise, evenly shaped pieces, packed tightly together on the bottom. This ground row needs to consist of hardwoods like maple, cherry or oak-wood that is troublesome to start a fire with, but will hold the heat once burning. The softer hardwoods like poplar or birch must not touch the ground as they will rot over time, but they will be the wood you use to light the fire. All other rows need not have such perfect pieces and any species of wood is acceptable.

As the stack rises upward, use the pieces with knobs and protruding branch knolls to even the stack, so it does not lean to one side or the other. Small pieces, half pieces and the round unsplit branch pieces fit nicely into the gaps created by the big triangular pieces. Diversity is what makes a strong stack that will last through the tough, harsh winter and withstand the

bowling, forceful north winds. And when it comes time to burn the wood, a good mixture of size and kind will provide the best heat.

At last you will come to the top of the woodstack. This is where all those pieces that just did not seem to fit anywhere else belong. These are the craggy, misshapen oddball pieces. Although these pieces lack the conformity of all the others, they provide heat as well as any piece in the pile. They are just as useful. They top off the pile and they will hold the plastic protective covering. They are essential and important.

Diversity in humankind is what will create a lasting and vital society upon the planet. Finding harmony within the different dimensions of the human spirit will produce a solid base and a strong upward development that will lead to simple happiness and a greater understanding of life. Acceptance of all aspects of the human race will provide a complete life of deep spirituality. Those people on the top of the pile, the people of our society who are not perfect — the handicapped, the misfits, the slow, the retarded, the diseased, the abnormal — are also essential. They are important and have



a place just like the people at the base and everywhere in between. All are significant to our society. All are on the same path reaching for the same goals and visions. A gap at any place would make society incomplete and render the stack unstable.

The sage, Chuang-Tzu, said regarding Kindling a Fire: “When the fingers have no more kindling to put in, the fire goes on burning, unaware that it’s gone. The physical body is like fuel; fire is the spirit. Those who nurture the physical body are nurturing life; this is keeping the fuel. Those who nurture the spirit are nurturing the master of nurturing life; this is keeping the fire.”

Both the fuel and the fire, the vessel and the space within, the perfect and the imperfect are essential to the totality of the whole. Erecting a stack of wood or building a healthy society requires discipline a discipline of physical, mental and spiritual self-cultivation. This is the Tao of woodstacking and the things I think about while preparing for the winter to come. ♻️

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The Earth at its Best

HOMER E. STENNETT

New York State is, environmentally, in a spectacular period of transition. Three hundred years ago New York State was all in forests. The forest soils were high in organic matter and the soils were very porous. By one hundred years ago most of the land had been converted to agriculture. There were probably as many as one million small farms. Even a farm of a few acres would contribute significantly to the food and fiber needs of the occupants.

The farms as they were operated would be about one third in woods.

It was almost a universal practice to use the woods for pasture. Cows tramping through the woods compacted the soil. The pressure per square inch by a horse, ox, or cow's hoof was sometimes greater than the pressure exerted per square inch by a tractor tire. So the compaction of the soil was great.

Old forest soils would readily soak up and hold for future release huge amounts of water; air could easily penetrate into the soils. Compacted soils had little room for air and water.

Farm abandonment has been very high in New York. Today 62% of the state or 21 million acres are forested, or are in the process of returning to woods through plant succession: first grasses, then weeds, herbs, shrubs, then trees. Environmentally this represents an enormous change returning millions of acres of compacted soils back to the loose porous soils common in old woods. It is in the soils that the biggest change takes place, but the process is slow. The energy expended by nature in this process is tremendous; but as nature does it, the changes come quietly and unobtrusively. If a like amount of energy were expended in a project done by men, there would be great noise and turmoil.

