

The New York Forest Owner

A PUBLICATION OF THE NEW YORK FOREST OWNERS ASSOCIATION

For people caring about New York's trees and forests

March/April 2023



Planting Forests in Nature's Image

Volume 61 Number 2



THE NEW YORK FOREST OWNERS ASSOCIATION

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NYFOA
New York Forest Owners Association

www.nyfoa.org

COVER: There are abundant opportunities in New York to create new forests on old field sites. Tree planting is hard work, but that is just the starting point for success. Image provided by Brett Chedzoy. See page 4 for full article.

From The Executive Director

Is your woodlot composed of valuable sawtimber that you have meticulously managed for many years? Or maybe your woodlot was mistreated and is made up of lower valued species or poor-quality trees that you are trying to nurse back to a more productive state? Or is your woodlot a young vibrant forest of saplings or pole timber that is still developing from old abandoned



farmland? Or is it somewhere in between or some mixture of all of the above? I imagine that every type of woodlot that I just described can

be found across the spectrum of NYFOA members.

Let me delve a little deeper—Is your woodlot chock full of black cherry that you drool over every time you walk through your woods? Or is it stocked with hard maple? Red maple? Red oak? White oak? Walnut? Ash (or sadly dead ash)? Or some mix of all of those “valuable” hardwoods? Or are you stuck with a bunch of hickory, tulip poplar, birch, basswood, cucumber, beech, or aspen that you lament for their “lack” of value?

While for good reasons we recognize black cherry, hard maple, red maple, red oak, white oak, and walnut (and ash once upon a time) as the bread and butter of timber value, and everything else not so much, I have learned not to trust that assumption entirely. As a rule, I tend not to make assumptions about anything and have learned to certainly not make too many assumptions when it comes to judging what timber is “valuable” or not.

My thirty plus years in the timber business is, by most standards, tenure, but the timber business has been around a lot longer than me and will be here long after me. But in this time, I have learned by witness and by anecdote a thing or two that have shaped my view of timber value. I learned that I wish I had a crystal ball that worked like it does in the movies, because I would be wealthy, but alas that will never be the case. So much for wishes. But to help explain where I am going with all this, I'd like to share what I have learned through a few stories.

Back in the mid 90's I met a forester who had been on the job for a long time. He told me that he had the opportunity to buy several pieces of land real cheap in the early 70's. But he turned down the opportunity, because they were loaded with a mostly worthless species and he wasn't foolish enough to make a bad investment. As it turns out that “worthless” species was black cherry. The market for cherry from the mid 90's through the mid 2000's was paying between \$1,000 and \$2,000 or more per MBF (thousand board feet) on the stump depending on quality, size, and where in NY it was growing. That is hardly worthless. Needless to say, he wrongly assumed that cherry wouldn't be valuable in the future and missed a golden opportunity.

White oak used to be one of the kings of timber value back in the 40's and 50's, especially quarter sawn white oak for its beautiful tiger striped grain figure that was highly sought for the Craftsman style of furniture design. But that eventually went out of fashion and prices never did anything exciting for decades. The demand for it now is changing rapidly however, but not because of its value to

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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.

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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.

Planting Forests in Nature's Image

BY BRETT CHEDZOY

We have all heard the story of how New York was once extensively covered by forests and then heavily deforested as our ancestors cleared land to make a living, followed by a gradual renewal to the tree-covered landscapes of today. This story is a powerful testament to the resilience and renewable nature of New York's forests.

Upon closer observation, however, most "forest" that has reverted on former farmland in the past few decades lacks the density, diversity, and overall quality when compared to stands originating prior to the 1980's when rapidly increasing deer populations and browse-resistant invasive shrubs began to disrupt and reshape forest succession. On the better end, these younger woodlands are dominated by fewer, stouter, limbier stems per acre of species like red maple, aspen, and white pine that were able to outgrow deer and competing vegetation. Highly preferred browse species like oak and sugar maple are often missing or scarce in these open pole-timber stands. At the opposite end of the spectrum are the invasive shrublands and goldenrod complexes that have remained arrested in their successional development for decades. I often hear landowners use terms like "thickets", "scrub," or "the thorn patch" to describe these areas, suggesting that they don't hold them in as high of a regard as the rest of "my beautiful woods" and are open to options for improving upon the status quo.

So what are these options in light of today's challenges and needs? On the natural regeneration side, slash walls (www.slashwall.info) have become a game changer for protecting vulnerable populations of seedlings from deer. Natural regeneration is the



Cornell forest carbon researchers Peter Woodbury and Peter Smallidge discuss planting plans inside a newly constructed "brush wall" built by pushing invasive shrubs and scrubby trees into a tall windrow around the perimeter as a barrier to exclude deer while the new seedlings will grow beyond browse height.

least expensive and easiest route for perpetuating quality woodlands, but is highly dependent upon having ample seeds fall on scarified soil during desirable weather conditions (warm and wet). Those factors occasionally align, but not frequently. Therefore, artificial regeneration (tree planting) becomes the safer bet in situations where lack of seed source and site conditions warrant direct intervention to create the next forest. So as the title implies, the focus of the remainder of this story will be on tree planting.

Back to the challenges. In addition to the deer herbivory and competing plant complexes (often referred to as "interfering vegetation") a sound reforestation plan through tree planting must take into consideration pest management (of both known and

yet to be known pests), site quality, potentially lethal weather conditions, and the ability – both financially and physically – to care for young trees through the establishment phase. To further emphasize these points, I'll share experiences from our family's tree farm in Watkins Glen as an example.

Pests – In the late 1980's and early 90's we planted dozens of different species — mostly conifers — on fragments of farm fields considered too small, stony, or seasonally wet to continue farming. Thirty-plus years later, many of those species have died or been heavily affected by pests that were unknown at the time. In hindsight we were fortunate to have mixed many of the species together so that as some died and diminished, others flourished



David Weinstein and Peter Smallidge inspect naturally occurring seedlings that will augment additional planted seedlings. Natural seedlings are likely to be abundant near seed sources such as the adjacent hedgerow. Protection is needed though to keep them growing upwards.

into decent plantations. But from that experience, today I would plant even more species in even more integrated patterns.

Site quality – A well-known axiom in the tree planting world is “right tree, right place”. This may mean something a little different to urban foresters, but for those of us less concerned with overhead powerlines and tight planting spaces this is a reminder that some trees do better on certain growing sites than others. All trees will grow well on good sites, but the list shrinks as site quality decreases. Site quality reflects not only the soil type, but also the drainage, and effective depth and health of the soil. Many of today’s tree planting opportunities are on lower-quality sites. Most species may initially survive and grow acceptably well on these poorer sites, but later lose vigor as the needs of the larger tree root systems are not met. Low vigor trees are more vulnerable to a greater number of pests, drought stress, and prolonged waterlogging. Having seen this play out on our own farm in recent years, I would strive to better match trees to their silvic requirements.

Weather – Even if we can’t predict the weather well from one week to the next, one thing that is certain is that there will be times when things seem way too hot or cold, or dry or wet. Record breaking weather events seem like the new norm, so plant sensitive species on marginal sites at your own risk. It’s fun to experiment and push the envelope at times with planting upland species on lowland sites, or to try a new tree with a slightly warmer Hardiness Zone – just recognize that some experiments will work when the eventual weather extremes arrive and others won’t. Each new growing season and record-breaking weather event has revealed the ones that didn’t work on our farm.

