



THE VOLUNTEER

A newsletter for Master Forest Owner Volunteers who give their time not for financial gain, but for the benefit of neighbor woodland owners and their forests.

April 2000

In this issue..

- The Sweet of the Year*
- Forestry Forum*
- MFO/DEC working together*
- Tree Trivia*
- News Items*
- Greetings from Gary*

The Sweet of the Year

by Mike Valla

It has been close to 30 years. The winter had been cold and bracing, and the hills were still covered in deep snows. The little river not far from my home was still frozen too, its steep banks shrouded with snowdrifts. The days had been growing longer with each passing week, yet the warm shafts of sunshine were still too brief to overcome the penetrating harshness of the cold winds. The winter had lived too long.

But the brightness of the late February days signaled the weakness of winter's grasp; spring would soon arrive. The days passed, and seemingly overnight the river ice weakened into a jumbled patchwork of ice and slush. The banks along the river changed too, as the gradually warming days transformed them into a landscape of scintillating cornsnow, and the little freshets that emerged from them grew larger every day. (*continued page 4*)

Forestry Forum

The Short Term and the Long Term

by Peter Levatich (c)

I am an old man. I have been amongst my friends, the trees, for seven decades. I know them.

I know that they grow more slowly than we do, one tree generation to three human generations. They are more patient. We need quick results to stay tuned, they are tied to a spot and patiently take it as it comes at them. We move on if we do not like things; they can only slow down and die instead.

Three generations. If we persist, our grandchildren will harvest. If they want to. But somehow forests get harvested despite those who say they do not want to harvest. Big trees rot only in the Forest Preserve. As life goes on, others take possession of our forest. Their children sell and move on and their grandchildren do the same. How often do Forest management goals change? Three times per human generation, five times? What is a forest to do with 9 or 15 management changes per tree generation? And when does the harvest or many harvests occur in that same span? Forest Owners pay taxes on a sustained basis and they sell the forest because they move on. The trees get liquidated by someone. All the good trees get harvested.

Now think of the resource, the forest. It is a resource of our society. Twelve inch diameter trees going to the mill are a waste of a resource. It is like the Civil War when the young men died too early, before their time. Tell your client that when his/her 12-inch diameter trees grow to 16-inch diameter trees they will have increased in value by a factor of four. Tell your client that this may take place naturally in forty years, or in only twelve years if he/she does a little work to favor the growth of these trees. What little work? Cutting! Whether managed for grouse, other wildlife, firewood, sugar, wildflowers, esthetics, the view, access, or whatever cutting takes place with a pruner, or the chain saw. If no cutting takes place in the forest, it is not managed, there is no man induced change.

All cutting is heavily influenced by financial considerations. While improvement cutting (thinning) costs money (time is money too), harvesting earns money. The former, which would add value by accelerating growth, is shunned by most owners because of its short term cost. The latter takes place prematurely in most cases canceling the best tree growth opportunity. The short term drives a great deal of the action. Could this be reversed in more cases? How?

Now think for yourself as an MFO. What is your mission? It is to get others interested in doing more cutting in their forest because it is good for them. You know that doing more in that forest is also good for wildlife, for the forest resource, for society. But no matter what the forest owner's objectives are, you must remember that in the long run it is his trees that matter. You must never lose sight of that. What matters is what is growing there and what happens to it in the long run. Take a look at the trees this owner has: little trees or big trees, straight trees or crooked trees, etc. What is the potential of this tree resource?

What can be done to improve it for this owner for his short term goals but also for the long term ones also which extend beyond the present potential of this owner. You have to think of the long term goals and potentials. You do not have to explain them yet. Just make sure that the short term goals do not cancel the benefits of the long term. Trees will grow into the long term unless they are maimed. The long term will happen. It is up to you not to impede the long term potential even if the owner is not interested in them just yet.

Our MFO program requires no extended follow up to our initial visit. It is assumed that the DEC, or a consulting forester, will explain what to do even for the long term. Perhaps they will, perhaps the explanation will be listened to. You too have opportunities, however. You should mention long term benefits on your initial visit. Then, once in a while, you get clients who know a little about trees, or who have acquired a stand that has been managed before, or who have money and staying power, who are not on the run like most of us. Be alert and grab the opportunity to energize these types of clients to carry the work forward.