Here is some of what is happening:

In a field that had been used for farming over one hundred years; but has recently been abandoned, a tree seed germinates and grows. From the beginning the tree

has difficulty pushing its roots through the compacted soils. A large amount of growth energy is used for that purpose detracts from the energy available for above ground growth. Then the roots will grow in diameter, as large as a man's thigh—or a woman's. This lifts and displaces a huge weight of soil. The whole growth period for the tree is one of struggle, pushing the roots through the soil and then expanding their thickness.



Some shelf mushrooms - Photo by David Hecei, Jamestown Audubon Society.

In 80 years or 100 years the tree will have reached its maximum growth. It will be mature-ripe. It will be cut or will die. The roots in the soil will deteriorate. In the soil will be a long, wide root hole. It is filled with punk like organic matter. The root hole provides easy access for air and water to penetrate deeply into the soil. The organic matter, damp and rich in nutrients that are released as the root deteriorates, provides a near ideal place for life to exist and flourish.

There will be huge numbers of bacteria, protozoa, mites, worms, bugs, millipedes and insect larva. Even larger animals. See a chipmunk's hole going straight into the soil. Chances are it is going to an old root hole that provides a cozy home.

It is likely that these root holes are the most, biologically, active parts of the whole earth. Then a new tree grows where another had been. Its roots find easier access into the soil by following the old root hole which it will extend and expand.

After this tree has occupied the soil and the air above for its life span of 100 years of so, it dies and is followed by another. This tree increased the number of root holes and enlarged those that were in place. In two generations of trees vast change has taken place. But quietly and unobtrusively.

The change will continue. After ten generations of trees in some 1,000 years the forest will have reached a stage than can be called a climax forest. This is the best that, environmentally, the earth can get. The soil will be a great labyrinth of root holes filled with organic matter and harboring great quantities and great diversity of life. There will, indeed, be a marriage of the biosphere and the atmosphere.

The soil will have reached one of its greatest purposes. It will soak up huge amounts of water during rainy periods, providing a great reservoir to hold the water for later release through seeps and springs during long dry periods, and will add much water to the earth's aquifers.

This Is The Earth At Its Best

During this period of time the forest will be forever changing. There will be damaging storms. There will be insect and disease invasions. There will be benevolent periods. There will be changes in the makeup of the forest community mostly determined by nature but in a minor way through management to meet the needs of industry.

Through it all the forest will survive and will lend its strength and endurance to mankind. 🌲

This article originally appeared in the January/February 1995 issue of the Forest Owner. Homer Stennett retired after 39 years employed by the US Soil Conservation Service.

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

WHITE PINES AT RISK

BY PAUL HETZLER

Our eastern white pine (*Pinus strobus*), monumental in a number of important ways, is now imperiled. The tallest trees east of the Rockies, white pines in excess of 230 feet (70 meters) were recorded by early loggers. The species provided settlers with abundant clear, light-colored lumber for structural members, sheathing, and flooring. Within its range, it's fair to say that European settlement was built on white pine.

It also has a towering cultural significance. Over a millennium ago, the white pine with its five needles joined at the base helped inspire five competing First Nations peoples to lay down arms and form a unified democratic government. Today the Haudenosaunee, or Iroquois as we often call them, still regard the white pine as the Tree of Peace, and a symbol of their enduring confederacy.

In addition, women's rights as we know them began in the figurative shade of the white pine. Matilda Joslyn Gage, a key architect of the US women's rights movement, expressly credited Haudenosaunee women, set the parameters for marriage and divorce, and voted to elect their chiefs, as her inspiration for pursuing equal rights.

With so many reasons to love white pines, I was distraught when around 2009, foresters and arborists in the northeast began to document a new flavor of white pine needle disease across



Continued on page 16

*Crown turning brown and thinning in mid-summer caused by White pine needle disease.
Nick Brazee, UMass Amherst.*



White pine needles infected with *Bifusella linearis*. The bottom needle is not infected for comparison. S. Johnson, NYSDEC.

large swaths of forest. The severity and scope of the illness increased markedly in 2016 and 2017, and by 2018, widespread mortality was being reported.

