

Branching Out: Maryland's Forest Stewardship Educator

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Published four times a year and distributed to more than 5,000 forest landowners, resource professionals, and others interested in forest stewardship. For a free subscription or to send news items, dates, and comments, phone 301-432-2767 x301; fax 301-432-4089; e-mail jkays@umd.edu for questions regarding newsletter content and cmason@umd.edu for address changes, additions, or corrections; or mail to Branching Out, Maryland Cooperative Extension, 18330 Keedysville Road, Keedysville MD 21756-1104. The sponsoring agencies' programs are open to all citizens without regard to race, color, gender, disability, religion, age, sexual orientation, marital or parental status, or national origin.

Supported by the Maryland Tree Farm Committee.

The Maryland DNR Forest Service Streamlines Stewardship Programs

By definition, Forest Stewardship is the application of economic and ecological principles to manage forest land. Forest Stewardship plans for private landowners provide professional and technical information needed to manage and conserve their forest resources.

The Forest Stewardship Program is a Federal-State partnership designed to encourage long term management of forested working landscapes. The Stewardship Incentive Program (SIP) was originally authorized in the 1990 Farm Bill. The reauthorized 2002 Farm Bill included the Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP). The FLEP provides funding for educational outreach, technical and financial assistance in the form of cost share to private land owners. The Maryland Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee in partnership with the State Forester of the Maryland Forest Service (MFS) establishes policies and guidelines to administer the program.

Maryland's private landowners play a crucial role in providing many environmental benefits derived from our forest resources: clean water; reduced air pollution; wildlife habitat; threatened and endangered species conservation; recreation and numerous products to name a few. In Maryland 76% of forest land is owned by 130,000 private forest landowners, 75% of whom own less than 10 acres.

Until now, the MFS has operated on a first come-first served basis in providing service to landowners. This approach has been altered as the result of declining budgets. Over the past few years the MFS has reduced its workforce by 30%. The decision was made to focus the expertise on geographical areas that will provide the greatest environmental benefit.

To meet this challenge, the Maryland Forest Service has developed a series of recommendations to streamline programs in response to the budget/personnel reductions. The intent is to provide the highest level of service possible to deliver programs and services to the citizens of Maryland with the resources that are available.

The purpose of these programs under review is to help non-industrial forest landowners achieve their objectives and leave the land in better condition for future generations. Some of the recommendations will not only affect the private landowners' resources, but the enhancement programs that enable them to benefit from financial assistance (Cost Share Assistance) which enables them to benefit from financial assistance.

Key Changes starting January 2006:

1. Forest Stewardship Plans (FSP's) will only be prepared for properties between 10–500 acres of forest, unless the properties are within the following priority areas-Critical Area, Priority Watersheds as designated by the Clean Water Action Plan and renewals for landowners with Forest Conservation Management Agreement (FCMA). The smaller acreage tracts (5-10 acres) that no longer meet forest stewardship plan criteria will be referred to private forest consultants. To encourage consultant participation, Forest Land Enhancement Programs (FLEP) cost share rates for forest stewardship plans have been increased. New rates are \$500 flat rate + \$10 per ac for FSP's less than 10 ac. and \$400 flat rate + \$10 per ac. for FSP's 10 acres and greater. Forest landowners will be reimbursed 75% of the rate paid to the private consultant.
2. Forest Conservation Management Agreements Renewals will be defined as "existing" FCMA's, should the property owners want to continue with their Agreement. New FCMA requests will not be included under the new rules.
3. Forest planting established under the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) will continue to be a priority with no minimum acreage requirements.

In addition to the changes listed above, additional guidelines have been established. Properties with less than 10 acres of existing forest, where the landowner was willing or able to conduct a forestation that would equal 10 acres or more, will be eligible for assistance. Also, requests from landowners outside this acreage range can be provided with "general" forest management information (such as brochures, website addresses, reference materials, etc.), as well as information on how to access the forest consultant list, so they could retain a consultant to prepare a plan. University of Maryland Cooperative Extension will make education and outreach materials available through additional funding from the Maryland Forest Association. For information on these programs visit: www.naturalresources.umd.edu.

Private landowners are encouraged to contact their local Forest Service Office for information on private consultants, financial assistance and additional changes made for the upcoming fiscal year.
www.dnr.state.md.us/forests/

It's That Time of Year Again Timber Tax Info

Forest landowners need to consider how the three types of taxes affect them – property, timber, and estate taxes. Property taxes are paid each year and by having a forest stewardship plan most landowners with more than 5 acres can reduce their tax burden. Estate taxes involve the market value of the estate when passed on to heirs.

Timber taxes involve how you treat the sale of forest products in any one year. Are you unfamiliar with the tax treatment of timber and want to brush up, or learn about recent changes in the tax code that may affect you? Then the "National Timber Tax Website" is the place to find your answers. This website, developed in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service, is intended to be used by forest owners, and as

a source for accountants, attorneys, consulting foresters, and other professionals who work closely with forest owners.

Very few sections of the IRS Code are written specifically for timber. This causes a lot of confusion and grounds for interpretation which can become time consuming and complicated. On this website the guess work has been taken care of for you. The material is available for landowners in an easy to follow, easy to understand format and is user friendly for your specific situation.

The website is the most complete and comprehensive resource available for the treatment of timber and estate taxes. Visit the website at www.timbertax.org. For additional information on property, timber and estate taxes in the State of Maryland visit the Maryland Cooperative Extension Natural Resources website at www.naturalresources.com and click on Publications/Courses. Check out Fact Sheet 630, Tax and Estate Planning for Forest Landowners.

Call Before You Cut!