Those forests are a special place. They are on their way to having big, healthy, well growing trees. A new set of wildlife is ready to move in, new vistas, new enjoyments in a more mature environment are at hand. It is getting nearer to an appropriate harvest. You should follow up on your client contact. Stay in touch and you will be asked for an opinion now and then. You can send new information when you think it will encourage the owner.

After a while you will get bold too. You will pass by forests you knew decades ago. You will notice the growth. You will be pleased to see it. There will be harvests.

You can be instrumental in postponing them for better future results, or encourage a good, timely harvest. You should be able to get good value for all owners by assisting with advice at the time of a contemplated sale. This will enable society to benefit to the highest degree from what grows on our land which we may own from time to time but really only as temporary stewards of it. You know all this, but most people do not, or forget it and need to be helped at decision time. Remember the generation thing. Remember that there will be a harvest ultimately.

Remember that the economic value is in saw timber. Remember that all forest owners are paying taxes forever and they deserve the highest returns, which are in large saw timber. Remember that most forest owners know almost nothing about this, only you know and that you can talk about it at the right time. Be assured that your reward for helping your friends, the trees, is beyond your wildest dreams.

Peter Levatich is a member of the 1992 MFO class and a frequent contributor to the New York Forest Owner magazine.

The Volunteer welcomes submissions to the *Forestry Forum*. Space is provided to express views that are philosophical or even controversial in content, and that will help MFOs look at issues from fresh perspectives. Contributions of up to 1000 words are appreciated. Send submissions to: Mike Valla, 2 Hill Crest Lane, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866, e-mail: mev8@cornell.edu or Art Harris at: e-mail: dr-art-for@worldnet.att.net.

Time, Stewardship, Benevolence:

A Giving Resource

by Henry Kennan, MFO, '91

Every forest property is a shared resource. Owners know that woodlands (for the general good without regard to deeds and boundaries), control the fall and flow of water, promote wildlife, and favor the qualities we want in air, soil, and landscape. Such passive sharing is general and unavoidable. I have found a closer touch with my neighbors in the spruce seedlings that show up in my woods by the thousands year after year. Ten years ago, I let the public know of them, free for the taking at any quantity. Over 40,000 have since been removed from the shade and moss, and planted elsewhere.

The shade and moss that now nurture the seedlings did not exist 38 years ago. Their present site was a sun-baked level expanse, five acres of stone, grass and weed atop a moraine 100 feet above the valley floor. Even pioneers such as poplar, hawthorn, and pine had not appeared.

My choice for planting was white spruce, a rustic hardy tree of the north, native to this state only near the St. Lawrence. The White Spruce is a slow grower but an abundant seeder, with dense foliage and persistent lower branches that intercept wind, sight, and sound. Deer and weevils leave them alone.

The trees are now 40-50 feet high and up to 12" in diameter. Year after year their needles and cones fell among the weeds and stones covering their barrenness with the soft greenery of moss where seedlings can germinate and grow in sun year after year. To bring sunlight and warmth to the forest floor, I have pruned the parent trees up to 16 feet. The smaller trees thereby remain vigorous for many more years than they otherwise would. I also took out many trees as Christmas gifts for my neighbors.

Handsome as they are, White Spruce alone cannot compare for beauty and interest with a medley of broadleaves and needles. Among the rather somber spruce have appeared oaks and maples, shadberry, birch, and white pine. The White Pine Weevil does less damage to the host growing in the semi-shade. My White Pines (there are 28 of them on 5 acres) are thus far without weeviling. The new growth and admixture have brought with them many indications of deer, turkey, rabbits, squirrels, and seed-eating birds.

Tree distribution day is the first Saturday in May. Announcements and stories in the press bring over 100 men, women, and children each year, with their bags and buckets, and words of thanks. Boy and Girl scout volunteers help find the seedlings and loosen their roots with garden forks. With undamaged roots and prompt planting, survival is very good.

