



## FORESTRY NOTES

# SPECIAL REPORT



## Programs that make a difference

A critical step in the evolution of private forestland management came in the 1990 Farm Bill, which introduced three key programs to the Forest Service's State and Private Forestry portfolio: Forest Stewardship, Forest Legacy and Urban & Community Forestry. The design was to make forestry a bigger priority, and to provide incentives for sound rural and urban forestry practices.

Now, a quarter century later, forestry leaders universally recognize the impact all three programs have had on America's more than 350 million acres of private forestland.

Much has changed since the programs were first introduced through the Leahy/Lugar Farm Bill (named for senate co-sponsors Patrick Leahy of Vermont and Richard Lugar of Indiana). Budget cuts have impacted state and federal agency staffing; catastrophic wildfire, forest pests and disease have intensified the need for management; and new strategies within USDA have resulted in coordinated, multi-jurisdictional approaches to land management. Through it all, Forest Stewardship, Forest Legacy and Urban & Community Forestry have remained strong and continued to improve the landscape. Most everyone agrees partnerships have played a key role in each program's success.

U.S. Forest Service Director of Cooperative Forestry Steve Koehn points to the Forest Service's long-standing relationships with state forestry agencies, as well as practice-funding partners such as NRCS and FSA. "There has also been a long-standing relationship with the American Forest Foundation and its American Tree Farm System, which have encouraged non-industrial forest landowners to move from inaction to action regarding the promotion of working landscapes to keep forests in forests as well as enhance or restore forest health," he says.

Conservation districts have helped support all three programs in a variety of ways. Some districts have staff able to write management plans, while others have steered projects that require landowners to have a plan. Districts in a number of states have helped coordinate Forest Legacy and Urban & Community Forestry projects.

Perhaps most important, the programs have helped to educate a generation of landowners about the importance of forest management. Says National Woodlands Owners Association president Keith Argow: "There's no question that every year more landowners become better stewards as a result of investments Congress makes in State and Private Forestry programs."

### A conservation milestone

As the visionaries who founded the Forest Service knew, conservation begins where people live; healthy landscapes and healthy communities are inextricably linked. Protecting natural resources is therefore a vital part of sustaining thriving communities.

This year, we celebrate a milestone in the cause of conservation: the 25th anniversary of the 1990 Farm Bill. The Farm Bill authorized three key Forest Service programs that collectively serve millions of people.

- The Forest Stewardship Program serves thousands of landowners each year. The program focuses on high-priority landscapes identified by the states. Under the program, private landowners are using forest stewardship plans on more than 26 million acres.
- The Forest Legacy Program provides resources for protecting working forests from conversion to non-forest uses. Through the program, the Forest Service has worked with partners to protect more than 2.47 million acres of important forested landscapes.
- The Urban and Community Forestry Program plays a critical role in protecting over 136 million acres of urban and community forest land, where 83 percent of our population lives. Urban forests provide critical benefits to Americans, including energy conservation, flood and pollution control and open space.



Jim Hubbard

I look forward to continue building partnerships and advancing conservation across our urban and rural landscapes. With the support of key partners, especially the National Association of Conservation Districts, these programs will protect America's forests, now and for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Jim Hubbard  
Forest Service Deputy Chief

# LEAVING A LEGACY IN COLORADO

Thanks to the Toll family, thousands of recreation acres near Boulder will remain

Located just 45 miles northwest of 2.8 million people in the Denver/ Boulder metro area, the South Boulder Creek Forest Legacy project permanently protects 3,334 acres of private forest land. With \$5 million from the Forest Legacy Program, \$1.5 million from Boulder County, and \$800,000 from Great Outdoors Colorado, the property has been placed under a conservation easement held by the Colorado State Forest Service. The Conservation Fund worked with the Toll family to complete the project, and secured the necessary federal, state and local funding. This forested property is the centerpiece of a larger initiative to conserve and keep intact 4,700 acres owned by the Toll family in the South Boulder Creek watershed.

The sale of the conservation easement enables the Toll family to keep the property intact and in private ownership, and ensures that this undeveloped landscape continues to provide invaluable recreation, scenic, watershed, wildlife and other public benefits for current and future generations. Owned by the Toll family for 120 years, the property has long been a priority for conservation.

