

The Western Finger Lakes Forest Owner



Fall 2010

Volume 24, Number 3

In the Woodlot

The saga of the timber harvest continues. When I wrote the previous column, the end of the one-year contract period had just expired with no sign of any activity on the part of the logger. Shortly thereafter we agreed to a three month extension, with the proviso that they would pay the balance of their bid immediately along with a small penalty. The check showed up, but the logger never did; today is the end of the extension, and my woodlot and I are right where we were three months ago.

Once again it is back to the drawing board. I will chat with my forester and try to figure out the next step. We could give them another extension, although at this point it seems more likely that we will go through the whole bid process again. Somebody recently remarked on hearing this story that perhaps I have stumbled on the way to make money growing timber: sell it repeatedly. It sounds attractive but it probably is not viable in the long run. I am not overly happy at the prospect of waiting another year to get the timber cut – this is a commercial thinning of low-grade trees, after

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Sawduster

Among our possessions are four chain saws, a sawmill, two table saws, a triple blade planer and lots of sawdust. What we don't have at our woodlot are utilities and our modern life style is accustomed to



Photo courtesy of Dick Starr.

these niceties. How I've solved the electric and water needs is for another time. This addresses sewage. A more modern term is humanure.

For years we've used a porta potty and carried the contents home for disposal. It works but this process has lost its charm and taking care of the chore is rarely high on the priority list. I did some online reading about sawdust toilets and decided it's a way to use up some sawdust and reduce our dependence on the portable potty.

In essence when Mother Nature dials your number, answer the call in a 5 gallon pail and bury the evidence with sawdust. Since humanure is mostly water (75% for solids and 95% for liquids) and rich in nitrogen, adding carbon in the form of sawdust absorbs the water and neutralizes the nitrogen compounds. This essentially eliminates the objectionable odors. Peat moss also works well and one person I know adds kitty litter.

We're all accustomed to the modern toilet seat so squatting on a 5 gallon pail is neither comfortable nor dignified. My solution was to build a wooden box that holds and hides the pail while allowing attachment of a seat and lid of choice. We selected oak. I knew my creation could only win the coveted Spousal Acceptance Award if it looked good and didn't smell bad. I succeeded as after the first weekend of use my wife said, "I love it!"

For clean out simplicity line the pail with a small garbage bag before initial use. When the pail/bag is full, something determined by frequency of use and the amount of sawdust added, secure the bag closed and remove it. Since the bag contains desiccated humanure and sawdust I envision tossing it on a future campfire for incineration, after

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In the Woodlot

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all – but I might not have much choice. As always, watch this space for further updates.

The lack of activity on the commercial front, combined with the heat and lots of other stuff going on, has kept me from doing much else in the woodlot this summer. Most activity has been concentrated in the pasture, where I am trying to encourage some walnut seedlings. The nuts that we planted last year have sprouted 12-18 inches this summer. That does not bring them into view among the 6 foot high goldenrod and asters, so I occasionally go searching for the seedlings and trim around them so they can get some sunlight. It remains to be seen if that just makes them more obvious as deer fodder this winter, since I have not fenced the area or deployed tree tubes.

From an economic point of view it probably makes little sense to spend time on these seedlings. A back-of-the-envelope calculation about how much to invest in a tree goes something like this. Let's say I can sell a reasonably large (500 board feet) in 40 years for \$350 (the last stumpage price report from DEC shows a median price of \$700/MBF for walnut). That translates to a present value of around \$50 - \$100 for each tree, depending on what you think interest rates will be (I chose 3-5% to get those numbers). If you figure half the trees will survive – which I

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~ Upcoming Events ~

General Meeting

Tuesday, January 25th at 7:30PM

**Cornell Cooperative Extension Building Auditorium
249 Highland Avenue, Rochester, New York 14620**

Please note the change to Tuesdays from Wednesdays for our meetings. The topic will be beekeeping, and our speaker will be Sam Hall, a partner in Hall and Karz, a law firm in Canandaigua, New York. He is also a beekeeping authority.

Sam grew up on a farm in Allegany County in the 1930's and 40's, learned beekeeping from his father and neighbors. He is an Air Force veteran, went to law school and was admitted to practice in New York in 1962 and still practices.

In 1988 he was able to buy a farm on Phelps Road in Gorham and immediately got back into beekeeping and has been at it ever since.

His presentation will consist basically of the following:

- The history of honey bees through the millennia
- The evolution of the interrelationship between the honey bee and mankind
- What are honey bees and how their society is structured
- What kind of bees are found in a colony
- How bees communicate, reproduce, and the variety of jobs they hold during their lifetime

Lastly, he will be discussing the crisis that is happening in the beekeeping world and how its outcome will affect everyone on the planet. Remember that three out of five mouthfuls of food we eat are attributable to the pollination of the honey bee.

