



# BRANCHING OUT

Maryland's Forest Stewardship Educator

Vol. 16, No. 2

[www.naturalresources.umd.edu](http://www.naturalresources.umd.edu)

Spring 2008

## TREND TOWARD SMALLER ACREAGE FORESTS

The challenge of providing assistance to Maryland private forest landowners is becoming more difficult due to the increasing number of owners with smaller acreages. Seventy-six percent of Maryland's forests are privately owned, most by family forest owners. As development has occurred across the state larger forest holdings have been "parcelized" or separated into smaller tracts owned by more individuals who often have differing objectives. The result is that the forest becomes increasingly fragmented and owners are more difficult to reach by traditional education, financial, and technical assistance providers.

The USDA Forest Service does periodic surveys of woodland owners and the trend of increasing parcelization is very clear in the newly released 2006 survey. In 1976 only 55% of private forest owners owned under 10 acres. This increased to 65% by 1989, but jumped dramatically to 85% of the total number of owners by 2006. This has come as the result of parcelization.

These percentages must be considered in conjunction with the actual acreage owned by private forest owners. It is usually assumed that while there is a large number of small acreage landowners, they represent a small part of the total forest acreage, so it is best to focus resources on larger acreage owners to have the most impact – a valid point. In 1977 and 1989 only about 7-8 percent of the private forest acreage was owned by private forest owners with less than 10 acres. However, private forest ownership jumped to 17% (22% for family forests) in the 2006 survey. If you include the owners of parcels from 10-49 acres, it totals more than half the total forest acreage. This is a significant percentage of the forest resource and one that will likely increase as parcelization continues.

There is some good news from the 2006 survey. Six percent of private forest owners representing 33% of the acreage have a written forest management plan and 13% of owners representing 58% of the forest acreage

received professional consultation, mostly from the state forestry agency.

The 2006 survey, like other surveys before it, indicates that quality of life objectives top the list of reasons for owning woodland. At the top of the list are objectives for privacy, part of the home, aesthetic appeal, diversity, and enjoyment, along with others. While 40 percent of forest owners reported a tree

harvest between 2002 and 2006, two-thirds of those reports were harvesting for firewood – a very low percentage was logs, veneer logs, and pulpwood. This indicates that cutting firewood on one's property is a popular activity.

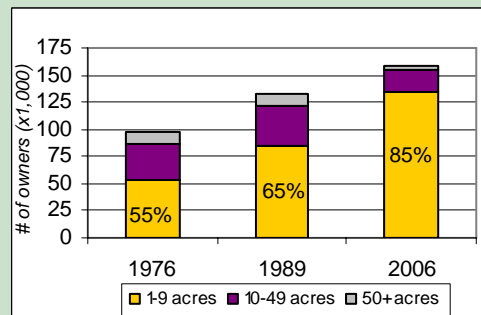
The challenge facing forestry agencies, university extension, and other organizations is how to reach this small acreage audience that generally has non-commercial interests, while continuing to provide assistance for larger acreage landowners who need technical, financial, and educational

assistance (and own the majority of the forest resource). The Maryland Forest Service now provides one-on-one management planning services to those with more than 10 acres of woodland; however, this leaves small acreage owners with little access to traditional technical assistance. To meet this need, University of Maryland Cooperative Extension has developed a self-assessment publication that can be used by small acreage landowners to enhance and create natural areas on their property. Entitled 'The Woods in Your Backyard' (WIYB), this publication allows owners to plan for sustainable outcomes that promote clean water, viable native wildlife populations, recreational opportunities, and forest health. Workshops are offered at some locations around the state, but the book can be used by itself by anyone. More details on the WIYB publication, as well as numerous resources to support it can be found at:

[www.naturalresources.umd.edu/backyard.cfm](http://www.naturalresources.umd.edu/backyard.cfm).

The change in the forest landscape to smaller acreages will require an increasing focus on educational initiatives that utilize the Internet, volunteers, local programs, and educational materials. It is unlikely most professional foresters will be available to work on these smaller properties as service providers. Efforts are now underway to work with the green industry professionals such as landscapers and arborists who are already working around these properties, to provide them the training to offer services that small acreage owner's seek.