Henry Kennan is a member of the 1991 MFO Class and a frequent contributor to the New York Forest Owner magazine.

An MFO and A DEC Sr. Forester Discover Bad Decisions and Good Potential

by Roy Esiason

There is nothing quite like having a tutor when you are a novice and you very much want to build greater understanding of skillful forest management practices. Region 5 DEC Senior Forester Ron Cadieux was my tutor. On January 5 we spent better than 2 hours walking a 200-acre site in the Town of Hampton, Washington County, to determine if there was enough economic incentive to initiate a salvage operation to harvest blow down trees and standing timber for the sawmill and/or firewood.

As we walked, Ron gave a historical overview of the land and the forest. He talked about doing simple things to naturally feed deer and turkeys. He explained how timber stand improvement could go a long way to pay property taxes and have money left over. He pointed out crop trees and low value over-mature trees that impeded the growth of the crop trees, and he evaluated a timber harvest that had taken place 3-4 years earlier that was initiated by the former owner who had inherited the property.

The remnants of the harvest told a story that was shameful. High grading of the timber had obviously been the logger's motivation. Only the big trees had been harvested. There were clusters of huge stumps much too close together. (Saw cuts on the stumps suggested that the logger had put himself at serious risk!) Standing smaller harvestable trees, that should have been taken, had been left behind.

It was obvious that the landowner had not used the services of a professional forester. He was faced with huge inheritance taxes and had no clue about protecting the forest or his financial interests. His interest, based on ignorance, was to trust the logger to get him as much money as possible from the harvest before he sold the land. The logger had the best of all possible deals: no external controls, only his own personal ethics. To his credit he operated his skidder skillfully and left behind limited skidder scars.

Before we completed our walk, Ron determined that there was no economic incentive to initiate a salvage operation. His message for the forest owners would be: 1) to forget about harvesting timber at the present time, 2) to prolong timber growth and protect its future value, and 3) to become seriously

involved in timber stand improvement. Then somewhere down the road in ten or fifteen years there could be a profitable harvest that would maximize the ideals of sustainable forestry

What a special experience I had on the walk in the woods with Ron. I learned many important things and I was in the woods, a place where I love most of all to be. I took a number of giant steps that early January Millennium day as I did during the NY Master Forest Owner/ COVERTS Program this past summer. What a great way to celebrate the new century!

Roy Esiason is a member of the 1999 MFO Class

(continued from the front page)

The Sweet of the Year

By March the woodlands themselves along the river changed quickly, the trees absorbing the warm radiance of the sun creating peculiar halos of bare earth around their trunks. Tin pails were hanging from the big maples like ornaments, and every day the sled passed through collecting the sap-flow. The cool, driving rains came later, and by April the ground was washed in preparation for nature's greatest celebration.

There were unexpectedly warmer days now, though the landscape still seemed almost lifeless. But then came bird sounds and freshly leafed shrubs and I can still remember the spring peepers that followed, their shrill sounds filling the night air.

My walks along the river became more frequent now and I took notice of everything that was changing. It was a simple time before the realities of life's stresses. To a boy of only fifteen, nothing weighed heavily on the mind and it was as if my only duty was to understand the natural world around me.

The old, winding rock-strewn road through the woodlands and along the river was blown dry by the soft early May breezes, and the buds on the canopy above opened, sprouting new growth colored brightly in green. The sunrays broke through the sparsely branched hardwoods like spotlights along the road. And that is where I noticed them.

The diminutive flowers were growing in little mats along the road, their pale blue petals glowing in the bright sunshine and shimmering gently in the cool breeze. I stopped and looked closer, picking a small clump of them and I studied them in my hand. I

marveled at their intricate beauty and then carefully placed them back into the mossy ground.

It was a wonderful time of the year, and I will never forget that spring day I sat and took time to marvel at those little flowers.

When you are out in your woodlands this spring, take time to notice the small things. The spring of the year is such a wonderful season. Show your landowner, too, the small things that make his spring woodlands special. The stately old trees are there, but there is so much more to appreciate and study in this special time of year. Take time to just sit and marvel at what nature brings us every spring. It is the sweet of the year.

