

THE OVERSTORY

SE ADIRONDACK CHAPTER NEWSLETTER



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Message From the Editor – This edition of *THE OVERSTORY*, contains: excerpts from a panel presentation made during Forestry Awareness Day by the SAC vice-chair, John Sullivan, and additional information useful to NYFOA members. Please feel free to make suggestions for improvement. Unsolicited contributions are welcome. My e-mail: dwg@frontiernet.net, phone: 315.392.4641. I look forward to hearing from you, Dan Gilmore.

THE ECONOMIC REALITY OF SMALL WOODLOTS – PRESENTED DURING FORESTRY AWARENESS DAY BY SAC VICE-CHAIR, JOHN SULLIVAN

The following article was adapted from remarks given at a panel on New York's Forests and the Economy held during Forestry Awareness Day, March 19 in Albany.

We in New York boast about our numbers, which are pretty impressive. We have more than 15 million acres of forestland, and a forest-based economy that generates billions of dollars and tens of thousands of jobs. And the amazing truth is that 13 million acres of the state's woodlands are private non-industrial forests, that is -- they are owned by people like us. No wonder we hear people say things like, "The future of the forest economy lies in the hands of all those private non-industrial forest owner."

But we are not so well off as the numbers seem to indicate. Here are some other numbers:

- About 1.3 million acres of that 13 million acre private, non-industrial forest is actively managed. That's only 10 per cent.
- There are 500,000 landowners, but only 2,000 members of the Tree Farm system.
- There is an even smaller number of private woodlots in the state that enjoy FSC or AFS certification.
- And NYFOA has just about 2,000 members.

So I see a disconnect between what we say about the future and what do to make it come true, and it all comes down to the simple fact that we need government policies and private actions that do a better job of encouraging people to manage their woodlots. It is that simple, and that difficult. Let's talk first about government. We have an administration in Albany that has said it wants to breathe life into the upstate economy.

One of the first things it can do is pass legislation that will reduce the tax burden for forest owners and encourage woodlot management, in other words, link property tax relief to a management plan. But it has to do it in a way that people want to take part. The present tax law (Section 480a) does that, but with so many restrictions that most potential participants don't want any part of it.

But if you don't participate, you are stuck in a system that not only does not encourage sustainable management, but that may force a sale and subdivision of the property, leading to fragmentation. Pressures on local government have led to what's called a "Tree Tax" in some places – a tax that rewards people if they clear-cut their land and eliminate the trees. In other places, like the Adirondacks, we have instead what I call the Subdivision Tax, which means woodlots are assessed not as forestland, but as subdivisions waiting to happen. It is outrageous, but not unusual, for forestlands to be assessed at \$1,000 and \$2,000 per acre and sometimes more. Forestlands – not camps, not lakefront. The taxes are equally outrageous, and beyond the reach of many families who have lived in the countryside for years. So they subdivide and sell.

The resulting fragmentation is a reality today. That 13 million acres is owned by 500,000 people. That's an average of 26 acres per woodlot. And the average is decreasing daily. Local government, by the way, can do its part by developing land use plans and enacting sensible zoning regulations.

Next, government must restore at least some of the technical help it used to offer to woodland owners. Thirty years ago I could expect ready assistance from the Cornell Cooperative Extension, from one of three local DEC foresters and two industry-sponsored Landowner Assistance Programs. I could get cash from federal programs to do planning and conduct improvement work.

This year, I am told, there are Cooperative Extension offices with a forestry component in just 18 out of 52 counties. In Warrensburg, one extension forestry specialist covers three counties. Likewise, one local DEC forester covers three counties. There are no Landowner Assistance Programs. And the current federal Farm Bill would reduce, redirect or eliminate nearly all funds to help forestland owners.

If this is the future of the forest economy, God help us.

The forest products industry and we landowners can also step up to the plate. For instance, they can bring the personal touch back to providing help to forest owners, especially those who are new to the game. I know from my own experience that few things are more helpful than face-to-face contact with experienced people who can share their knowledge, spontaneously suggest action, or subtly shame you into doing what you need to do. With service foresters stretched thin,

there isn't much time for that. So why don't the Tree Farm System, NYFOA and the Master Forest Owners (MFO) get together, sharpen their grant-writing pencils and expand MFO activities in New York. MFOs aren't trained foresters, but they are knowledgeable and can be very helpful, especially in getting people started on the right track. Industry can also help by remembering the small landowner in its planning. Renewable energy is a hot item these days, and growing and mowing willow fiber is a great idea. But so is gathering and chipping low-grade tree stems on some of those 500,000 woodlots and turning them into pellets or bio fuels. There are some real logistical issues to be handled, but they are worth handling.

We need marketing help. Small local sawmills seem to have disappeared, and portable mills don't really fill the gap. Where can we sell a half-load of logs? We need a way to aggregate the products from smaller woodlots, to attract more distant buyers and better prices.

Finally, let's not forget the big picture. We have a place in the economy, but also in society as a whole. I have never met a stranger who hasn't expressed envy at what I do because, they usually say, "you can go out and walk in the woods any time you want." That's true. Even city folks think a walk in the woods is good for you. And it is wonderful that they think it is something to be envied. We owe it to those people to keep it up, to make sure that landowners receive the help and encouragement they need to become something more important – land stewards.

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO RECEIVE YOUR *OVERSTORY*?