Tree Care Capacity – Getting newly arrived seedlings in the ground is just the starting point for successful establishment. Winning the race for the sky requires a minimum commitment of three to five years of diligent vegetation management, protection from wildlife and pests (especially defoliating insects), and judicious watering if the rains don’t come. The single largest mistake that I have made

over the years with my tree planting projects is underestimating the amount of time needed to properly care for the trees beyond the initial planting.

All of these challenges are manageable with proper planning and execution. If new to tree planting, the hindsight wisdom I can share is to start small and grow from there. Seek out local expertise before planting. Many Soil and Water Conservation Districts have staff with extensive tree planting experience. Even local orchardist, vineyardists, and Christmas tree growers can provide useful insights and help avoid expensive mistakes. If you are a better reader than listener, search for the “Northeastern Tree Planting and Reforestation” guide by Peter Smallidge and others. Cutting corners with tree planting is the same as digging the hole and filling it with money instead of seedlings.

Now to the needs. If tree planting is challenging, why do it? No two landowners would give the same answer, but most would probably mention at least one of the following: land improvement, habitat enhancement, a legacy for the next generation, future income, woodland restoration, a better alternative to battling brush thickets, agroforestry production, and even carbon.

Planting trees – lots of them - for carbon capture and sequestration is a front and center part of New York’s strategy for addressing climate. Feel how you will about that issue, but everyone should feel good about planting more trees. And doing so will likely be supported by generous incentives in the not-too-distant future. New research and extension projects have started this past year at Cornell’s Arnot Forest to “re-learn” what it will take to reclaim potentially hundreds of thousands of acres of invasive brushlands through tree planting. Re-learn because the last significant tree planting efforts occurred nearly a century ago during the Civilian Conservation Corps era. Unlike the CCC initiatives that relied primarily on

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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

What do you want, and how do you get there? Planning to optimize productivity in your woodland.

Question:

I retire in two years and we're excited to think about being more involved in our woodlot. What can we be doing now to prepare for what we might want to do? We're not even sure what we want or how to accomplish anything. (Ron, CDC)

Answer:

A woodlot owner's goal in owning a woodlot is likely to enjoy the property as well as to benefit in some way from their ownership. The two general steps to this success are to (1) identify what you want from your woods and (2) set a path to acquire what you want. The woodlot jargon for these steps are: to know your ownership objectives and to have a management plan.

Ownership Objectives

The quality and character of your woodlot will depend on what you do, or don't do, with those lands. Defining your forest management objectives will ultimately help you maintain or improve the quality and character of your forest. The pivotal and perhaps most important step is to know your objectives, clearly and explicitly. The range of services available

to help you recognize your ownership objectives illustrates the great value placed on this step.

Clearly stated objectives provide direction, simplify the decision-making process, and provide a basis to gauge success. Your management objectives reflect what you value about your woods. What you value might include tangible outputs (e.g., firewood, maple syrup, revenue), intangible outputs (e.g., time with family, privacy, sunsets), or how your

land is part of a larger forested landscape. It is helpful to make your objectives as specific as possible to know that most objectives are compatible (Figure 1), and include others who are or soon will be decisions makers about the property.

The first step in stating your management objectives is thinking about your woodlot—why you own your woods, what you like about it, and how you want it to look in 5, 10, 20, or more years. Many people own woodlands because they inherited them, purchased them as a place of sanctuary, or purchased them for investment purposes. This is a start for your objectives as it explains perhaps a sentimental value, the value of retreat or seclusion, the value of an investment, or most likely some combination of the three. You may like to visit the area where you had a pleasant experience with a family member, a scenic overlook, the spot where you can always flush a grouse or run a rabbit, or the stand of red oak or sugar maple that will someday help support you in retirement. Finally, the vision of your future woods is probably closely aligned with what you like about your woods, although you know your woods will change through time. For example, keeping the memorable spot unchanged, ready access to grouse cover, or an increase in the sawtimber value of your oak or maple stand. Again,



Figure 1. Many objectives are complementary. This woods was thinned to remove trees of low vigor and improve tree growth. The skid trails were positioned to support the owners interests in cross-country skiing and bird watching.



Figure 2. Master Forest Owner volunteers bring their experiences as woodland owners on free visits to other woodland owners. The volunteers offer non-technical advice (such as a forester would provide), and can direct the owner to useful people and educational resources. (photo credit B. Blair)

those things you value help define your ownership objectives. These thoughts and visions provide the direction and the standards for successful management.

The next step is to ensure your objectives are mutually compatible and realistic for your forest. This is where some owners start to have uncertainty, but there are several sources of assistance available.

Master Forest Owner Volunteers

One resource is a group of woodland landowners like you who are volunteers and trained by Cornell Cooperative Extension as Master Forest Owner (MFOs) volunteers. MFOs are not foresters, they are woodland owners trained to assist other woodland owners (Figure 2). From their experience as a fellow owner, they can help you think through your objectives and how those objectives might fit with your property. They can help you find educational resources to inform your

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Figure 3. The New York Forest Owners Association (NYFOA.org) and other similar groups often host tours of private woodlands. These events give owners the opportunity to talk with other owners, see activities, and learn about the people and resources available to help with planning and management.



Figure 4. This woods was previously thinned to improve the growth of the best trees that are most suited to the local soils. As a result there was a change in the habitat to allow more sunlight and growth in the understory. One action often has multiple outcomes.

planning and decisionmaking, that likely include written publications at www.ForestConnect.info or archived webinars at www.youtube.com/ForestConnect, and a variety of other materials. A good initial document is the *Forest Resource Guide for Landowners*, something close to an “owner’s manual” which is a free download at <https://ecommons.cornell.edu/handle/1813/69464>. Typically, MFOs will schedule a half-day visit with you to your forest, listen to what you value, and help you think about your potential management options. Learn more about a visit from an MFO volunteer at www.CornellMFO.info

Relevant organizations that many MFOs and other woodland owners belong to are the New York Forest Owners Association (NYFOA) and the Catskill Forest Association (CFA). NYFOA and CFA are active, landowner-based organizations full of good information and good people. Forest landowners that are members of NYFOA and CFA often lead woods walks (Figure 3) or may be available to discuss forestry with you.

Department of Environmental Conservation

Another option for assistance in identifying and assessing your ownership

objectives are the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation public service foresters, or something similar in other states. The DEC public service foresters are trained professional foresters, and will visit with you free of charge to discuss your ownership objectives. As professionals, DEC foresters can provide technical guidance on forest management questions. Like MFOs, the public service forester is a good listener and will help you think about the compatibility and synergies of your objectives. The differences between MFOs and DEC foresters are complementary. An MFO cannot write plans or make management prescriptions, but probably can visit with you sooner than a DEC forester, and the MFO can relate to you as a woodland owner. Although the MFO will likely recommend you contact a DEC forester, the MFO will help prepare you to optimally utilize your time with a DEC forester.

Depending on your interests and needs, the MFO or DEC service forester may suggest you engage a professional private consulting forester. Because private consulting foresters provide fee-based services, woodland owners are best positioned if they have their objectives well defined. You can learn more about

woodland owner support at <https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4972.html>.