Although the disorder, known as white pine needle damage (WPND), is being studied intensively, it is not yet fully understood. Needles begin to turn yellow in May, and drop by early August, leaving only the current year's growth. Infections are perennial — once a tree is affected, it never recovers. Following the initial infection, in subsequent years the new growth is increasingly stunted. Trees on poor soils and along highway corridors were affected early on, and symptoms were also noted in landscape settings, where trees are by definition stressed. But soon even pines on rich sites were sick.

A fact sheet from UMass Extension clarifies why early defoliation caused by WPND is so significant; “when needles are prematurely shed early in

the growing season due to WPND, white pines not only have a reduced ability to photosynthesize, they also lose foliar nitrogen that would have been retained by natural senescence. When foliage is naturally senescing, trees pull nitrogen out of the declining foliage, a process known as resorption. Research has shown that needles shed early in the growing season can have twice the amount of nitrogen present compared to needles naturally shed in autumn.”

Foresters and arborists know about the “disease triangle,” whose three legs are pathogen, susceptible host, and an environment conducive to infection. In the case of white pine needle damage, at least four fungal pathogens are involved. However, typically only two or three are present on any given site, which makes it hard to point a finger at any single microbe.

According to a March 24, 2020 article in *NH Forest Health*, brown

spot needle blight (*Lecanosticta acicola*) is present on the majority of infected sites. The second most prevalent pathogen is *Septorioides strobis*. It is the more virulent of the group, and is a possible invasive species (all others are native and endemic). Two other organisms, *Lophophacidium dooksii* and *Bifusella linearis* appear in affected needles on some locations. Several additional fungi have been recovered from needles at a minority of WPND sites, but infrequently enough that they aren't identified in the literature.

To muddy the waters even more, *Caliciopsis* trunk canker, as a rule considered a weak native pathogen, has become more prevalent (found on about 85% of sites sampled), and is causing greater damage as well. Infestations of eastern white pine bark scale, a native insect, is on the rise too. Where bark scale infestations occur, white pines seem predisposed to *Caliciopsis* infection.

Given that the insect pest and all but one of the identified pathogens have been around since approximately forever, it's reasonable to look at another leg of the disease triangle: conditions which favor infection. In a June 2019 article in the *Conservationist* magazine, Jessica Cancelliere, a Research Scientist with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, writes:

"Increases in annual temperatures and precipitation have provided ideal conditions for WPND fungi, allowing them to proliferate to consistent outbreak levels. Since 1950, the northeastern U.S. has experienced an increase in average temperature (about 1° C) and cumulative precipitation (about 165 mm) during the April–September growing season, with 2011 ranked as the wettest year on record."

From what we know about white pine needle damage, a changing climate has allowed otherwise weak pathogens to become lethal. It would be nice to know how best to respond. Fortunately, management options do exist to enhance tree health and vigor.

In terms of forest stands, the best response is to thin them. To again quote the UMass Extension bulletin,

"Research has shown that thinning to create lower density stands of white pine promotes crown vigor, radial growth and reduces the severity of WPND. Heavier thinning operations had a more significant effect on the reduction of WPND."

We just learned that affected pines lose half their annual nitrogen complement as a result of early-season needle drop. It makes sense, then, that supplemental nitrogen applications have shown promising results, both in forest and landscape settings.

For landscape settings, mulch around white pines, and water deeply during hot spells. Ideally, soil pH should be kept between 5.2 and 5.6. Soil testing to identify and correct any nutrient deficiencies is a good idea. Soil compaction can be mitigated through air or hydraulic fracturing. White pines will not be happy for long on clay soils, or those with a pH above 7.0. Planting white pines farther apart than historical norms is another very important practice to adopt. 🌲

More information can be found at:
<https://ag.umass.edu/landscape/factsheets/dieback-of-eastern-white-pine>
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/>

journal/forest-ecology-and-management/vol/423/suppl/C
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/8a4ac2f813dc4b34ac08d8081eecb50d>

An ISA-Certified Arborist since 1996, Paul Hetzler lives in Val-des-Monts, Québec.