One of the objectives of the forestry profession is to assist landowners in making sound decisions about the management of their forests. With the help of professional forest managers, landowners can achieve their environmental and economic objectives. Before you agree to harvest any trees make sure you “Call Before You Cut.” That is, call a licensed professional forester.

To be considered a professional forester, practitioners must be Licensed Professional Foresters with the State of Maryland, the Department of Licensing and Regulation and the Board of Registration for Professional Foresters. Other basic requirements include graduation from a forestry school accredited by the Society of American Foresters with at least a Bachelor of Science degree and two years of practical experience under the guidance of a licensed forester.

There are different types of professional foresters that can help you –state, private consultant, and industrial foresters. State foresters work for the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) and they are the best place to call first for general information. They can develop forest stewardship plans but cannot assist with commercial timber sales. However, they can refer you to the Consulting and Industrial Foresters Referral List which will provide the names of foresters licensed to practice forestry in Maryland. A private consultant forester will work as your agent in a timber sale and assist with the marketing and oversight, usually for a commission. This is a recommended method for most forest landowners new to forest harvesting. Industrial foresters work for a specific mill and offer different services depending upon the company.

So, why call before you cut? Because experience has shown that landowners who do their homework prior to the harvest of forest products are more satisfied with the result and receive more income. If someone knocks at your door interested in purchasing your timber, ask them for their license number and see if they are a Maryland Professional Forester. Then, get references and do your homework.

The phone number of your state forester, a list of professional foresters and other information on forest stewardship and selecting a forester can be found at www.naturalresources.umd.edu. under the Forest Stewardship link.

Advice to Hunters Concerning Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)

Chronic wasting disease is a naturally occurring disease of the brain and nervous system in deer and elk. CWD belongs to the family of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSE) that attacks the brain

of deer and elk, producing small lesions that eventually result in death. Concerns over CWD shouldn't stop you from enjoying the hunting season. CWD has not been found in Maryland, but has been found in West Virginia and Pennsylvania*. It has not been shown to be transmissible to humans. However, hunters' field-dressing or butchering deer should take the same precautions as they might to protect against other pathogens or diseases. The following precautionary measures are recommended for safe handling, field-dressing and home processing:

- Avoid shooting or handling a deer that appears sick.
- Remove all internal organs.
- Bone the deer (remove the meat from the bones and spinal column). Do not use household knives or utensils. Avoid cutting through bones or the spinal column (backbone). Never eat a deer's brain, eyeballs, spinal cord, spleen, or lymph nodes. If you saw off antlers or through a bone, or if you sever the spinal column with a knife, be sure to disinfect these tools prior to using them for the butchering or removal of meat. Remove all fat, membranes and connective tissue from the meat. Note that normal field-dressing and trimming of fat from meat will remove lymph nodes. Always wash hands and instruments thoroughly after dressing and processing game meat. Use a 50/50 solution of household chlorine bleach and water to disinfect tools and work surfaces. Wipe down counters and let them dry; soak knives for one hour.

If you hunt deer or elk in other states and/or provinces, particularly those in which CWD has been detected, check with the respective fish and wildlife agencies regarding special regulations or specific advice for hunters. Also check with your home state fish and wildlife agency to ensure that animals lawfully killed elsewhere may be imported and possessed in your state. Additional information can be found at the CWD alliance website <http://www.cwd-info.org/> and the Maryland DNR website <http://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/deerhunting.asp>.

*** CORRECTION: Chronic Wasting Disease HAS NOT been found in Pennsylvania. We apologize for the error and will print a retraction in the Winter 2006 issue.**

Welcome New Coverts Cooperators

The Coverts Project has been reaching out to Maryland's individual woodland landowners since 1990 to teach them how sound management practices can make wildlife healthier, more diverse, and more abundant.

This year's 2005 Coverts did just that at their training sessions September 22-25, 2005. On behalf of the University of Maryland Cooperative Extension and the Ruffed Grouse Society, we welcome and congratulate our new class (pictured below)

. For additional information on the Covert's Program, visit our website at www.naturalresources.umd.edu.



2005 Coverts Cooperators

Left to Right (back two rows): Richard Cook, Mike Tabor, Karen Martinez, Dave Richards, Carol Gilliss, Greg Villabona, Amanda Koss, Joe Ryba, Brain Kristal, Paul Effingham, Paul Walker, John Storck

Left to Right (front rows): Jonathan Kays, Brian Torrance, Franz Stuppard, Nancy-Elizabeth Nimmich, John Price, Douglas Phelps, Harry Ford, Kevin Grimes, Madonna Pool, Pamela Martin, Janet Sykes

Calendar of Events

- January 28, 2006. 19th Delmarva Forestry Seminar - University of Delaware Virdin Retreat Center, Lewes, DE. Registration and information contact Dot Abbott-Donnelly at 302-697-4000 or email dotad@udel.edu.
- January 2-6, 2006. Advanced Landscape Plant Short Course-Plant Sciences Building, University of Maryland, College Park, MD. For more details on registration contact Debbie Wilhoit at 301-405-3913 or email debrar@umd.edu.
- January 10 and January 17, 2006. Pesticide Private Applicator Test Review and Exam-Garrett County, MD. For persons interested in taking the Pesticide Private Applicator test. Contact Willie Lantz at 301-334-6960 or wlantz@umd.edu to reserve a seat.
- February 10-12, 2006. Leopold Education Project Facilitator Workshop-The Carroll County Chapter #622 of Pheasants Forever is sponsoring a workshop at the Hashawha Environmental Education Center north of Westminster, MD. For additional information contact Tom Harbold at 410-751-1772 or tharbold@qis.net.

Visited www.naturalresources.umd.edu lately? Check for latest postings!