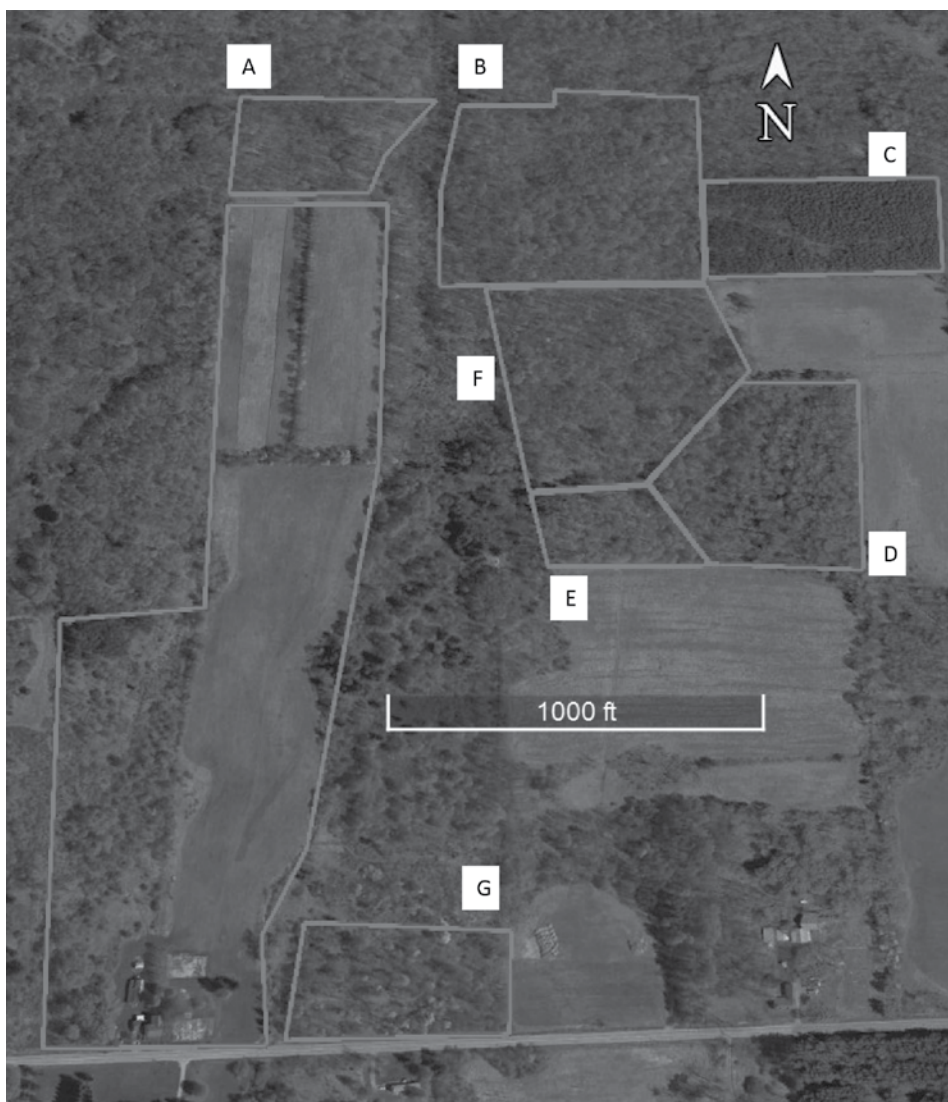
Management Planning

The planning that you do for your woodlot or forestland is not a difficult process and provides numerous benefits. If you have planned a vacation or a wedding, then you are capable of the planning necessary to get the most from your woodlot. Developing a plan for your woods, a task usually completed by a forester, must include your ownership objectives.

The planning process will involve some thinking on your part, discussions with your spouse, children, or co-owners, collection of resource materials, and working with a forester for technical and professional assistance. These are easy but necessary steps; the good news is that much of this can be accomplished for free or with minimal expense. The expenses you do incur may be tax deductible depending on your situation and will be offset by gains in the efficiency of management and the benefits you receive from your property.

A plan for your woodlot provides benefits that are aesthetic, economic, and logistical in nature. A plan allows landowners to integrate seemingly complicated objectives such as timber harvesting, habitat enhancement for specific wildlife species, and recreational trails. Planning ensures that activities (e.g., boundary marking, thinning) change the property in ways that help accomplish the owner’s objectives (Figure 4).

There are different types of plans. The simplest plan, suitable for many owners is often called a “stewardship plan.” These are quite short and have limited detail about the forest vegetation. A “forest management plan” is more detailed and often involves an inventory of the forest to describe the number and sizes of trees in certain areas. Your private consulting forester can write the forest management plan to also satisfy the requirements for the owner to participate in the NYS Forest Tax Law program known as 480-a. For landowners who seek IRS recognition as an active participant or proof of the intention of an activity, a forest management plan can document the role of the landowner in the management process or the intent of certain activities. Stewardship plans are free through the state forestry agency. More



Stand Acreage

A = 3.9	E = 2.1
B = 11.5	F = 8.56
C = 5.25	G = 3.34
D = 6.16	Fields = 20.4

Figure 5. Maps of the property are helpful to gain a big picture understanding of your options. This image shows stand boundaries, but additional information might include soil types, trails, and past or future management activities.

detailed plans have a fee to cover the time spent on forest inventory, but often these fees are offset by state or federal cost-share programs.

A typical management plan, regardless of the type, has four sections. The first section is a statement of the landowner objectives. The second section describes the property. This might include some or all of the following: a legal property description; an assessment of the condition of the different areas or management units (called “stands”) for timber, wildlife, recreation, or other uses; and


characterizations of the soils, especially any limitations of use such as poorly drained or stony soils (Figure 5). The third section will be a work plan or calendar of scheduled events. Except for a forest tax law plan, the work schedule is only a suggestion of activities. You’ll likely want a fairly detailed plan for the current and next year, but then more general targets for the following 5- and 10-year time frame. Each year you can check the tasks completed and revise the current year plan. Part of the schedule might include the tools, equipment, or resources

you’ll need to complete some task. The fourth and final section is an appendix that includes any number of things from maps, to historic records, glossary of terms, aerial photographs, old pictures, list of trees or birds seen on the property, etc.

You have likely recognized that the planning process will be easiest with some outside assistance. Fortunately, there are numerous tools, people, and organizations you can access. Some woodland owners will simply want to contact their NYSDEC service forester and ask for a stewardship plan plan. Other owners will want to be more involved. One option is the Forest Resource Guide mentioned above with a link to download. Another is the American Tree Farm System template available at <https://www.treefarmssystem.org/tree-farm-management-plan-templates>

Summary

Once you have your plan, use it to your full advantage. The combination of your objectives and your plan’s work schedule can help you assess whether suggested actions you hear are a temptation or an opportunity. Use the schedule of activities to plan the yearly events, perhaps when children are home for the summer or in-laws come to visit and you want them to do something productive and useful. Use the description of the different management units to think about places to put hiking trails, picnic areas, or potential bird watching locations. Take the advice of your carefully chosen forester to help you evaluate offers from someone who shows up at your door and wants to buy your timber -- if your plan doesn’t call for a timber sale then you’re likely best to let the offer pass.