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Ask a Professional (continued)



Figure 5. Brush saws can be used to clear subcanopy trees and shrubs.

Also, as sunlight passes through each vegetative tier, the red wave-lengths, which have the highest energy, are used by that tier. Multiple tiers thus filter most of the useful energy from sunlight before it reaches the forest floor.

A student project at the Arnot Forest illustrated the importance of providing plants protection from deer and access to sunlight (Figure 3). The canopy in the study area was previously thinned and then treatments were applied to the understory to evaluate the survival and growth of desired tree species. If a desired species has protection and equal opportunity for sunlight, it can compete with undesired species. Note that the treatment plots were only 10 feet x 10 feet, so the clearing created lush growth and likely concentrated deer browsing in the cleared and unprotected plots. However, also note that by providing both sunlight and protection, the desired species were most abundant.

Many owners are in situations where they have mature overstory trees,

perhaps with ash or hemlock at risk from invasive pests. As previously described, past management or just the maturing of the canopy could increase sunlight and allow for the establishment and growth of a subcanopy. The owner isn't obligated to cut any trees, but if the canopy trees die then the owner loses the potential for revenue and the dead trees become a hazard for other activities in the woods. There are different silvicultural systems that a forester might suggest to the owner to manage the canopy in these circumstances, one of which is a patch cut or group selection that moves the woods towards a mosaic of variously aged patches.

A patch cut in the canopy is straight-forward as most trees have some value or utility. The subcanopy is problematic because there are typically more stems than in the canopy, but mostly because the understory has no value due to either small size or undesired species. The

two most common ways to manage undesired vegetation is with either mechanical or chemical methods, or a combination of the two. A third method, biological, would use intensive rotational grazing with livestock within a silvopasture system; this is uncommon but possible. The mechanical and chemical methods employ a specific technique (examples below) to deliver the treatment. The common purpose of treating the subcanopy is not to permanently annihilate the undesired species, as comforting as that might sound, but to interrupt the success of those species as you establish and grow the desired species.

Any manipulation of established vegetation, even undesired vegetation, will result in a dramatic change and usually visually shocking conditions. While this change is abrupt, and the land appears raw, the process is necessary to shift the balance to the new desired plants. The visual change is also of short duration because our soils and climate are conducive to plant growth that will quickly revegetate the area. This process is the same principle as used by farmers to prepare a field for planting. Farmers and woodlot owners are literally and figuratively "leveling



Figure 6. An integrated approach that combines mechanical and chemical techniques is often highly effective. This picture also shows protection provided by tree tubes. Short tree tubes will protect against rodent damage and allow for herbicide treatment, but will not protect from deer. Other protection may be needed to prevent deer impacts. (Photo credit: Mike S.)

the field” so that the desired plants have an equal opportunity to capture sunlight.

Whether the subcanopy is treated mechanically or chemically, and which technique is used, depends on several factors. Some owners are adverse to the use of herbicides, or have property restrictions that prevent the use of herbicides. These circumstances require the use of mechanical methods. In other circumstances the owner or the contractor have equipment that favors one method and technique over others. Some species are most effectively and efficiently treated with one method versus another method. A matrix to assess your options for strategies to undertake forest vegetation management is available in the resource section of www.ForestConnect.info and described in a recent blog at <http://CornellForestConnect.ning.com> by searching for “forest vegetation management matrix”

For mechanical control of a subcanopy in a patch cut, the techniques that might be used effectively include cutting, bulldozing, girdling, and mulching. Cutting would likely be most efficient with a feller-buncher (Figure 4) although it is technically possible to cut by hand with chainsaw or brush saw (Figure 5). Bulldozing would involve pushing the subcanopy stems away from the area to be planted. Ideally the dozer would avoid scraping away the organic matter on the soil’s surface. Girdling might be challenging given the tendency of many subcanopy species to have lower limbs and the number of stems per acre. Also, the death of a girdled tree is sometimes slow and might not offer a timely response for sunlight. The mulching process would use a masticating head, such as on a Fecon or similar machine, to mulch. The mulching could leave a thick layer of coarse organic material that would benefit planted seedlings but potentially impede naturally dispersed seeds. Cutting and dozing would retain the subcanopy stems intact, but dislodged from the soil. For planting after the treatment, the dislodged stems should be aggregated into piles or windrows to simplify access.



