



BRANCHING OUT

Maryland's Forest Stewardship Educator

Vol. 15, No. 3

www.naturalresources.umd.edu

Summer 2007

New Website Eases Transition Between Generations

Bob bought several hundred acres of forest land for \$500,000 in the 1950s. It was important to him to keep the land both in the family and forested, so when he and his wife died he left it all to his son, Jon, who he knew would take good care of it. Much to Jon's surprise, he received a bill for almost \$400,000 in state and federal taxes soon after inheriting the land. No one had realized that the land's value had risen to \$2.5 million because of its prime location for development. Unfortunately, Jon was forced to sell the land in order to finance these inheritance taxes, and soon saw it subdivided and developed.



"Not What Dad Wanted," one of the videos available on the *Ties to the Land* website.

Estate planning for forest land is necessary to prevent a similar fate for your family and its assets. There is a new resource for families facing the challenge of passing their properties and land-based businesses from one

generation to the next. The *Ties to the Land* website will help guide family landowners through ownership transition. Developed to address the needs of forest landowners, the site has relevance for families with agricultural or other land-based businesses as well. The website includes streaming video clips, excerpts from the *Ties to the Land* workbook, a calendar of events and links to other relevant sites. The site will be expanded, and new features added, to meet users' emerging needs.

<http://www.familybusinessonline.org/resources/ttl/home.htm>

To get you started, here are a few pointers for creating a successful estate plan. The first step is to create an inventory of all of your assets, which will all be considered part of your taxable estate. Part of this process should be the appraisal of your land, to avoid surprises like Jon's. If your total assets, including real property, are worth less than \$2 million, they will be exempt from federal taxes, and if less than \$1 million they will be exempt from most Maryland taxes.

Next, talk with your family and identify your goals for the land, such as continued timber production, preservation for wildlife, or financial security for your heirs. Now you can assemble your estate planning team. Calling on professionals for help does cost some money, but inheritance and tax laws are so complex that very few landowners can do it on their own. The expense is also small when compared to the value of your land. Your team should consist of your family attorney, an accountant specializing in estate planning, a forester, and possibly a representative from a conservation organization or a town planning board.

Once your team is assembled, you can discuss options like annual tax-free gifting of smaller parcels of your land, and the use of trusts and bargain sales to reduce taxes. You may also want to discuss the possibility of a significant exclusion from federal estate taxes through the sale or donation of development rights on your land

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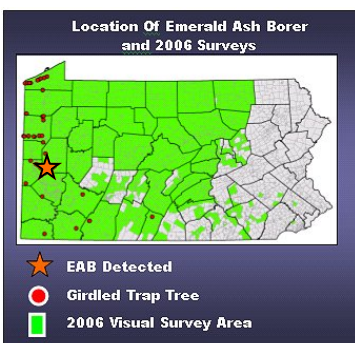
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as a conservation easement. One or more of these options in combination with a well-designed estate plan and a forest stewardship plan can help you rest easy knowing that your assets will be well cared for after your death, and that Uncle Sam will not get more than his due. The area of estate planning is one in which an old adage holds true: "Failing to plan is planning to fail."

Some of the information in this article came from "Forest Stewardship: Estate Planning" by Penn State Cooperative Extension. For more information, check out the Ties to the Land website (address on page 1), contact your county extension agent (extension.umd.edu/local) or DNR forester, or search for "estate taxes" at www.naturalresources.umd.edu, www.irs.gov, or www.comp.state.md.us.

EAB Found in Pennsylvania

Two adult emerald ash borers (EAB) were found during a routine inspection on June 21, 2007 in Cranberry Township, Butler County, Pennsylvania. These are the



From PA DCNR website
www.dcnr.state.pa.us.

first EAB specimens seen in the state. Officials are currently conducting further inspections to determine the extent and severity of the infestation, and a quarantine is now in place in four counties. The quarantine restricts the transportation of any ash material, living or dead, and all hardwood firewood. In Maryland, a quarantine is also still in effect in Prince George's County.

The effort to eradicate all ash trees bigger than 1" DBH within a 13,714 acre eradication zone in Prince George's county was completed in May. On June 1, a tree on the edge of the 2 mile survey buffer was found with three galleries, one larva, and one adult, but no additional instances were detected in nearby ash trees.