A management plan is a useful tool that will serve you for years to come. It’s a critical starting point for the long-term stewardship of your wooded acreage. 

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Wild Things in Your Woodlands

DEVON DAVIS

SOUTHERN RED-BACKED VOLE (*MYODES GAPPERI*)



The southern red-backed vole is a small, slender rodent with large, round ears and a short, thin tail. Their coats are thick, long, and soft in the winter but thin out and become coarser in the summer. They have prominent red coloration extending from head to tail, and dark gray to golden gray fur along their sides. Their undersides typically range from gray to white. Sexes are generally the same size with the same coloration, which tends to lighten with age. Breeding begins in the late winter and continues until late fall. Females usually produce 2-3 litters each year, and can begin mating right after giving birth. The average litter size is 3-7 young, which are born naked and blind and become sexually mature at around 3 months of age. Individuals have several mates in their lifetime, and little is known about parental care except that females nurse and protect their young for 2-3 weeks after birth. They can live up to 20 months, but their typical life expectancy is 12-18 months.

The southern red-backed vole is common throughout many parts of North America. Their range extends from British Columbia east to Newfoundland in Canada, and in the US, they live in the north, northeast, Rocky Mountains, and the Appalachians. They inhabit most of New York State, with higher concentrations in higher elevation regions like the Adirondacks.

The preferred habitats of southern red-backed voles are cool, moist, mature, coniferous, and mixed deciduous forests. However, they inhabit a wide variety of habitats, including bogs, swamps, young forests, deciduous forests, and meadows. They thrive where there is an abundance of logs, stumps, roots, twigs, rocks, and groundcover, which help to protect them from predators and provide nesting habitat, shelter, food, and moisture. Southern red-backed voles also tend to avoid living near other vole species to avoid competition. They are very territorial animals.

Their preference for damp environments is partly due to their dependence on food that requires moisture to thrive, such as fungi, which are a major part of their diet. As opportunistic feeders, their diet depends on what is available, which varies by season. In the spring, they feed on leaf petioles and young shoots from emerging vegetation. In the summer, they eat available seeds and nuts. In the fall, they focus more on storing available food for the winter, such as fungi, seeds, roots, and nuts. In the winter, they feed on whatever they have cached away and what they can scavenge, like tree bark. They also eat small insects.

Though southern red-backed voles are abundant in New York State, they rarely are seen.

In the winter, they forage during the daytime, but they do so under the snow to avoid detection. During the other seasons, they tend to forage at night.

Though they do not construct complex tunnel systems like other vole species, they often use burrows constructed by other animals as shelter. They also construct nests under the snow to keep warm and have protection in the wintertime. These elusive behaviors in conjunction with their camouflaged appearance make them difficult to detect. Though little is known about their communication tactics, they sometimes do let out audible screeches and barks when disturbed, which can give away their presence.

Despite their elusiveness, southern red-backed voles play important roles in the health of the forest ecosystems they inhabit. As major consumers of mycorrhizal fungi, they play a key role in helping to spread the fungal spores and increase the amount and distribution of these beneficial organisms. Mycorrhizal fungi form


continued on next page

Wild Things (continued)

mutualist relationships with plant species and attach to their roots. As a result, plant root systems extend, which greatly increases their access to moisture and nutrients. Plants also become more drought and stress tolerant.

Southern red-backed voles also serve as an important food source for many predators, such as owls, hawks, mustelids, foxes, and coyotes. Though insects are not a main part of their diet, they also help by consuming harmful insect larvae.

Southern red-backed vole populations currently are relatively stable. However, given the current and future impacts of climate change, and increasing habitat fragmentation and loss, you can

help ensure healthy red-backed vole populations by leaving rocks, logs, and other woody material on the forest floor. You can also leave burrows intact for them to use as shelter. Doing so will also increase your chances of encountering these charming and ecologically important creatures. 

Devon Davis is a Program Assistant for the New York State Master Naturalist Program, directed by Kristi Sullivan at Cornell University's Department of Natural Resources and the Environment.

More information on managing habitat for wildlife, and the NY Master Naturalist Volunteer Program, can be found at <https://blogs.cornell.edu/nymasternaturalist/>
Photo credit: Scott Hecker

From the Executive Director (continued)

make furniture. It is in high demand for making barrels for wine and spirits. Not only is white oak closed-celled making it the perfect leakproof barrel wood, but it has properties making it valuable to the distilling and fermentation process. The industry is even concerned about the future supply. Again, assuming its value was, and would only be, for furniture that went out of style would have been the wrong one to make. So if you want to help increase the value of your white oak timber, consider drinking more whiskey.

When the economy crashed in 2009 the timber market was turned upside down. Cherry that had once been selling for \$2,000/MBF could barely be given away. Even with price adjustments there wasn't enough demand to move the lumber that was being produced. Lumber companies were quite worried about the losses they would incur and the money they had tied up in lumber inventory that they could not move. But many switched gears to the one product that there was decent demand for: railroad ties. The rail companies were in the process of repairing tens of thousands of miles of old track and replacing ties and have continued to the present day. As sad as it made me to see beautiful black cherry logs sawn into railroad ties, that saved the day for a number of species,

especially during the pandemic. Even still, cherry has not recovered to its heyday pricing as fashionable demand for darker woods has been replaced by lighter woods like maple, oak, and ash, which have been on the rise while cherry has been in decline.

I suspect you all understand that the markets go up and down and trends in fashion and design fluctuate. But my overall point is that as you are making decisions about managing the trees in your woodlot for timber, don't make too many assumptions about their value based on what you know the market to be today. You just never know what the market will do. My general recommendation is to manage for tree quality and species diversity first and the value will follow. Those hickory or tulip poplar trees may end up being more valuable one day than you think. In other words, don't indiscriminately cut out ALL those odd "low valued" species in favor of your black cherry, maple, or oak because you may end up regretting it. I'd hate to hear you tell me a story someday about how you made the wrong assumption and missed a golden opportunity.

Until next time, go to the woods — take it all in and love it until you can't.

—Craig Vollmer
NYFOA Executive Director

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Chair Camp 2023

August 1,2,3 and August 5,6,7

Chair Camp 2023 (Windsor furniture class) will be held at two locations this summer: August 1,2,3 at the home and woodshop of Ed Neuhauser and Peg Coleman in Groton, New York and August 5,6,7 at the home and workshop of Harold and Gay Thistle in Whitesville, New York.

Class instructor David Abeel welcomes students of all skill levels to attend one or both workshops. **As in years past, a 10% discount is available to active members of the New York Forest Owners Association.**

Participants can choose from any of 6 projects: natural edged bench, shop stool, sidechair, arm chair, rocker, or 28 inch mini settee. All turned parts, materials and tools will be provided.

To enroll in this year's camp text or call David Abeel at 734-646-2064 to reserve your space.

To see examples of past class accomplishments visit Facebook: David Nelson Abeel.

In regard to the charge for class, it depends on what project you have selected. Active New York

Forest Owner Association members (NYFOA) will receive a 10% discount. You can pay by check or cash on the day of class.

