

# New York Forest Owners Association Capital District Chapter Newsletter

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## Message from the Chair

This will be my last message as chapter chair; I have enjoyed this role and plan to continue to be active in our chapter steering committee and activities. Jim Bulich will be taking over as our chair. Jim has a realty company in Catskill and is a woodlot owner and also joint owner of another woodlot with his wife, a son and daughter-in-law. Jim brings a history of forest ownership and a sound understanding of rural land to this position. I am pleased to see the chair role returning to a forest owner instead of a forester. Too often, I think we foresters believe we know what you need and often can miss the mark; so I prefer having a woodlot owner directing the chapter.

Recently I met with my assemblyman, Peter Lopez to discuss concerns about forest ownership. In preparing for this meeting, I put together some thoughts that I will include in this issue of our newsletter. My hope is that NYFOA can provide leadership in improving public policies affecting woodlot stewardship.

*Mike Greason*



## Meet A Smoke Jumper! 2011 Holiday Gathering

Mark your calendar! New York Forest Owners Association members, family, and friends are invited to attend the Capital District Chapter annual Holiday Covered Dish Supper. The program will be held on **Saturday, January 22, 2011** at the Bethany Presbyterian Church in Menands starting at 4:00 p.m.



This year Bob Stegemann will be our featured speaker. Bob started his forestry career as a smoke jumper for the Forest Service. He will show slides and tell us about fire fighting and his experiences as a smoke jumper 30 years ago.

Please join us and bring a friend. The chapter provides tableware, plates, cups, napkins, condiments, and beverages. Attendees are asked to bring a dish to pass. This is a great opportunity to enjoy some good food and fellowship.

Directions: From the north – take 787 south to exit 7W (rte 378) and bear right on the ramp to route 32. Turn left onto rte 32 (Broadway). At the first traffic light turn right onto Menands Road. The church is on the left after you cross the railroad tracks. From the south – take 787 north from Albany to exit 6. At the end of the exit ramp turn right onto rte 32 (Broadway). At the first traffic light turn left onto Brookside Ave. Take Brookside to the end and turn right on Lyon Ave. The church is on the right after two blocks.



## Emerald Ash Borer Moves East

The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) has been found in the Catskills. This one invasive insect may eventually wipe out ash trees in New York State. At this point there are no effective controls.

Emerald ash borer is native to China and eastern Asia. Since its discovery in North America in 2002, EAB has left a path of destruction in southeastern Michigan, northern Ohio, and Indiana. EAB is well suited to our climate and feeds on ash species. It is hoped that over time natural ecosystem controls, such as parasites or disease, will help regulate the beetle's population and reduce its impact.



Adult Emerald Ash Borer and larva

Symptoms of EAB attack include tree decline, crown thinning and the appearance of epicormic branches (new shoots growing from the trunk or main branches, often in clumps). Other symptoms include vertical cracks in the bark created from larval tunneling. Symptoms of EAB attack are similar to those caused by other factors such as drought or disease.

### Managing Woodlots Threatened by EAB

Silvicultural practices such as thinning and pruning can reduce stress and promote good form, vigor and growth. Targeted reduction of ash density that maintains some isolated but healthy individual trees may reduce the susceptibility of the stand to infestation. Cutting trees according to provincial tree marking guidelines provides space and opportunity for other tree species to regenerate and grow and will maintain adequate density or basal area to reduce the risk of blowdown. Removal of all ash in stands where it makes up 50 per cent or more of the dominant trees or basal area may result in damage from wind or allow the establishment of non-forest or invasive plant species.

## Saratoga Nursery Faces Budget Cut

The Post Star newspaper of Glens Falls recently reported that the Saratoga Tree Nursery faces significant staff reductions next year. Nearly half the staff will be eliminated to help close a gaping state budget gap.

The nursery, run by the Department of Environmental Conservation, has become a perennial punching bag when it comes time to cut the state budget. Officials have on more than one occasion suggested closing it outright.

Now, in the face of a gaping budget deficit, state leaders say they need to cut 900 workers, including 140 staff members at the DEC, to help control costs. A list of positions targeted for elimination, obtained by the Adirondack Daily Enterprise, includes four laborers from the Saratoga region due to be fired by Dec. 31.

David Lee, the manager at the nursery, said those positions would come at the nursery's expense and that, with a permanent staff of ten, the cuts would increase reliance on temporary labor or simply force staff to make due. "It's not going to be easy, but we'll just have to do the best we can," Lee said last week.

The cuts remain far from certain, however. Union leaders are threatening to sue over the proposed cuts, and union members with more tenure will get the chance to "bump" those with less experience. "Right now, we're just waiting to see what happens on Dec. 31," Lee said.



The nursery, opened in 1902, occupies 300 acres between Routes 9 and 50 adjacent to the Saratoga Spa State Park. At its peak, it generated 15 million seeds for reforestation annually. In more recent years, it has produced about 10 percent of that amount.

# The Forest Tax Law – Let's Make it More Effective

By Mike Greason

RPTL was enacted in 1978 and has attracted somewhat less than 1,000,000 acres of 9,000,000 eligible to date. It is a timber production law designed to stabilize forest industry through intensive forest management for forest crop production.