A new program will utilize trained Master Gardener volunteers to inspect possible EAB detection sites. Report possible infestations at www.hgic.umd.edu or

call MD Dept of Agriculture at 410-260-3477. Go to www.mda.state.md.us/plants-pests/eab/current.php for the latest news.

Gypsy Moth Worst in 12 Years

Maryland is currently experiencing the worst gypsy moth outbreak in a dozen years. Despite the spraying of more than 50,000 acres of public and privately owned land in May by the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA), large portions of the state have been defoliated. Now that caterpillars are pupating, spraying is ineffective. The best action to take is to water defoliated trees and call your nearest MDA service center to report damage.

Hess Named Tree Farmer of the Year

Robert Hess was presented with the 2007 Maryland Tree Farmer of the Year award before the Maryland Senate on Arbor Day 2007.



Robert Hess, MD Tree Farmer of the year for 2007.

Hess, a retired waterman of 43 years and currently a handicap school bus driver, owns and manages his 487 acre tree farm in Marion for profit, wildlife habitat, recreation, and for his own satisfaction and health. He also

Branching Out - Vol. 15, No. 3, Summer 2007

Editors: Jonathan Kays and Nevin Dawson

Published four times a year and distributed to forest landowners, resource professionals, and other interested in forest stewardship. Issues are posted online at www.naturalresources.umd.edu/BranchingOut.cfm. To sign up for online updates, email listserv@listserv.umd.edu. In the body of the message, type SUB branchingout your name (ex: SUB branchingout John Doe). For a hardcopy subscription (\$10 per year, payable to University of Maryland at the address below) or to send news items, email ndawson@umd.edu; call 410-827-8056 x125; or mail

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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.

works to promote forest management awareness to the community at large by hosting visits from school groups and speaking at community meetings.

Hess' tree farm contains woodland, stream buffers, marsh, and food plots, and has been under a forest management plan since 1993. He planted a total of 151 acres, 60 of which are under incentive programs. He also experiments with planting techniques and new species. A believer in intensive management, Hess sprays to manage competition, prunes and thins for timber improvement, and closely monitors all results. He has also personally managed several timber sales for both pulpwood and saw timber on his land, including a clear-cut and a commercial thinning,

Hats off to Robert Hess, a shining example of an active forest manager, and Maryland's Tree Farmer of the Year!

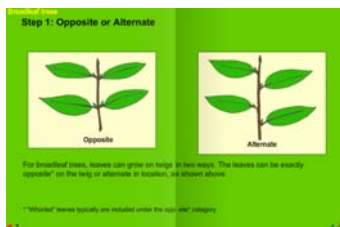
State Forest Plans up for Review

The Maryland DNR Forest Service is conducting an online public meeting for 30 days to solicit comments on the proposed work plans for four State Forests: Green Ridge, Pocomoke, Potomac-Garrett, and Savage River. The plans will be available for public viewing and comments from June 25, 2007 to July 24, 2007. The plans identify the work that is to be accomplished in the 2008 fiscal year. Each work plan can be accessed from the DNR website: <http://www.dnr.state.md.us/forests/workplans/>. Call Jack Perdue at 410-260-8505 with questions.

Forestry Course goes Online

Maryland Cooperative Extension has gone high-tech. The new online version of the General Forestry Course will run from September 1 until December 15, 2007. Registration opens August 1, and class size is limited to 10 participants on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Like the original paper version, there are no formal classes. You work from the comfort of your home, using your own woodlot, a friend's, or a public forest while



Online forestry course has interactive exercises.

learning the basics of forestry, forest ecology, and forest health in this non-credit certificate course. The course exercises ultimately help you develop the framework of a management plan for your forest.

The core content of the course is the same, but the text and appendices are now electronic, and there are additional interactive exercises. Access to live online Master Logger lectures is also included. Course registration costs \$300.00, which includes hard copies of supplemental materials and a CD-ROM with required texts. Discussion with other students and the instructor are also included in the curriculum.

For more information and to view sample lessons and exercises, go to <http://www.agnr.umd.edu/extension/elearning/generalforestry/>, or contact Nancy Stewart at 410-827-8056, ext. 112, nstewart1@umd.edu.