Mike Valla is an editor of The Volunteer, and a member of the MFO class of '93.

MFO/COVERTS **Introductory Presentation**

Thanks to a need and the insistence expressed by MFO Volunteer and Onondaga County CCE Educator Paul O'Connor, we will very shortly have available a 15-minute MFO/COVERTS introductory slide show with script available for any MFO volunteer to use. Gary Goff put together the presentation as a MS PowerPoint display and Paul used it at the State Fair Grounds in February before a crowd of about 90 forest owners. Paul says it is just what the doctor ordered, with few improvements necessary. By early April, it will be available to download off our Extension web page and as a loaner set of 35mm slides available from Deanna Owens, 607/255-2814, dlo3@Cornell.edu.

New Sponsors

The NY MFO/COVERTS Volunteer Program is very fortunate to have acquired three new sponsors for the 2000 program year. Rolf Wentorf, '99 MFO, worked with the board of the Robert H. Wentorf, Jr. Foundation to approve a grant to the MFO program. Mr. Eugene Giscombe, Pres. of the NY/Tri-State Chapter of Safari Club International, at the request of Scott Colby, a member from Connecticut, made a contribution on behalf of his organization to our program. The board at the new NY Woodland Stewards, Inc. passed a resolution

to partially fund NY's MFO/COVERTS Program. These funds will partially cover the loss of support from the NYS Forest Stewardship Program which, provided over half of our annual funding since its inception. If we are to continue to grow, additional support will need to be acquired. Suggestions are welcomed!

Regional Refreshers

Last year's refreshers were very well attended. So.. the challenge is upon us to maintain the quality experience. Gary would greatly appreciate receiving suggestions from you regarding hosts and locations (one each is needed from western, northern, and eastern NY). Gary has received a couple of offers and has some of his own ideas, but he seeks our input! The format is typically about 3 hours in the morning in an indoor setting, followed by an afternoon fieldtrip. Please contact Gary by the end of April to help this along!

Forestry Website

Peter Smallidge, Extension Forester and Director of the Arnot Forest, has done a lot of work in improving and adding to the Department of Natural Resources Webpage. The addresses appear below. The forestry page now includes the following topics: calendar, hot issues, assistance (includes info on the MFO/COVERTS Program), publications, virtual tours, maple production, Arnot Forest, NY forests, mission and hot links. The Arnot page is still under production, but currently has several useful items.

<http://www.dnr.cornell.edu/ext/forestrypage>

<http://www.dnr.cornell.edu/arnot>

Tree Trivia

QUESTION #1 *Seedling level difficulty:*

I am related to the pines, firs, and spruces. Although I am an American, I do not follow the tradition of my relatives. While the rest of my family hefts the heavy snows upon their winter green boughs, I strip myself naked every autumn, defying my family ways." *Who am I?*

QUESTION #2 *Sapling level difficulty:*

"I am not that big, but my nickname is

Moosewood." *Who am*

QUESTION #3 *Sawlog level difficulty:*

"Oil of Wintergreen is found in my sap and leaves. My roots are not shy. I boast quaint little curls along my trunk." *Who am I?*

The first reader to e-mail editor Mike Valla, MFO, '93, with the correct answer to any two of the three questions wins a prize!!! (mev3@cornell.edu)

New MFO Candidates

It is time to solicit candidates for this year's Volunteer Training Workshop at the Arnot Forest, to be held Wednesday evening September 13 through Sunday noon September 17, 2000. Please send Gary names and addresses of individuals you believe would make good MFO/COVERTS volunteers. You need not have previously contacted them as the introductory letter and application form pretty much stand on their own. Gary was real pleased with the turnout and response to the expanded workshop format last year, so he plans to try again this year. As usual, the new volunteers thought the training was a great learning experience and quite a bit of fun! In response to Jack Ward's article on "hardwood" in the Jan/Feb. 2000 issue of the NYFOA magazine, Gary is going the extra mile and suggest that volunteers bring a seat cushion for the folding oak chairs! He'd gladly accept other suggestions on program content and format with the one exception being, anything involving Chuck Winship (just joking!!)