# of MD Private Forest Owners by Year and Size



### INSIDE

- TREND TOWARD SMALLER ACREAGE FORESTS..... 1
- MARYLAND BIG TREE PROGRAM CHANGES..... 2
- MARYLAND WOODLAND STEWARDS ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS..... 2
- MASTER LOGGER PROGRAM ADDED TO EXTENSION..... 2
- TIMBER TRENDS: THE TREE FARMER'S SECRET WEAPON..... 3
- IN EVERY ISSUE..... 4



**MARYLAND BIG TREE PROGRAM**

The Maryland Big Tree Program (MBTP) was started in 1925 by Fred Besley, Maryland's first State Forester. Mr. Besley also developed the three-part system for measuring trees. In 1940, the American Forests Association began the national program, adopting Mr. Besley's measurement system. In 2007, due to budget cuts, the Department of Natural Resources Forest Service transferred all the Information and Educational (I & E) Programs, including the MBTP, to the Maryland Association of Forest Conservancy District Boards, a volunteer group. The Cecil (County) Forest Conservancy District Board assumed operational responsibility for the MBTP, and John Bennett, a former Coverts Cooperator and Cecil Board member, became the volunteer coordinator for the Program. You can visit the new website and contact Mr. Bennet at:

Website: [www.cecilfb.sailorsite.net](http://www.cecilfb.sailorsite.net)  
 Email: [mdbigtreeprogram@aol.com](mailto:mdbigtreeprogram@aol.com)  
 Phone: 410-287-5980

The scope of the MBTP was also downsized. Prior to 2007, all nominated trees were automatically included on the Maryland Big Tree Register, a database in Microsoft Access format.

After the transfer, it was decided that only newly measured trees that met the national standard of "native or naturalized" would be added to the MBTP Register. This change of policy will be reevaluated in coming years as the volunteer base expands, and a standard of inclusion is established. Readers may want to ponder the questions of "what constitutes a 'big tree'?" and "should hybrids be included?" We currently have 1,841 trees on the database, so there is also an issue of manageable size.

We submitted 18 trees from Maryland to *American Forests* for possible inclusion in their 2008-09 National Register of Big Trees as National Champions. This edition was released on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, Earth Day.

The downsized Maryland State Champion List, in Microsoft Excel format, is available from Mr. Bennett at the above email address. A copy in portable document format (pdf) is available on the above website, but may not be completely up to date. Mr. Bennett and a group of volunteers generally travel throughout the State twice a month measuring/re-measuring trees. Should you be interested in learning how to measure trees, becoming a MBTP volunteer, or nominating a tree, please contact Mr. Bennett 410-287-5980 [mdbigtreeprogram@aol.com](mailto:mdbigtreeprogram@aol.com)



**MARYLAND WOODLAND STEWARDS TRAINING—CALL FOR APPLICATIONS**

The Maryland Woodland Stewards project (formerly the Coverts Project) will hold its annual training seminar October 9, 10, 11 and 12, 2008 at Camp Pecometh in Centreville, MD. University of Maryland Cooperative Extension is




now accepting applications from individuals interested in forest and wildlife management on large or small properties. Since 1990, this program has been reaching out to Maryland's individual woodland owners, teaching individuals about how forest stewardship can improve wildlife habitat and forest health.

The three-and-a-half day training includes classroom instruction on management practices for wildlife and forest health, as well as field trips to actively manage forest

land. Using concepts of "neighbor helping neighbor" and "education through demonstration," participants use case studies and other materials to learn how to help other landowners reach their goals.

The all-inclusive cost for the training is only \$95, a bargain by any measure. In return for the training, participants, known as "Maryland Woodland Stewards," agree to develop or improve a forest stewardship plan for their property, and spend 40 hours over the following year in making an active effort to advocate sound forest and wildlife management in their communities.

If you are interested in attending the training workshop, or know someone you would like to nominate for the program, please contact Nevin Dawson at 410-827-8056 ext. 125 or by email at:


[ndawson@umd.edu](mailto:ndawson@umd.edu)  
 All program information, applications, and other materials are available online at: [www.naturalresources.umd.edu](http://www.naturalresources.umd.edu)  
 Applications are due by July 9 and those selected will be notified by the end of July. 

**MASTER LOGGER PROGRAM ADDED TO EXTENSION**

University of Maryland Cooperative Extension has gained a new asset. The Maryland/Delaware Master Logger Program (MLP), formerly run by the Maryland Forests Association, is now a member of the MCE family. MLP is a voluntary, proactive, logger training and education program aimed at encouraging excellence in the timber harvesting profession. Loggers involved in the program have a desire to become the best they can be in their profession. Master Logger training is also required in order to log on Maryland state land, and wood products must be harvested

by Master Loggers to receive Sustainable Forestry Initiative certification.

To become a Master Logger, one must complete the 16 hour core training requirement, which is broken into four courses that cover topics from safety to activism to endangered species. First Aid and CPR certification must be maintained, and eight hours of continuing education credits are required every two years.

The new website at [www.md-demasterlogger.com](http://www.md-demasterlogger.com) has more information, *The Logger* quarterly newsletter, and many of the presentations used during the training programs. A variety of continuing education classes are offered to both potential Master Loggers and the general public. Check the website calendar or subscribe to the newsletter to stay up to date. To subscribe, for more information, or to find a Master Logger in your area, contact Nevin Dawson at [ndawson@umd.edu](mailto:ndawson@umd.edu) or 410-827-8056. 