The Farm Bill of 1991 introduced the Forest Stewardship Incentives Program (SIP) and New York led the nation in implementation for the first three years before funding disappeared. SIP taught us that, when woodlot owners obtain Forest Stewardship Management Plans designed to their goals, the common tool used to achieve those goals is timber harvesting. Selling timber is the cost effective means to develop access trails for recreation and to manipulate the forest cover for wildlife habitat enhancement. Timber production is a low priority for most woodlot owners; but most owners do sell timber at some point. Unfortunately most timber harvests are done without planning, or well informed decision making, or with the assistance of a forester. Consequently, most timber harvests are exploitation cuts (also called high grading, selective harvesting, or diameter limit cutting) that deplete future productivity.

Note that Germany's forests are three to five times as productive as ours because they have a history of practicing silviculture. New York, potentially, has some of the finest forests in the world as recognized by the worldwide markets.

Degraded woodlots lose potential and then tend to be subdivided and converted to other uses. In 1970, the average woodlot in the state was 40 acres; now in rural Greene County which is 85% forested, the average woodlot is 14 acres. Parcelization leads to fragmentation of the forest ecosystem and is less cost effective for forest industry, which is a major contributor to upstate economy, and the NIMBY attitude leads to restrictive local ordinances that further drive up costs to the woodlot owner without leading to better management.

New York's real property taxes far exceed those of surrounding states; thereby making New York woodlot owners less competitive in the market place. New York needs an improved incentive program to retain a healthy forest and forest industry. All New Yorkers benefit from well managed forests that contribute to rural economies, water quality enhancement, air filtration and oxygen production, carbon sequestration, the recreation industry, viewsheds, wildlife and fisheries habitats, and many other valued open space benefits.

## DISCUSSION:

New York's forest tax law (RPTL, Section 480-a) is overly restrictive and discourages participation. It is an unfunded mandate and NYS DEC is understaffed to administer the program credibly. An improved program could protect the rural character of our state, contribute significantly to the state's economy, and enhance the societal benefits that are often recognized as important (ie: NYC watershed protection through the Watershed Agricultural Council).

If 480-a was revised to be a "forest stewardship" program and shift to a more user friendly program, participation would increase and forest exploitation could be discouraged. The stimulus to the economy could far outweigh the cost and enhance all those other recognized ecosystem services. This could be achieved through:

- 1) Shift from a timber production program to an open space forest stewardship program;
- 2) Broaden allowed landowner goals to include wildlife habitat, recreation, timber production and even preservation;
- 3) Broaden qualifying acreage to include swamps, ponds, rock outcrops, non-agricultural openings, etc which contribute to forest stewardship. Currently the narrowly defined qualifying woodlot standards exclude non-productive areas that can be assessed to reduce or even eliminate the program's benefit;
- 4) Remove the mandated work schedule. Let woodlot owners work at their own pace and towards their own goals. BUT, retain control of harvesting to assure silviculture is applied when the forest is most vulnerable to exploitation. This would allow less intensive management, but improve the overall quality of the forest and retain biodiversity, genetic quality, and economic potential. Definitely have state oversight over committed lands at the time of harvest to assure appropriate silvicultural application.
- 5) As society is educated to the values of well managed forests and exploitive practices are reduced, economic contribution to the state's economy would increase dramatically (based on the German example, possibly 3 to 5 fold current contributions).
- 6) Where all New Yorkers benefit from well managed forests (NYC watershed as an example), have this a state funded program that holds the locality harmless... with reasonable constraints to assure equitable administration.

# The October Timber Harvesting Workshops

By Mike Greason

On October 23<sup>rd</sup>, our chapter partnered with Cornell Cooperative Extension and its Agroforestry Resource Center, Columbia Land Conservancy and the Hudson Mohawk Resource Conservation and Development Council to conduct back to back Low Impact Harvesting and Silviculture events. We anticipated major participation because every woodlot owner of more than 25 acres in Columbia County had received at least one invitation.



Peter Smallidge demonstrates safe tree felling techniques

We ended up with two relatively small groups, many from several other counties, who came to learn from State Extension Forester, Peter Smallidge. Peter discussed silviculture, tree selection, control of beech root suckering, safe felling technique, and skidding wood with an ATV and arch. Mike Greason demonstrated skidding with a small compact tractor equipped with a Farmi winch.

We have been asked to repeat this session in Albany, Rensselaer, and Dutchess counties. Although Dutchess County is out of our chapter area, we will support this in appreciation of all the efforts Peter Smallidge has provided our chapter.



A chainsaw and felling wedge are useful tools for cutting trees



Beech tree stump shows how a hinge helps control the direction of fall

## The CDC Poetry Corner



### MICES

All the room is dressed so fall-ish,  
And the Pilgrims stand quite tall-ish;  
Summer's throngs are home from churling,  
In the ocean's waves unfurling;  
Kiddies are ensconced in schooling,  
Lest they spend much time in fooling.  
Autumn leaves are down and crunching;  
Time for TV and snack munching;  
Where instead has my peace squandered,  
In the wall, those mice have wandered.  
In the wall are scratching, scratching,  
Scratching, scratching;  
And the quiet time are snatching;  
While they work in hurried frenzy;  
Will there never be an endsy,  
To the nasty, pesky mices,  
Making me forget my niceness?