Assistance Program Update

Landowners can obtain cost-sharing or incentive payments for a variety of management activities. Details of the programs change often, so check with your county forester before applying.

Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP)—WHIP provides cost-share reimbursement to landowners that plant grassland habitat or restore riparian buffers, stream banks, and wetlands for wildlife habitat. The program is currently well-funded and open to applications.

Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)—EQIP has an agricultural land focus, but may also be applied to forestry practices. The program shares 25-75% of costs to install and maintain conservation practices that enhance soil, water, and related natural resources, while sustaining production of food and fiber. This program is more complex than others.

Conservation Reserve Program & Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CRP & CREP)—These programs share costs up to 87.5% and pay landowners to put their least productive agricultural lands into conservation practices (including forest) that benefit wildlife, improve water quality, and conserve soil. Watch for changes to the incentive structures of these programs in the near future.

Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP)—FLEP shares up to 50-75% of the cost of approved practices for landowners with up to 1,000 acres and a Forest Stewardship Plan. Funds for this program are very limited and distributed on a rolling basis, so apply soon.

Forest Stewardship Plan Subsidy—Qualified landowners can have a Forest Stewardship Plan written for their property by a county forester at no charge. This program is funded by the Natural Resource Conservation Service, but is currently dormant. It will likely be reinstated in the next fiscal year, so look for an announcement.

All of these programs may undergo significant changes as a result of the 2007 Farm Bill, which will take effect when passed by Congress. Talk to your county forester about which program is best for you and your land.

Watch Live Lectures Online

Forestry seminars on the Internet? Free and easy? Yes! Cornell University's ForestConnect program continues the nation's first webcast seminar series for forest landowners. The thirty minute webcasts are the third Wednesday of each month with live presentations at noon and again at 7:00 PM. Presenters are technical experts from the area of forestry and natural resources. Participants must pre-register once, without charge, at www.ForestConnect.info. Email notification of Internet URL details will be sent to all registrants prior to each seminar.

July 18th—Working With Foresters

August 15th—Timber Sale Arrangement

September 19th—Small-Scale Firewood Production

October 17th—Creating Vernal Pools for Wildlife

November 21st—Hardwood Natural Regeneration

December 19th—Don't Degrade Your Woodlot

Coverts Refresher Courses Open to Public: Save the Date

The Coverts Project is a three day training course teaching sound forest and wildlife management practices to a select group of people each year who then apply these principles to their own property and actively encourage others to practice good forest stewardship. There will be no Coverts training this

year, but there are plans for five Coverts Refresher Courses to be held across the state in September. Each will be hosted by a Coverts Cooperator and will showcase their property and projects. There will also be time to discuss the state of the Coverts Project and for input on its future direction. Interested in becoming a Coverts Cooperator next year? These field days will be a great way to learn more about the project. Contact Cindy Mason at cmason@umd.edu or 301-432-2767 x301 to receive more information as it becomes available.

Sept 8—Garrett County

Sept 22—Baltimore and Dorchester Counties

Sept 29—Washington and Calvert Counties

Miscellanea

Forest Stewardship Website offers a wide variety of resources for forest landowners and managers, and is frequently updated. www.naturalresources.umd.edu

GPS training courses for professionals will be offered in October and November (may also interest landowners). Check out training materials on the website. Contact Cindy Mason for more information as available: cmason@umd.edu or 301-432-2767 x301

Woods in Your Backyard workshops and twilight tours are still in progress. Contact your county extension agent if interested in having one in your area.

Upcoming Stewardship Events

August 11 *Game Management* (11:00 am) and *Setting Forest Management Goals* (5:00 pm). Queen Anne's County Fair, Centreville. Contact Carol Taylor at 410-827-8056 x135.

September 12 *Tree Farm Biosolids Workshop and Field Tour*. Marion, MD. Contact Howard Anderson at 301-855-0927.

September 8, 22, 29 *Coverts refresher courses* (see above).

October 3 *Maryland Forests Association Annual Conference*. Go to www.mdforests.org/AM2007.htm for more information.

October 6 *College of Agriculture and Natural Resources Open House*. Clarksville, MD. Contact Frank Allnutt at fallnutt@umd.edu or 301-432-2767 x308

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