## TIMBER TRENDS — THE TREE FARMER'S SECRET WEAPON

BY: DAN RIDER, FOREST PRODUCTS SPECIALIST AND STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM MANAGER, MARYLAND DNR FOREST SERVICE

The recent decline in the housing market has captured the attention of most Americans. Monthly housing reports are followed by industry workers and investors looking for clues to predict future financial trends. However, this particular decline has provided an understanding of how the housing market has influenced the lumber market which, in turn, influenced the timber market. Forest owners are left with questions about timber values for today and in the future.

Experts are unanimous in asserting that the housing market will remain depressed for at least another year. Market declines have happened before, but there's a lot of fuss over this one because it occurred suddenly, widely and quickly "jumped" over into the financial markets, leaving behind related dual market declines. This situation has left analysts reporting a high risk averse capital market (meaning that home buyers and lenders are both leery of taking/making loans on property they fear might not hold its value). This housing decline affect is more than the usual issues of supply and demand. This time, it's a difficult combination of housing inventory levels *and* a retracting capital market. The demand for lumber to build those homes had declined and depressed timber prices.

respond, and the species in usual high demand will once again be at the forefront of the timber buyers demand curve. With the weak U.S. dollar, the timber market may come back faster than once predicted due to export demands.

The third reality is that the current timber market situation is unusual, but not unique. Look at the chart for pine stumpage prices which tracks actual price paid for standing timber since 1964. Those sharp peaks and valleys represent the wild nature of pine prices from month to month. But note the heavy curved yellow line roughly in the center of the fray representing the "real" price of the pine adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Price Index. What is obvious is that the real price of pine continues to rise regardless of the short-term disturbances in the market. The hardwood market is similar to the pine market. Timber is a valuable asset as it continues to increase in real value. Furthermore, timber continues to "beat" inflation by increasing in real value through tough times.

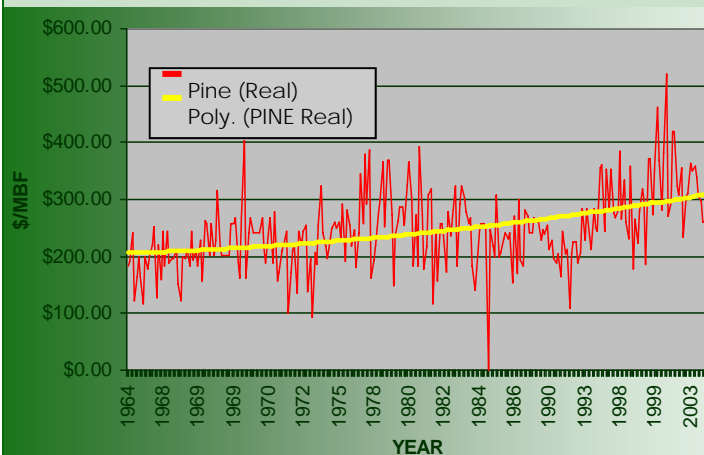
### The Tree Farmer's Secret Weapon

My argument is that marketing your timber should be based primarily on an educated evaluation of your financial and non-financial goals set forth in your management plan. Making management decisions based on price speculation is taking a gamble. The tree farmer's secret weapon is *the growth of trees*. Focus on growing healthy trees. The bigger trees are worth more so as time marches onward, so do your trees in both height and girth. Double the diameter of a tree and you will (roughly) quadruple its volume. But keep in mind that trees die. When your trees slow in growth or mortality consumes more volume than what the rest of the trees produce, your asset is declining. Market timber at this decline in your forest instead of "timing the market," which is rarely successful.

The odds are that you will achieve both your financial and personal goals by staying focused on your overall management plan. The power of compound interest working in concert with the growth of trees all but assures your timber assets will increase in real value with time. So, focus on the fun stuff and grow your trees. 🌲

### Real Value of Timber

Pine Stumpage Prices  
Adjusted for Inflation using Consumer Price Index (CPI)  
Base Year = 1984



### The Reality

The timber market still exists and prices haven't dropped all that much despite the doom and gloom headlines! Houses are still being built, just not as many. The first reality is that homeowners are inclined to improve upon their current home instead of upgrading to a brand new, bigger home. The remodeling sector is a huge component of the overall wood market and it seems to be holding its own as people are seeking to invest their money into their existing home. The second reality is the bloated inventory levels of the complex lumber industry. Lumber futures are in fact moving upwards, albeit slowly and in small increments. Once this excess inventory works itself clear, the timber markets will quickly