Figure 7. When clearing with a bulldozer be careful to keep the organic matter as intact as possible. The end result can be a clear and easily worked area. (Photo credit: Mike S.)

For chemical control of a subcanopy in a patch cut, the techniques that might be used effectively include basal bark spraying, mist blowing, stem injection, or a combination of cutting following by chemical treatment of the stump. Cutting and stump treatment is the only option to allow for piling or bunching of the stems if the site is to be planted. Stumps might be treated individually with a technique called “cut-stump” or “cut-surface”, or the area might be cut then broadcast sprayed using a technique called “cut-stubble.” Basal bark spraying is effective when there are mostly single-stem plants with a diameter less than 6 inches; plants with multiple stems limit access into the forked area for application of the herbicide. The bark of stems greater than 6” diameter is often too thick for effective movement of the chemical. Mist blowing the foliage would only be reasonable if the subcanopy allowed for easy access and was less than about 4 to 5 feet tall. Stem injection would not be easy given the abundance of branches common to most subcanopy species. Note that not all herbicides are effective on all subcanopy species, and the herbicides and concentrations used for each of these techniques is different.

After the subcanopy is treated, the area will begin to regrow from residual plants and seeds. The regrowth following a broadcast treatment such

as “cut stubble” will be more delayed because the previous herbaceous and small woody stems were treated (Figure 6). Mechanical techniques will likely have a more rapid regrowth of previously existing vegetation (Figure 7). The selection of the method will thus influence whether additional steps are necessary to ensure the new desired vegetation is able to succeed.

If trees will be planted, there are three key elements necessary for success in reforestation:

1. Matching the species to the soil rather than just planting your favorite tree.
2. Preparing the site before planting to limit the competitive effects of other vegetation.
3. Protecting the planted seedlings from deer, especially, and sometimes small rodents. 🦌

The column is coordinated by Peter Smallidge, NYS Extension Forester and Director, Arnot Teaching and Research Forest, Department of Natural Resources, Cornell University Cooperative Extension, Ithaca, NY 14853. Contact Peter at pjs23@cornell.edu, or (607) 592 – 3640. Visit his website www.ForestConnect.info, and webinar archives at www.youtube.com/ForestConnect. Support for ForestConnect is provided by the Cornell University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and USDA NIFA through McIntire-Stennis, Smith-Lever and the Renewable Resources Extension Act.



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Member Profile:

Peter Tonetti and Maureen Sullivan

BY ELENA MARTIN-HERNANDEZ

Maureen Sullivan grew up on a farm outside of Waterville, NY. She eventually crossed paths with her now husband, Peter Tonetti, thanks to the fact that, in 1967, Peter's dad retired from the Army and took a teaching job at Morrisville College. Both Maureen and Peter graduated from Waterville Central High School, in Oneida County, in the early 70s. They both pursued higher education degrees, with Maureen graduating from Cazenovia College in 1975 and getting her BA and MBA degrees from NYU. After graduating from business school in 1978, Peter went to work for Exxon for 10 years. The two got married in 1985, and in 1988, Peter began working for Phillips Electronics, where he stayed for 20 years. Maureen returned to school in 2002 to pursue a master's degree in education, teaching at the elementary school level until they both moved to Clinton, NY, shortly before the credit crisis of 2008 hit as Peter started a new job at Hamilton College. Maureen has been working for the Admissions Office at Colgate University since 2011. After

retiring in 2015, Peter has led a peaceful—although remarkably busy—retiree life in Cazenovia, NY, with their two sons and daughter scattered across the country/world.