Tall Kitchen or Shop stool:
\$200; NYFOA member \$180
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Comb Back Side Chair:
\$290; NYFOA member: \$260
Comb Back Arm Chair:
\$345; NYFOA member: \$310
Comb Back Rocking Chair:
\$395 NYFOA member--\$355
28 inch Mini Settee:
\$395; NYFOA member: \$355



Missing *The Woodlot* E-Newsletter?

Did you notice that you have not received an email from NYFOA in the last couple of months with *The Woodlot* E-Newsletter? For several reasons we won't bore you with, it was necessary to part ways with the company we contracted to publish *The Woodlot*. The good news is that we are in the process of rebooting it and it is undergoing some significant changes.

Our goal is to shrink it to a more reasonable length, and we intend to overhaul it by bringing you more meaningful content and

communications that originate within NYFOA. We will be soliciting you to contribute in some ways that we think you will be excited about. Our true goal is to make the newsletter of greater benefit to you and a better communication tool for NYFOA, with content that we hope you will find both relevant and entertaining.

Take note, however, that we are likely going to change its name; we have learned that it is similarly named to another email publication called My Woodlot and want to avoid confusion or being accidentally overlooked. The name hasn't been

settled on yet, but you'll know it when the first issue hits your inbox. If all goes well the first issue will be sent out in April, so be on the lookout for it.

We hope to bring you an improved, more interesting newsletter and welcome any feedback you are willing to share. If you weren't receiving it before and want to get it now, make sure we have a current email address on file for you. Thanks for being patient while we bring new life to your newsletter.

—Craig Vollmer

ARE YOU MAKING MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

It's that time of year when some of you might be making distribution management decisions from your IRA. If you are thinking about making a donation to NYFOA, we are very grateful for that consideration. Don't forget that you can make a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) directly from your IRA if you are at least 70 ½ years old and that a QCD can satisfy the required minimum distribution if you are 72 or older. The good news is that a QCD sent directly to NYFOA does not have to be reported as income and doesn't affect your social security benefits or your Medicare B premiums. Should you decide to make a QCD to NYFOA make sure you fill out the right form with the custodian of your IRA and have the check made payable directly to NYFOA and sent to our address at PO Box 541, Lima, NY 14485.

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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

KILL THOSE GIRDLES

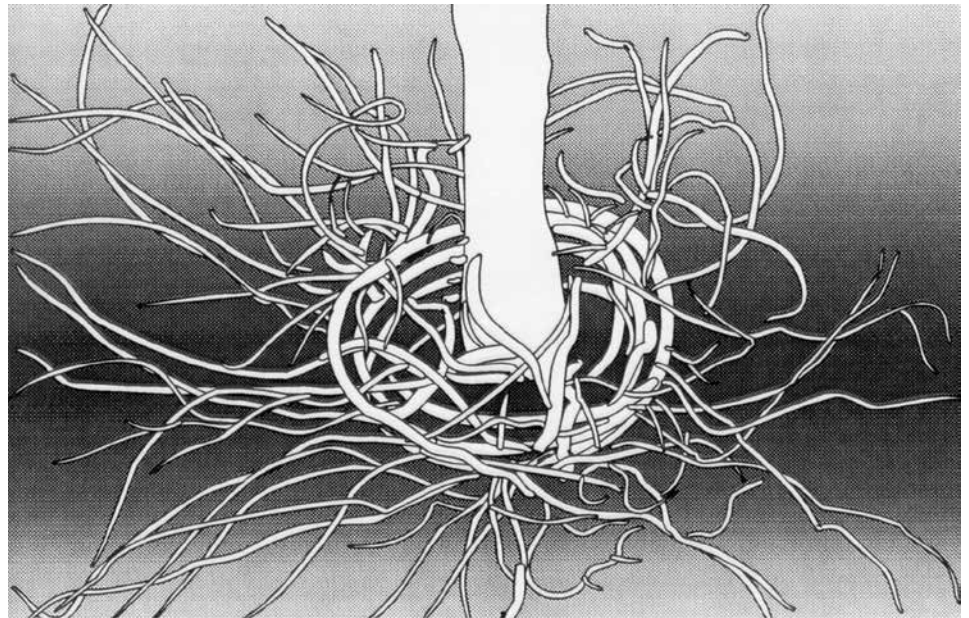
By PAUL HETZLER

“My girdle is killing me” was an obnoxious slogan from a TV ad that ran in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The widely-mocked catchphrase was meant to inspire women to rush out and buy a certain brand of non-murderous undergarment. I doubt the ad’s plaintive tone helped boost sales, but hey — I’m no marketing expert.

And yet, underwear can be dangerous. In 2009, the so-called “underwear bomber” stuffed his shorts with explosives and boarded a plane. Luckily, he couldn’t ignite his stuff, and his plot fell flat. In 2020, Alexey Navalny, a fierce critic of the Kremlin, nearly died when a Russian agent smeared nerve toxin on his underpants (because nothing says “strong, confident world leader” like poisoning one’s critics, right?).

Girdles may not be homicidal, but they kill countless trees in yards, parks, and along roadsides, putting us in danger in the process. If you know what to look for, it’s often possible to arrest this type of “crime” and reverse the damage. Better yet, trees can readily be girdle-proofed when they’re planted.

The sort of girdles that kill trees are girdling roots, and we’re to blame for these arboricidal miscreants. They begin when roots curve inside the planting hole rather than pointing straight out away from the trunk. If a container-grown tree is root-bound



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Stem girdling roots. International Society of Arboriculture, Bugwood.org.

and the twisted roots are not cut and straightened, this is the outcome.

Girdling roots also result when a planting hole is too deep and/or not wide enough. Failing to remove burlap, wire, or other impediments to normal root development will cause this problem as well. Banking mulch against a tree in a “mulch volcano” is yet another cause. Although girdling roots sometimes form on the surface, they usually develop out of sight in the soil.

These dizzy roots that go around and around in a planting hole don’t cause trouble at first. But as the trunk widens,

at some point it begins to press against the ring of roots. From then on, the tree’s girdle is killing it, and it’s too late to switch to a more comfortable brand.

Over time, the expanding trunk is garroted ever tighter until the tree’s vascular system can no longer get water and nutrients to the leaves. The tree will begin to show evidence of acute stress like undersize and/or slightly pale leaves, a sparse canopy in general, or early fall color. As the process advances, the tree declines and dies.



Stem girdling roots. Joseph O'Brien, USFS, Bugwood.org.

Girdling roots frequently choke a portion of the trunk and not the whole circumference. This leads to the decline and death of a corresponding part of the canopy. While it sounds better than losing the entire tree, it presents another risk: dead wood. The problem can be exacerbated when the remaining live foliage in the canopy hides the danger from view and corrective action is delayed until large dead wood begins to fall.

Given that all trees perish sooner or later, death by girdling may not seem calamitous. One heartbreak of girdling roots is that before a tree can reach maturity, it is choked to death; typically this occurs within 20 to 30 years. Two or three decades of life is better than

nothing, to be sure, but compared to the 300- to 400-year potential lifespan of sugar maples, red oaks, and white pines, or 500+ years in the case of bur oaks and white oaks, it's not much.

Nurturing a tree to the point that it gives us shade, pollution control, ambient cooling, carbon storage, and other "ecosystem services" takes money, time, and energy, whether that tree lives 25 years or 250 years. A truncated tree lifespan is a major impact of girdling roots.