### Branching Out

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WEB RESOURCES

EXTENSION LAUNCHED IN FEBRUARY



eXtension was officially launched on February 21 in a virtual ribbon-cutting ceremony. The U.S. Secretary of Agriculture did the honors from the USDA Ag Outlook Forum in Washington, D.C. A local extension office from each of the seventy-five land grant universities participated via web conference. In Maryland, the

Washington County Extension Office hosted the eXtension public launch.

eXtension is unlike any other search engine or information-based website. It's a space where university content providers can gather and produce new educational and information resources on wide-ranging topics. Because it's available to students, researchers, clinicians, professors, as well as the general public, at any time from any Internet connection, eXtension helps solve real-life problems in real time.

eXtension resource areas are known as Communities of Practice. These Communities of Practices are typically multi-institutional, multi-state, and

multi-disciplinary bringing the "best of the best" educational resources to the public.

Over time, more information about Natural Resources will populate the eXtension website. For now, resource areas of interest are:

- Pest Management: Wildlife Damage Management
- Community: Gardens, Lawns and Landscape

[www.extension.org](http://www.extension.org)



FORESTRY FOR THE BAY



Chesapeake Bay Program partners have unveiled *Forestry for the Bay*, a new program that promotes sustainable forest management as a way to improve the health of the region's woodlands and the quality of local streams, rivers and the Chesapeake Bay. This voluntary membership program is free and designed to provide resources and information to small acreage woodlot owners, the largest forest landowner group in the Chesapeake region.

Forests are the natural cover for our region once comprising 95% of the landscape. Today, 58% remains forested and is made up of smaller and smaller lots owned by a diverse group of private owners. In fact, there are currently 900,000 private family forest owners that own nearly 80% of the total Chesapeake Forests. For more information about program details and membership benefits, visit their website at the address below.

[www.forestryforthebay.org](http://www.forestryforthebay.org)

INFO CHIPS

EAB Update

Posted February, 2008—Emerald Ash Borer Eradication Update: MD Dept. of Agriculture's website:  
[www.mda.state.md.us/plants-pests/eab/current.php](http://www.mda.state.md.us/plants-pests/eab/current.php)

Gypsy Moth

Posted March 18, 2008—MDA announces spray block locations on or about April 21. Keep checking MDA website for updates:  
[www.mda.state.md.us](http://www.mda.state.md.us)

Gypsy Moth Page—Home and Garden Information Center:

[www.hgic.umd.edu/content/GypsyMoth.cfm](http://www.hgic.umd.edu/content/GypsyMoth.cfm)

MDA Email Newsletter—Celebrating Maryland Agriculture

Sign up for a free copy of the MDA Email Newsletter at the address below. This is a nicely formatted monthly newsletter with valuable information and upcoming events pertaining to Maryland agriculture.

[www.mda.state.md.us](http://www.mda.state.md.us)

NWOS Table Maker

Create a customized National Woodland owner Survey Table online using 2002 to 2006 NWOS data. Enter State(s) of interest, variable(s), and apply an optional size of forest holding filter.

<http://fiatools.fs.fed.us/NWOS/tablemaker.jsp>

[www.naturalresources.umd.edu](http://www.naturalresources.umd.edu)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Date / Time	Event Details
5/14/08 9:30 am to 2:30 pm	Small Landowner Forestry and Conservation Field Tour—Somerset and Wicomico Counties. \$5.00 per person (includes lunch, materials and transportation). For more information, contact Berran Rogers at 410-651-6693 or <a href="mailto:blrogers@umes.edu">blrogers@umes.edu</a>
5/21/08	Online Seminar: An Introduction to the Ecology & ID of Common Northeastern Conifers by Peter Smallidge, Cornell University Cooperative Extension. FREE. For more information and instructions, go to: <a href="http://www.dnr.cornell.edu/ext/forestconnect/web.htm">www.dnr.cornell.edu/ext/forestconnect/web.htm</a>
9/12/08 8:30 am to 3:30 pm	5th Annual Eastern Regional Tree Farm Meeting Senator Stolzfus Tree Farm. Details forthcoming.
7/20/08 to 7/26/08	High School Students—Natural Resources Career Week Conference Hickory Environmental Education Center; Garrett County, MD For application and other info., go to: <a href="http://www.dnr.state.md.us/forests/nrcareersconf.html">www.dnr.state.md.us/forests/nrcareersconf.html</a>
10/9/08 to 10/12/08	Maryland Woodland Stewards Training Camp Pecometh, Centreville, MD (For more details, see article on page 2.)
10/16/08 to 10/18/08	2008 National Tree Farmer Convention, to be held in Portland, Oregon Hilton Portland & Executive Tower Hotel For more information, go to: <a href="http://www.treefarmssystem.org/cms/pages/73_1.html">www.treefarmssystem.org/cms/pages/73_1.html</a>