In total, Peter and Maureen own 370 acres of land, 239 of which are in Otsego county, 49 in Montgomery county, and 82 in Madison county, in the town of Cazenovia, where they reside. The management, or “no-management” decisions on the woods and farmlands are made by Peter, with some guidelines from Maureen. However, decisions regarding the structures such as the house and barn on the Cazenovia property are definitely a team effort. Maureen takes care of most of the gardening and lawn management around their house and barn and is glad to incorporate her love for painting on remodeling opportunities. Peter has gotten a chance to work with members of the community on his forest management, working with a local farmer to revitalize one of the hay fields on his property for four years now and to plow another field



Beavers are fun to watch and can have a significant impact on the local ecosystem. They never seem to rest, and rebuild their dams as necessary. Their ponds add texture and richness to the local woodlands.

where Peter looks forward to planting a mixture of clover and timothy. His neighbors on either side have also helped to brush hog his fields on occasion.

The property in Otsego county, which sits atop a plateau between two valleys running north and south, was purchased by Maureen and Peter in 1999, when they were looking to beat the baby boomers in finding a place for retirement. The several ponds—including a 20 to 25-acre beaver pond—found on the property, as well as the overall beauty of the isolated property, sold them on it. Formerly a vegetable farm, 60-70 acres have reverted to woodland. The primary overstory tree species found here are white ash, black cherry, and beech. The understory is mostly beech, honeysuckle, and raspberry with some ferns. One of the biggest management projects on this property was when Peter convinced his sons and nephews to help plant 500 black cherry and black walnut seedlings, plus 100 white pine and 100 white birch seedlings. He lured his children with promises they would be able to retire with the money



Renovation of the Cazenovia barn.

continued on page 22



The magnificent 50-ft waterfall makes the Montgomery county property a great recreational place for friends and family.

made from selling the cherry and walnut timber in the future. Weed mats and plastic mesh tubes were used to protect the seedlings, which sadly didn't prevent deer from browsing nor beavers from chewing the retirement funds away, but rather than seeing this as a sour experience, Peter took this as a lesson to provide better protection from deer browse.

In 2007, they purchased the Montgomery county property, which was just as

mesmerizing, bisected by a seasonal road, with half the property west of the road being sloping land, on the edge of the Mohawk River Valley. The half east of the road has a stream in a canyon with steep sides and a spectacular 50-foot waterfall. A couple of books listing NY state waterfalls include this waterfall. As an abandoned farm, most of the land has reverted to woods. Here, elm and hemlock dominate the overstory. Elm



Wildlife watching is one of the best perks of being a woodland owner.

trees also make up a lot of the understory, but unfortunately they succumb to Dutch elm disease before getting very large. The property also struggles with the presence of well-established invasive species such as multiflora rose, honeysuckle, and garlic mustard.

In March 2013, Peter and Maureen purchased 57 acres including an old farmhouse and large barn in Madison County from Cornell University. Over the next seven months, Peter and Maureen had the old farmhouse renovated. In early 2014, Peter carried out a small timber sale to thin some of the woods to promote growth by primarily removing ash trees before they became infested with EAB. From this experience, he learned it's better to be patient and have a full understanding of the management goals for your property before acting. He did not know what the acronym TSI meant.

Between 2015 and 2016, old roads and trails were cleared by mechanically pulling honeysuckle, and in other areas seedlings were planted. Peter has learned he needs to do a better job of protecting the seedlings from browsing, as otherwise he was "just feeding the deer" with them, and that he needs to ensure they get enough sunlight. This learning is a work in progress. In 2016, Pete and Maureen purchased 25 additional acres from Cornell. In 2018, the transite (an asbestos cement fiber board) in the barn was remediated, an expensive process. In 2019, Peter and Maureen renovated a portion of the barn to provide guest space, and they also hosted the fifth annual NYFOA Chair Camp.