Keith Maynard

June Woods Walk

On the 26th of June, 40+ Western Finger Lakes members and friends enjoyed one of the more memorable woods walks in recent years. The Piestrak family were hosts on their 900 acres in Lindley, New York near Corning.

The food and fellowship alone could have made the day and the weather was excellent. For 7 hours family members shared the various projects they're working on within the property and we still didn't see it all. Bruce Robinson, the Piestrak's consulting forester, was the narrator on the extensive and comfortable guided tour. To add to the excitement, some of us witnessed a bobcat heading off into the woods.

Each person attending received a bluebird box plus an 11 inch cross, hand crafted from native walnut stock by the family. Thanks Piestraks for your efforts in arranging a walk that won't soon be forgotten.

Dale Schaefer, Dean Faklis, Tony Ross

In the Woodlot

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think is pretty optimistic – and that I can't predict which ones will be the survivors, that means it is worth investing only \$25 - \$50 in each tree. If I value my time at \$10/hour (and I tell my employer it is worth a lot more than that), I should spend only a few hours on each tree over the course of its life.

I am sure any accountants reading this are cringing at my casual use of financial analysis, but the point is not to be too rigorous; the point is to get a ballpark figure of what it is worth investing in a tree. Planting a tree, trimming weeds around it and pruning it very quickly makes it not a very good investment from a purely financial perspective.

Fortunately, there is more to life than finances. As long as trying to grow these trees is something I do as an enjoyable hobby, rather than something I depend on to fund my next meal, the above analysis is very misleading. As long as I enjoy doing the work and having the trees around, at the end of the day (or perhaps at the end of the decade) any income I get from selling the timber is just an added bonus. That is what I like about woodlot management as a hobby: it can be a lot of fun and yield some financial benefits.

Mike Seagar

Sawduster

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roasting the marshmallows. Some prefer to compost the contents for a year and later add the rich mulch to flower beds.



Photo courtesy of Dick Starr.

I built the sawduster frame out of 2 X 2s and veneered the exterior with knotty pine and cherry. The frame measures 16" high, 19" wide and 18" deep. For increased support of the

seat, remove the tabs on the seat bottom so that it rests on the pail and wooden frame.

If you have a primitive hunting camp or property with just a storage shed I think the sawdust toilet is an alternative worth considering when compared to the pit outhouse, porta potty or commercial composting toilet.

Dick Starr

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The Western Finger Lakes Forest Owner is published for members of the Western Finger Lakes Chapter of the New York Forest Owners Association (NYFOA) and is published 4 times per year. NYFOA was founded in 1963 and is organized to encourage the wise management of private woodland resources in New York State by promoting, protecting, representing and serving the interests of woodland owners. The Western Finger Lakes chapter was founded in 1988 and encompasses Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Steuben, Wayne, and Yates counties.

Membership is open to anyone interested in understanding how to manage a woodlot. NYFOA membership can bring returns in the satisfaction of growing quality timber, stabilizing forest industries and markets, providing permanent jobs, increasing the value of your woods, enlarging areas of natural beauty across the state, and leaving behind a monument in living trees to bless the tomorrows for the boys and girls of today. For information on becoming an NYFOA member, contact Liana Gooding, NYFOA Secretary, NYFOA, P.O. Box 541, Lima, NY, 14485 or at 1-800-836-3566. Annual membership is \$30 for individuals and \$35 for families and includes: subscriptions to this newsletter; to the bimonthly NYFOA state-wide publication, *The New York Forest Owner*; attendance at chapter meetings; and at two statewide meetings. Membership at the Contributing level (\$50- \$100) and Supporting level (\$101 & up) are also offered. For more information visit www.nyfoa.org.

Readers are encouraged to submit articles for publication in this newsletter. Articles should be mailed or e-mailed to: Richard Starr at the address to the left. Electronic submissions are preferred. Any letters should be sent to the Chair for consideration.



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Mark & Linda Hopkins
Fairport, NY

Dave Keebler
Penfield, NY

Charles Lucido
Geneva, NY

Anthony Yazback
Webster, NY



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Upcoming Events ~ Mark your Calendar

General Meetings • January 25th & March 22nd, 2011

Thanks

WFL has recently had 3 retirements from the Board of Directors. We thank them for their service to the chapter. Our secretary, Patrick Baxter, has hung up his quill and we're looking for a replacement. The job requires taking minutes at the 4 board meetings each year. If you're interested in filling this vital role contact the chapter chair.

After 13 years Keith and Marianne Maynard are stepping down as program coordinators. They have made arrangements for the general meetings we've enjoyed during their tenure. We're pleased to announce Dean Faklis has agreed to take over this critical role. If there's a topic you think appropriate for a general meeting, contact Dean.