Not only do girdling roots lead to an early grave for an afflicted tree, they create life-threatening hazards. The girdle choke-point soon becomes mechanically unstable, and gets weaker with time. A brilliant report out of

the University of Minnesota states that girdling roots are to blame for at least one-third of all trees toppled in storms. Because these situations usually take place below ground, the condition tends to go unnoticed until the tree fails at the base. When you learn to spot the signs of girdling roots, they can be detected in the majority of cases.

The best clue that girdling roots are present is when a tree goes straight into the ground like a utility pole. Sometimes a trunk actually narrows at the soil line. Tree trunks normally widen at their base; this is called a trunk flare. Incidentally, the trunk flare should always be visible after you've planted a tree. It is nature's depth gauge. When one side of the trunk has a

continued on next page

flare and the other is straight, only half the tree is being choked.


Any kind of tree can develop girdling roots if it is not planted properly, but some species are especially prone to them. By far, maples and lindens (basswood) lead the pack in this regard. Pines, oaks, beech, and elms regularly fall victim as well. Norway maples, a tough, nearly bullet-proof species widely planted in urban areas, appear to be genetically disposed to girdling roots. Given that the Norway maple is now considered an invasive species, very few arborists are shedding tears over its habit of strangling itself.

Although treating a root-girdled tree is not always feasible, the only way to find out is to examine the roots. For this task it's best to hire an arborist, who may use an "air spade" to gently

remove soil and expose the root crown. An arborist can also tell if excising an embedded girdling root will do more harm than good. Girdling-root removal is a bit like surgery, and may involve hand saws, chisels and gouges. A successful procedure gives the patient a longer, healthier life. There are cases, though, where the safest course is to remove a badly girdled tree.

The time to prevent girdling roots is when a tree is planted. A planting hole should be 2 to 3 times as wide as the root ball, but never any deeper. Locate the trunk flare to guide you as to proper depth. Carefully cut and straighten all circling roots on container-grown trees.

If the root ball is wrapped in burlap, all fabric must be removed, along with the wire cage, once the tree is situated in the hole. When the planting area is mulched, be sure to pull it away from the trunk.

Girdles are out of fashion, but girdling roots are never in vogue. Help save trees: kill those girdles. 

Paul Hetzler has been an ISA-Certified Arborist since 1996. A shorter version of this article originally appeared in The Saturday Evening Post.

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

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Planting Forests (continued)



Participants in the "Forest Regeneration Field Practicum" hosted at the Arnot Forest in September 2022 learn about emerging markets for forest carbon and the potential to plant trees inside brush walls (visible in the background) as a carbon cash crop.

blocked monocultures of conifers to fill in farm fields, the vision for a new wave of planting will strive to create diverse young forests that more closely resemble naturally occurring ones. That means planting predominantly hardwoods which are much more sensitive to wildlife pressure and herbaceous competition.

Part of the new research and extension at the Arnot Forest is a strategy to use "brush walls" (similar to slash walls) for the dual purpose of clearing the land of invasive shrubs and scrubby trees for site preparation and also to temporarily exclude deer from the young plantation. Four brush walls, each about three acres in size, were built last winter using different construction methods and then planted in May with a mix of hardwoods. Despite the lack of rainfall and a heavy infestation of leaf munching caterpillars, survival was around 90 percent at the end of the first growing season. An unanticipated benefit of using brush walls instead of tree tubes to protect the seedlings is that the

absence of deer has allowed an even greater density of natural seedlings that were hiding in the weeds to finally put on some significant new growth. These seedlings will add species diversity and density to the plantings to boost future stem quality and provide greater options for future improvement thinnings.

I'll close by sharing some of my

favorite species that will be found in the next big planting project at our farm (2024 if things go as planned): white pine, oaks – multiple species, hickories – multiple species, tulip poplar, cucumber magnolia, black walnut, and American chestnut if and when a truly resistant cultivar is available. All of these species naturally occur on our farm and would be compatible with our silvopasture objectives. Cherry, maples, basswood, and birches would also be desirable additions, but are capable of seeding in naturally over time with some small deer exclosures. Not all of our potential planting sites are well drained, so on the low spots I would additionally plant sycamore, yellow birch, bur oak, swamp white oak, and black gum. Hopefully some day we can restore elm and the ashes to that mix. Larch, spruce, and other native pines like pitch and red could grow well both on our farm and throughout much of NY to help maintain an evergreen component that many wildlife species depend on. Last, but not least would be black locust, which is hands down one of the easiest and most economical trees for filling in the gaps, and one that has real cash crop potential. More on that in a future article. 🌱

Written by Brett Chedzoy, Regional Extension Forester with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Schuyler County.

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Please send your suggestions to:

Mary Beth

Malmsheimer, editor at mmalmshe@syr.edu

or

Jeff Joseph, managing editor at jeffjosephwoodworker@gmail.com

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
Peggy Berk	LHC	Brendan Lindaman	SOT
Michael Butler	AFC	George McCabe	NAC
Anthony Dean	CDC	Karen Mock	NFC
Matthew DeGraw	CNY	Prentiss & Carlisle	
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Trish Gorman	WFL	Ed Scholes	SFL
Ryan Harper	NAC	David Zimmie	CDC
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Member Profile: Brian Draiss

COMPILED AND EDITED BY JEFF JOSEPH

Please provide a brief background on yourself, and how your life and family relate to your property (where you're from, family, current/previous careers, etc.)

My name is Brian Draiss. I am 44 years old. I live with my wife of 15 years, Lisa, and my 3 children, in Greenlawn, New York. My oldest son Dylan is 11, my daughter Riley is 9, and my youngest son Parker is 5 years old. I am employed as a detective in the Suffolk County Police Department where I have worked for approximately 23 years. I was born in Dutchess County, NY and lived in Hyde Park and Pleasant Valley. My family comes from a long line of outdoor people. The Draiss family worked as gardeners at President Roosevelt's house. My cousin managed Adams Fair Acre Farm Garden Center in Poughkeepsie, my mother gardens all the time, and is a member of the local garden club. My father, who retired from law enforcement, is an avid fisherman and is my mom's personal landscaper. I think my father and I both find a sense of peace and reduction of stress when we are outside. I think that is part of the reason why I find enjoyment in owning a woodlot.

How much land do you own?

The property is approximately 64 acres, and around 58 acres of it is wooded. The property has a small house, a 60x30 pole barn, and a 34x16 shed. The property has several natural springs that I had tested and are drinkable. From time to time a few local neighbors have showed up with empty gallon containers asking for them to be filled up with some of the water. They all enjoy the mineral taste.

Where is the land (county, town)?

The property is in Hannacroix, in Greene County. I have noticed that a lot of local contractors describe the location as "up on the hill." They will say, "Next time I am up on the hill I will stop by and give you an estimate."

Who participates in the management decisions and the actual work? Where do you obtain information to guide your decisions?

I purchased the property in May of 2020. I was familiar with the area because growing up my parents would take us on vacation in Athens, New York. At age 17, I joined the Army National Guard and the armory was located in Leeds. My parents Joan and Carl bought land, built a house and retired in Athens. All of these locations are approximately 20 minutes from the property. Having family nearby was an important factor for me. For several years I had been searching online for property and driving around casually looking for land. I wanted somewhere where I could hunt and give my children the opportunities that a woodlot offers.