The Madison county property is comprised of three lots, all subject to a 2003 conservation easement. Before this easement, the old farmland had mostly reverted to woodland and had been logged. Today, about 50 of the 82 acres are woodland, with very good soils and a flat to gently sloping topography. Two designated trout streams run through the property and Peter has his eye on the potential of small springs and wet areas in the property as pond sites. The overstory of this property is diverse, with the main species being sugar maple, white ash, and white pine. The understory is dominated by white ash, beech, sugar maple, and black cherry. Honeysuckle is the most pervasive invasive species on this property. While Peter hasn't found any definitive evidence,



Their 25-acre beaver pond is a great place to recreate and spend time with family and friends.

he believes that the emerald ash borer may be present on the property, especially since infestations have been identified within 3 miles of the property.

Across all three properties, but primarily in Cazenovia, friends and family participate in deer hunting during the fall, though their success is not enough to provide meaningful control of the deer population. Due to its beautiful waterfall and mostly unmanaged nature, the Montgomery property is used primarily as a recreational spot, where family and friends camp and swim on occasion. One of the recreational aspects that Peter appreciates the most about being a woodlot owner is nature-watching, whether when standing still in a tree stand while bow hunting or when



Maureen operating the contractor's lift to paint the cupolas of the barn as part of the farm house and barn renovation project.

he and Maureen are walking around their property. Their trail camera recently caught images of a local family of red foxes. This is one of the main things that has helped to keep them sane during self-quarantine. Peter's future plans include putting nesting boxes on the Otsego property to attract wood ducks for hunting.

Since the Otsego property is the one Peter and Maureen have owned the longest, it is the one where changes have been the most noticeable and significant across the years, mainly due to the active presence of the beavers, which are ecosystem engineers. Unfortunately, the heavy rains brought by Hurricane Sandy in 2012 washed away the beaver dams that had created the large 25 acre pond. By the next year, however, the beavers had managed to largely restore their ecosystem. Also, as succession continues to take place on the property, it has brought an undesirable spread of honeysuckle.

In managing so much woodland, Peter has found having too many items on his to-do list to be his biggest challenge and believes that creating a management plan with a detailed work schedule would be a great benefit. A tractor (with a bucket, forks, a York rake and a brush hog), is the main tool Peter uses to make his management more efficient, along with a couple of chain saws. He does regret not getting a bigger tractor. His 30HP New Holland doesn't have enough

power to accomplish a lot of tasks. Peter would advise other forest owners to: 1) take the MFO course and become an active volunteer, 2) become a member of NYFOA, 3) go on wood walks to see what other NYFOA members do, 4) take at least the Game of Logging I course, 5) get to know your land before starting any major projects, and 6) put a stewardship or management plan in place. Ideally, he would say to follow them in this order and prioritize projects that are the most important or urgent. Peter admits that the relationship with the land trust holding the conservation easement on the Cazenovia property has been rocky. He would caution anyone considering a conservation easement that it is very difficult to anticipate and plan for issues that may arise in the future and address them in the easement. Forever is a long time.

Guiding them through their management journey, Peter finds the best sources of information have been the training programs he previously mentioned. More casually, Peter has also found fellow NYFOA members and wood walks to be great sources of information. For example, the five-foot welded wire enclosures he uses to protect his seedlings were derived from seeing what other NYFOA members had done in regards to this issue. Additionally, Peter has found the *Forest Owner* magazine, along with the ForestConnect monthly webinars from Cornell University to be valuable sources of information.

As a kid, Peter travelled all over the country due to his father being in the US Army, and the constant camping, fishing, and hunting that he had access to as well as farm work in high school sparked an interest in owning his own land from an early age. What Peter enjoys most about being a forest owner is being able to work on the land and witness the constant change in the natural ecosystem, especially when those changes are the result of his management practices. He and Maureen would like to leave the land as a legacy to their children and grandchildren (hopefully someday). 🌲

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