WMI Releases

Schoolkid Booklet

The Wildlife Management Institute is delighted to announce the release of Living With Nature and Wildlife: Doing Our Part, by Del E. Benson. This is an illustrated, full color, 54 page teaching and learning guide created to explain the processes and basic principals of nature, wildlife ecology, and natural resource management.

Living with Nature and Wildlife: Doing Our Part is supported by the Wildlife for Tomorrow Program administered by Wildlife Forever of Minnetonka,

Minnesota. The booklet is available for \$4.00 a copy postpaid from the Wildlife Management Institute, 1101 14th Street, N.W. Suite 801, Washington, D.C. 20005. There are discount rates for bulk purchases. This is a great resource for youth groups, hunter education groups, libraries etc.

Year End Reports

Gary is compiling the data from the 1999 fiscal reporting year. He has received reports from about 25 volunteers so far. He knows there are more activities to report on! We need to document the program's value to sponsors and supporters. Gary will take reports through April, but will have to summarize it at that time. **Please use the enclosed Background Information, Visit Summary, and Additional Outreach Report forms**, or just write down whatever you have handy and he'll enter it into the data base.

Video Conference

On April 15, 2000 from 9:00a.m. until noon, Cornell Cooperative Extension will broadcast a satellite videoconference focusing on the economic aspects of private forestland stewardship. National experts will present to private forest owners strategies addressing enterprise development, estate planning, and tax management. The purpose of the videoconference is to help private forest owners improve their property by taking advantage of some economic opportunities. Contact your county extension office to find the downlink nearest you.

Most downlink sites will conduct an afternoon fieldtrip as a follow-up to the morning presentations. The New York Forest Owners Association and other state forest owner groups are cosponsors of many of the downlink sites.

For information contact: **Peter Smallidge, 607-255-4696, pjs23@Cornell.edu** and visit the **Forestry Web page at: <http://www.dnr.cornell.edu/ext/forestrypage>**

NYFOA Meeting

The Fall 2000 Meeting of the NY Forest Owners Association (NYFOA) will be held over the weekend of September 22-24, 2000 at Pack Forest in the eastern Adirondacks. This is the NYS College of Environmental Science and Forestry Charles Lathrop Pack Demonstration Forest of 2,200 acres located just north of Warrensburg, NY. This years fall meeting is co-sponsored by the South-eastern Adirondack and Capital District Chapters of NYFOA. Peter Gregory is chair of the planning committee.

MFO Volunteers from throughout the state are invited to use this meeting as an opportunity to visit the south-eastern Adirondacks in its early fall splendor. This meeting will be a special opportunity for MFOs in Eastern New York to gather for some refresher expertise and to exchange experiences in woodlot management. For information, please contact: Art Harris at 518-399-8320 or e-mail: dr-art-for@worldnet.att.net.

Art Harris is a member of the 1993 MFO Class

Greetings From Gary...

Hello all! I wish to heartily thank Mike and Art for pulling together this newsletter for us all. It serves a valuable administrative service for me and an informational communication service to you as volunteers! The articles contributed by Peter and Roy, Henry and Mike are just what we are looking for to publish in the next issue! Writing a paragraph or two is pretty easy now-a-days with all the editing capabilities of word processing! Let's hear about some of your adventures as Volunteers. Send the text, and he and Art will see to it that it gets edited and published! Thanks! -Gary Goff Program Director

MFO/COVERTS is a statewide program co-sponsored by The Ruffed Grouse Society, The Robert Wentorf Jr. Foundation, NY/Tri-State Chapter of Safari Club International, and NY Woodlands Stewards, Inc., and Cornell Cooperative Extensions Renewable Resources Extension Program with cooperation from NYS DEC Division of Lands and Forests and The NY Forest Owners Association. The purpose of the MFO program is to provide private, nonindustrial forest owners with the information and encouragement necessary to manage their forest holdings wisely.

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The Editors would like to thank MFO/COVERTS Program Director Gary Goff for submitting the News Items for this issue.