***THE OVERSTORY* is now being made available to all NYFOA members on the SAC portion of the NYFOA website: <http://nyfoa.org/chapters/sac.php>. Please let the On-line Secretary of SAC know if you would like to receive *THE OVERSTORY* online only by e-mailing Bob Manning at bobmanning@frontiernet.net. *THE OVERSTORY* will be automatically mailed to all members that do not contact Bob Manning via e-mail.**

SAC Officers

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Residual stand following a harvest this past winter on the Bill Knox property in Saratoga County

JILL CORNELL RECOGNIZED

At the NYFOA Annual Meeting on February 25th various awards were presented, including the Chapter Activity Award (a.k.a. - Service Award). This year the award for SAC was given to Jill Cornell. Jill has been a regular participant in our planning meetings for many years. She was our Chair for 2004 and Vice Chair for 2002 -03. She was on the organizing committees for the 97 & 98 Family Forest Fairs and the 2000 Fall Conference at Pack Forest. Jill has contributed articles to our newsletter, volunteered to man our booths at the County Fairs and the Woodworkers Show. She has also helped arrange woodswalks and other activities.

When the award was presented, it was mentioned that Jill is a past NYFOA President and was active at the State level for a number of years.

Congratulations, Jill, and thank you.

UPCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST

April 11 – Forest tent caterpillar workshop, Oneida County. <http://counties.cce.cornell.edu/oneida/>
315.736.3394 ext. 124

April 15 – SAC “potluck”, Cornell Cooperative Extension 4-H Training Center on Middle Line Road in Ballston Spa. 10 am to 4 pm Contact Laurel Gailor: 518.623.3291 or 518.668.4881
lrg6@cornell.edu

Directions To: [The 4-H Training Center:](#)
Middle Line Road, Ballston Spa, NY 12020



From the West: Take Exit 27 (Amsterdam) off the NYS Thruway. Go right (north) onto Route 30. Go through the City of Amsterdam, following signs for NYS Route 67 East. After crossing Route 147 (traffic light, Stewart's on left, church on right), continue for approximately 8-10 miles. At the next light, turn left onto Middle Line Road. Continue for 1/2 mile. The 4-H Training Center is a blue steel building set far back on the right hand side. There is a sign at the driveway entrance.

From the South: Take Exit 12 off I-87 (the Northway). Go left onto Route 67 West. Go several miles to the traffic light at the intersection of Route 50. Bear right at this intersection heading North on Route 50. At the next traffic light go left onto Route 67 West. Continue to the next traffic light and to right onto Middle Line Road. Proceed for 1/2 mile. The 4-H Training Center is on the right.

From the North: Take Exit 12 off I-87 (the Northway). Go right onto Route 67 West, and follow the directions above "From the South."

April 17 – Invasive Pests Workshop, Warrensburg. 9am – 3:30pm. \$55 includes lunch, breaks, and take home materials. Sponsored by New York Loggers Training Program. Phone 518.463.1297

May 12 -- Joint NYFOA/Extension workshop on "Getting the Most Out of a Small Woodlot" at Rodger Hurley's place in Granville. More information to follow. Contact person: Laurel Gailor: 518.623.3291 or 518.668.4881 lrg6@cornell.edu

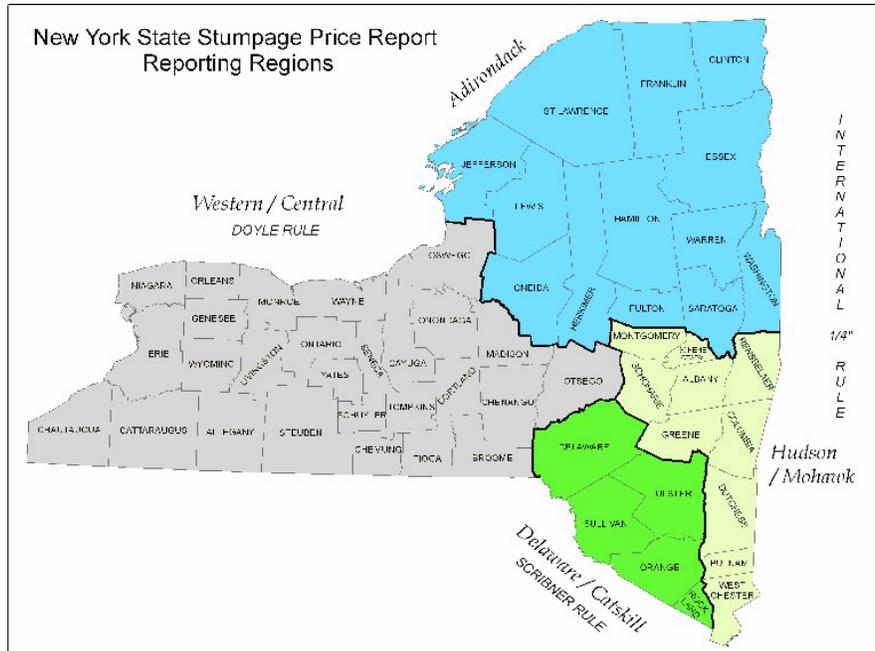
Landowners' Chainsaw Safety – Offered through the “Game of Logging Program” at the Arnot Forest. Checkout: <http://www.dnr.cornell.edu/ext/info/2007/05-07.htm> for more information

Cornell University Cooperative Extension, Warren County Website:
<http://counties.cce.cornell.edu/warren/naturalresources.html>

INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO FORESTLAND OWNERS

The NYS DEC has a website where anyone can obtain information on the forest resources of New York: <http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dlf/privland/utilization/index.html>.

Average stumpage prices are reported for each of four regions as per the map below. See: <http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dlf/privland/utilization/stumpage.html>



Note that there are different log rules (International 1/4, Doyle, and Scribner) used throughout the state. Landowners should be aware that all log rules are not equal. The same log will scale differently for each log rule and the price should be adjusted accordingly. Consulting forester Steve Bick (<http://www.northeastforests.com>) provides a spreadsheet tool that can be used for comparing log rules.