I live over 3 hours away from the areas I was searching for property, so my parents would check out different places and give me feedback. I noticed this one piece of property that had been on the market for a while. The place listed that it had several tree stands, a barn, small house, and mature fruit trees located on the property. The property was 20 minutes from my parent's house and a little over 3 hours from mine. I remember getting a phone call from my dad, who said, "Brian, this is worth you coming up and checking out." This conversation took place as my mother was sending me photos of the mounted deer and European skull mounts that the owner had decorating the house.

I drove up to see the property for myself. I loved the woods, the stone walls, the trails and the peaceful feeling I got as my cell phone lost service. I met owners, Karl and Isabella Pehr who owned the property since 1987. It was clear that they had many good memories on the property. They used rough cut wood to build many of the structures on the property and built cabinetry in the barn. They lived in the city and this was their place to get away from it all. They seemed to want to sell it to a person who had a family and could experience the same joys it gave them. The sale for them appeared to be bittersweet. A year later, Mrs. Pehr, contacted me and asked how I was enjoying the property. I thanked them for all the improvements they had made over the years that I am now able to take advantage of.

When did you take ownership of your land? Was it from within the family or outside the family? If outside the family, what attracted you to purchase that particular parcel?

I wanted to get back to some of my childhood experiences. I always loved the woods as a kid and spent time building forts, checking under rocks, and exploring. I found endless entertainment in the woods behind my house growing up and now that I have children, I wanted to give them the same opportunity. I want them to know that a world exists outside of Long Island. My oldest was involved with Cub Scouts and now Boy Scouts. I saw that he too enjoyed outdoor activities. My daughter and youngest love to hike, build forts, and explore as well. When I go "upstate" hunting, my youngest wears his camo shirt to school. I bought all 3 of them lifetime hunting and fishing licenses prior to owning the woodlot hoping that each of them would enjoy these types of outdoor recreations. Seeing positive results due to small changes that I have made managing the woodlot motivates me to continue actively managing the woodlot. I have seen deer, turkeys, and bear take advantage of the food plots. I can count a dozen turkeys showing up right after I throw down the seed. They kick up the dirt and treat the areas like a giant bird feeder. I combat that by going a little heavy on the seed. They need to eat too.

Describe the overall makeup of the land, the topography, water features (ponds, swamps), surrounding landscape, etc....

Prior to purchasing this property, I had no experience in being a woodlot owner. In fact, I was dead set against any type of logging as I thought the woods was beautiful and park like. I learned that what we like visually is not necessarily what nature requires to be a healthy woodlot. I was first introduced to land management by a family friend, Jason Post, owner of Hudson River Hardwood Exports in Leeds, New York. We went on a walk through the woods, and I watched him stop and examine certain trees. He spoke about the benefits of logging, and how it

could help financially and environmentally meet my land management goals. He spoke about NYFOA and gave me a few issues of *The New York Forest Owner* magazine to read. He mentioned the New York State 480a Forestry Program and the need to hire a professional forester. After reading the magazine, I was hooked. I started searching the internet for anything forestry related. I watched hundreds of YouTube videos on logging and land management including Forest Connect. The logging or TSI related videos led me to more video on land management for hunting and food plots such as Jeff Sturgis, Don Mealy's Hunting Channel, Whitetail Obsession Outdoors, Dr. Grant Woods, Chilcote Forestry, and fellow Long Islander, Fig and Clover Ranch. (Fig and Clover always makes me laugh.) Online, I looked up anything I could on foresters and 480a information. I also reached out and spoke to members of NYFOA who graciously answered my novice questions.

Describe the land's vegetation. Types of trees that dominate? Presence of and type of understory vegetation?

The land has multiple small streams, some seasonal, that all run into the Medway Creek which runs along the eastern border of the property line. The creek is located down a steep ravine that has a few shelves as it drops to sea level. A small quarter acre pond drains into a marshy area, eventually leading into the creek. The land has flat areas and some small hills divided by rock walls. There are some rock ledge formations

and a few large boulders that were dropped on the property randomly. The trails on the property are wide enough for a tractor and several culverts have been installed to keep the natural flow of water from washing out the paths.

The timber in the woodlot is primarily a lot of pines, red oaks, chestnut oaks, soft maples, hemlocks, basswoods, and poplars. Prior to the timber harvest, I would describe the property as a crowded, closed canopy woodlot with some small areas of low-level understory growth. While hunting, I noticed the sunset in the woods, prior to sunset. I have heard this type of woods described as a biological desert. Some areas fit this description. The canopy needed to be opened to activate understory growth.

Do you use your land for any recreational purposes? Who recreates (family and friends?), how do they recreate? How do management activities support recreation?

We use the land for hunting during both archery season and rifle season. I have hunted spring turkey. My two brothers-in-law, a few friends and I hunt and maintain the trails. I am hoping my children want to learn to hunt when they are eligible and will also use the property for hunting. I had the forester take into consideration the creation of shooting lanes as a part of the harvest. We also used low or no value timber as a back stop for a small shooting range. The low value timber protects the future harvested timber from being damaged. We



Brian's uncle Gary's ATV, who would take him on rides when he was young. Now he gives his children rides on the property, and also uses it to drag brush, haul tools for fixing blinds, and for managing food plots.

ride ATVs on the property during the off season. We ride bikes on the skidding trails. We hike the property, bird and animal watch. We also use the property for a semi-annual family kickball game and picnic. Kids as young as 4 and adults as old as 75 participate. This summer we plan on having an outdoor movie night and sleeping in a tent in the woods.

Provide a summary timeline of your experience with the land since you bought it. What have been your major projects? What did you learn during those projects?

Real estate agent, Wayne West from New West Properties in Catskill, recommended local Forester Brian Bower. In January of 2021, I went on a walk in the woods with him and we discussed my goals for the property. Mr. Bower used a lot of terms or acronyms I had read about during my online research, so I was glad that I had done some reading in advance. Land management was a world that I had no experience in, and as a weekend warrior I knew on my own I was not going to be able to make the changes that the property required to reach its potential. Mr. Bower went over the positives and negatives of the 480a program as it uniquely related to my situation. He answered all my questions. I was a little overwhelmed by the process, but he continued to address my concerns in

continued on next page



Brian with children Dylan, Riley, and Parker. The family enjoyed the sheer power and size of the skidder, and watched it drag multiple trees at once with ease.