--Phyllis Lovelace House  
November 7, 2010



## The Chapter Welcomes The Following New Members:

Jimmy & Micaela Bulich  
Dr Dennis & Killen Cirilla II  
Fred DeMay  
Robert Green  
Gordon Pollard  
Richard Rogers  
Fred Seely

Catskill, NY  
Pattersonville, NY  
Sand Lake, NY  
Kinderhook, NY  
Duanesburg, NY  
Peekskill, NY  
Preston Hollow, NY

## 2011 EVENTS CALENDAR

### CDC Steering Committee Meetings – 6:30 p.m.

January 11  
April 12  
July 12  
October 11

### Chapter Holiday Gathering

January 22, 2011 4 - 7:00 p.m.  
Bethany Presbyterian Church in Menands

### Annual Statewide Membership Meeting

February 28, 2011 NYS Fairgrounds, Syracuse  
Held in conjunction with NY Farm Show

### Sustainable Woodlands Weekend

September 23-25 Agroforestry Center, Acra.  
This will be the fall NYFOA membership meeting including a series of workshops & field trips..

### Albany County

Wolfe Tree Farm – Berne Date: TBA  
See marked timber to be harvested by the owner

### Greene County

Greason Tree Farm – Catskill Date: TBA  
Various techniques to undesirable trees

### Rensselaer County

Wentdorf Tree Farm - Johnsonville Date: TBA  
See a firewood operation including kiln, etc.

### Schenectady County Woodswalk

Christman Sanctuary - Duanesburg Date: TBA  
How to Evaluate Woodlot Management Opportunities

# NYS FOREST RESOURCE PLANNING EFFORTS

## STEERING COMMITTEE

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Many people do not fully appreciate the great potential of forest resources in New York State. More than half of the state is forested, and over 20% of all forest land is in public ownership.

For the past year the Department of Environmental Conservation has been working on two forest resource plans. One for state forests, and one for all forest lands, including urban forests – i.e. trees in developed areas.

The Strategic Plan for State Forest Management was developed for the 786,000 acres of “state forests” which are not part of the Adirondack and Catskill Forest Preserve lands. This plan will guide the future management of the state forest holdings. Key goals focus on ecosystem health and diversity, economic benefits, recreational opportunities, forest conservation and sustainable management.



The Forest Resource Assessment and Strategy covered all forested lands in the state. The report assesses the status of New York's nearly 19 million acres of forest land, both public and private, and provides practical recommendations on how landowners, forest stakeholders and federal, state and local governments can work together to sustain the many benefits and ecosystem services forests provide to our society

Both of these plans can be accessed on-line from the DEC website at the following address:

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/regulations/2401.html>

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## Test Your Knowledge ...

Get ready to give your brain cells a good workout as you try to recall the name of another fearsome critter\* that was once a well known denizen of the forest. In fact, several CDC members have written to say that "name this critter" is far more challenging than either the typical crossword or Sudoku puzzle could ever be. Even our modern day oracle "Google" is occasionally flummoxed. However, the following clues to the identity of this dangerous fiend will be a dead give away to any NYFOA member who has spent a winter in the great north woods felling trees with an axe and crosscut saw.

Here they are:

### Clue #1

This brute was formerly quite common from Maine to Michigan. Today it is only occasionally encountered on the Upper Peninsula of the latter state.

### Clue #2

He is a marsh-dweller, very dangerous to human beings. He sports an anatomy shaped a good deal like an alligator, but curious as to equipment in that he has no mouth. The nostrils are abnormally large, the legs short and the tail thick and powerful. The only cry is a loud snort.

### Clue #3

Concealing itself with Satanic cunning behind a whiffle bush, this predator awaits the passing pedestrian. On coming within reach of the dreadful tail, the victim is knocked senseless and then pounded steadily until he or she becomes entirely gaseous, whereat the remains are greedily inhaled through the wide nostrils.

Note: during 19<sup>th</sup> century, rum sodden loggers were sought with special eagerness.

What is the name of this confounded critter?

\*From Henry H. Tryon Fearsome Critters 1939.

## Mystery Critter Do You Recognize It?



# ?

Answer:

**THE DUNGAVENTHOOTER**  
*Crocodilus hauriens*

# Join Us!!

## Help Support Forest Conservation

The New York Forest Owners Association is a not-for-profit organization which supports sustainable forestry practices and improved stewardship on privately owned woodlands. Our members are family forest owners and all others who care about the future of New York's trees and forests. If you are not a member, please consider joining today. Your membership makes a difference. Regular annual dues are just \$30.00 for an individual or \$35.00 for a family.

**Contact: NYFOA, P.O. Box 541, Lima, New York 14485 1-800-836-3566 [www.nyfoa.org](http://www.nyfoa.org)**