NYFOA sponsored woods walk held on the property on July 10 2021. Attended by Peter Smalidge, forester Brian Bower, Jason Post and many other woodlot enthusiasts. Brian looks forward to hosting a post-harvest event early this summer.

emails. Mr. Bower recommended a timber harvest and assured me that he would do routine inspections to make sure the harvest followed best management practices. We came up with a plan where I felt as if I was still giving trees an opportunity to grow but was also creating an opportunity for more wildlife related improvement. I did not want the property high-graded with little hope for regeneration. I had read that some described timber plans on a sliding scale between timber value and wildlife value. I wanted to be positioned just off the center toward the direction of more wildlife value. Money is great, but venison is tastier. By the beginning of February of 2021, the timber had been marked, inventoried, and a bid

prospectus was sent out to multiple loggers and companies. By March of 2021, I had an accepted bid and a logging contract. Toward the end of July of 2021, logging started. It paused for a short period of time so I could take advantage of archery season. We had that built into the contract. The harvest was completed in the end of October of 2021 after a final inspection. I learned a lot watching the process. I learned the symbols of how trees get marked. I also learned how logging is a difficult labor-intensive industry that deserves respect. I watched one logger single-handedly cut hundreds of trees and drop them in planned locations. I learned about bumper trees, using cull trees to build corduroy bridges, and how little goes to



Brian and his forester agreed to this landing site which could be easily reached by trucks doing the least amount of damage to the property. After the harvest was complete it was graded and seeded. Brian says he would choose this same location for future harvests.

waste. My children loved the size and power of the skidder. It was a rainy season so there were days that the forester paused skidding until the conditions improved.

How has the land changed since you bought it?

After the harvest there was an increased amount of daylight hitting the forest floor. It was winter so at first I really couldn't see a difference in the floor growth. I did notice I could see a lot farther and I had a few short cuts or roads created by the skidding process. The deer were taking advantage of these new routes. The tops of trees or slash were crushed and spread around on the ground. In January, I noticed that deer were bedding close to areas where slash piles were located and were feasting on the now available tree tops. At the first sign of spring, I noticed these to be havens for fishers, porcupines, and red squirrels.

After consulting the forester, I hired the logger to clear cut two small areas for food plots. I threw down winter rye to hold the soil in place and to give some early food for the deer. In the spring of 2022, I noticed a lot more life. I have seen an increase in deer and ground animals. Some of the stumps grew woody stems at the perfect height for deer browsing. I also noticed that some of the plant's leaves seemed to grow greener or lusher from the increased sunlight. The salamander population that we usually see on the paths seemed to be unaffected from the all the skidding.

From the money from the timber harvest, I was able to get the old barn stained. It was looking shabby and I wanted to preserve it from rot. I updated some electric and had rock spread around the driveway of the barn to reduce the mud mess. I planted some Red Osier Dogwoods and three apple trees. The kids and I built and placed two wood duck houses in the vicinity of the pond. We built some new tree stands big enough for two so I can be with my children when they are eligible to take advantage of the youth hunt. My oldest just finished his hunter safety course and I couldn't be prouder. I am trying to use a no-till process with no or limited use of chemicals in the food plots. I seeded various types of clover into the standing rye and some brassicas. I also experimented with some oats, peas, and radish. I let the rye go to seed for the birds and the deer love to bed in the middle of it. It also gave fawns a place to hide. I have a few very large coyotes that visit the area looking for an easy meal. I attempted to address them by hunting. However, I was not that successful. I set up an electronic call with a fake tail. The call was set to

a rabbit sound. Out of nowhere a large owl swooped down and flew off with the electronic caller. My hunt ended with a few laughs. I later found the caller in the woods, minus the decoy tail.

What is your biggest challenge when it comes to managing the property and the woods?

My biggest challenges are time and distance. Time because I have 3 active school-aged kids who require drop offs and pickups at all sorts of extra-curricular activities. Between both my wife and I having full time jobs and volunteering our time in Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, and school related activities it limits the times that I can be up there to work on the property. The distance makes it a little difficult to do things in a day. I have left several times at 3 am which allows me to get up there by 6 am. When I leave, I never know how long it will take me to get home due to traffic issues. In the summer, I try to make it a family affair. I solicited help from my family to get things done. My father, uncle, brother-in-law, and cousins have been a big help. I have so many plans and look forward to one day retiring and being able to realize a lot of them.

What are some things you have done to manage your land more efficiently? Acquired tools or equipment? Taken training courses? Worked with friends and neighbors?

I ask questions of people in the business. The local feed and seed store has been a good source of knowledge for me. Reading *The New York Forest Owner* magazine articles has taught me a lot. I also subscribe to multiple YouTube and Rumble channels where both professional and novices share their knowledge and experiences. I am a novice. I write down significant events, guest visits, hunting failures and successes. I use a journal that my wife gave me to document land management changes to the property. This way I can go back and learn from myself, from both successes and failures. I would love to attend the Game of Logging and a few other classes in the future. I really want to be able to identify my trees.

What advice would you give to other forest owners? Are there one or two absolutely essential "rules" you would suggest?

First, do your own research to give you a basic understanding of terminology. Figure out your goals both long and short. But in every instance, hire an independent forester. The cost is worth it. Understand that logging

can be a messy process, but all the bumps and bruises will heal with time. Prepare yourself for the mess. Have faith in the forester. He will inspect and make sure best practices are followed. He is your advocate but also a voice of reason. When no active logging is taking place, walk around and check it out for yourself. Sometimes what you think is a big deal is not. Know that nature seems to like a little chaos to stir things up a bit and get things started. Everything needs light to grow to its full potential. Ask your logger questions, but allow them to do their job. If the logger is willing to do extra work, get it done while the equipment is there. Consider leaving one section untouched if you visually enjoy that park-like setting. Use your property when it's sunny, rains, snows, in the morning, daytime, and evening. Each time has its own unique beauty. There is no quick fix as Rome was not built in a day.

What prompted you to become involved in forest management?

I enjoy watching my kids and their cousins walk around and explore. It is great exercise. It is also the best non-electronic babysitter out there! I enjoy being alone in the woods and working with others to improve it. I enjoy others enjoying it—such as my brother-in-law and cousin getting a larger deer than I did this year...

What do you enjoy the most about being a forest owner?

On July 10th, 2021 I hosted a woods walk at the property. Over some good food, I got to know and learn from both professionals and enthusiasts. It was a great opportunity to learn about my property and other's properties. Jason Post organized the woods walk. New York State Extension Forester Peter Smallidge attended as did my forester, Brian Bower. All provided no cost advice and insight. The woods walk was held pre-timber harvest. I look forward to hosting another walk this late spring or summer so others can see the changes.

In what ways, if any, do you interact with your neighbors or community as it relates to your woodlot?


Due to lack of equipment such as a tractor and available time I hire some of neighbors to help make improvements on the



Brian planted winter rye in October after the harvest. The rye was the first to grow back in early spring giving deer an early food source. He also seeded clover into the standing winter rye, which acted as a nurse crop protecting the clover as it matured, then let the rye go to seed. The birds ate the seed, and the fawns and deer bedded into it. In the summer, it was crushed and returned to the ground as a soil builder.

property. During the woods walk, I allow any neighbors and community to see and walk the property. I take my deer harvests to a local butcher. My use of the woodlot helps the local economy as I eat and drink at local small businesses. I am also looking to purchase rough cut wood to create a few more blinds on the property.

How has membership in NYFOA benefited you as a woodland owner?

I am affiliated with the Capital District chapter. NYFOA has kept me in the loop on pending legislation changes regarding 480a and other woodlot related laws. NYFOA has also given me contacts with other likeminded people who are much more experienced in managing a woodlot than myself. From member's information, I recently joined the mailing list for the Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District. I am hoping to take advantage of the bare root plant sale. I always look forward to reading the magazine, as it makes me feel like I am "upstate" for a few moments. 

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