The largest private property in the South Boulder Creek Watershed, the project directly benefits Denver Water, Colorado's oldest and largest water provider, which relies on South Boulder Creek to help deliver safe drinking water to nearly one-quarter of all Coloradans. A four-mile stretch of upper South Boulder Creek runs through the project. Lying within the boundary of Roosevelt National Forest, the project creates an expansive buffer between the National Forest and developed urban areas to the east and provides critical connections for wildlife and people including 65 miles of Nordic ski trails leased to Eldora Ski Resort for public use. These trails are widely used by the public, local ski clubs, and schools. Completion of this project comes with an agreement to establish a new trail link for non-motorized summer use that once constructed will connect with popular recreation areas on national forest lands that adjoin the property.

The property is central to the history of this area. In 1904, the switchback railway known as the Giant's Ladder was built over Rollins Pass, elevation 11,660 feet: thousands of Denver's early socialites rode the rail line, stopping at the historic town of Tolland for lunch. Today, Amtrak's California Zephyr carries passengers from Chicago to San Francisco through the property.

## MY URBAN STORY: EVELYN WARE-JACKSON

As an investor who renovates homes in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Evelyn Ware-Jackson looks at blighted areas a little differently than most people. Where others see despair, Evelyn sees opportunity. She also realizes restoring one home alone is not enough. You must redevelop the whole neighborhood.

Nowhere has she been more successful than in Melrose East, a once thriving neighborhood that has suffered years of neglect, crime and disillusionment.

There were "just lots of multi-family and warehouse spaces," she says. "None of the sidewalks were shaded and everywhere was just drab concrete."

This turned around when Evelyn accepted an offer from Baton Rouge Green for 300 trees funded by a U.S. Forest Service grant through the Louisiana Office of Forestry. The trees enabled Evelyn and residents of the neighborhood to complete a community reforestation program.

Since the project's completion, Evelyn meets people who thank her for the trees and say that their property values have increased. The trees not only added shade and beauty, the planting project served as a catalyst for other neighborhood improvements and provided a way for citizens to get involved with their neighborhood's turnaround. The experience has also affected Evelyn. "Sometimes when you get something deep down inside you, it's hard to get it out unless you see it happen," she says. "The vision of the neighborhood makes me very happy."

### More Landowner Profiles on ForestryNotes.com

- Forest Stewardship Profile: The Turneys
- Forest Legacy Profile: Homer SWCD assists Diamond Creek Project
- Forest Legacy Profile: Brushy Mountain



Patrick Leahy  
U.S. Senator  
Vermont

"In my home state of Vermont, 80,000 acres have been conserved under the Forest Legacy Program. But while development pressures continue to mount, more projects nationally compete for a shrinking commitment of federal funds. We must shore up our commitment to these programs if we are to fulfill the promise of healthy, resilient and intact forests for our grandchildren, and their children."

"Twenty-five years ago Congress understood the need to focus efforts on protecting our working forests. Today we understand with even greater clarity the need to keep our



Robert Bonnie  
USDA Under  
Secretary

forests healthy, resilient and intact, to help address large-scale issues of reducing wildfire risk, maintaining rural jobs, protecting watersheds and protecting at-risk species."



Tom Tidwell  
Chief  
Forest Service

"These programs have helped us strengthen a shared conservation ethic across land ownerships. Landowner involvement in these programs, for example, permanently protects more than 2.4 million acres of

America's forestland, which ensures they will continue to provide clean air and water, abundant outdoor experiences, and habitat for threatened and endangered wildlife and fish."

# MY STEWARDSHIP STORY: BRUCE BROWN

One tree farmer's passion for land management has become the model for Illinois

Bruce Brown always wanted a tree farm. There was something appealing about walking amongst the wildlife habitat, the need to care for the trees, and getting to see the land transform. Forestland stewardship is in his blood.

In 1993, Bruce and his wife purchased 40 acres of hog pasture near the Brown family farm in Southern Illinois. "You can't imagine a more hilly 40 acres," he laughs. "Absolutely no top soil."

There was plenty of work to be done, but it began with a visit to his local district forester and the creation of a Forest Stewardship plan. That plan provided guidance, and it opened doors to programs and contacts that would help carry out his vision.

More than 20 years later, Brown is now working with his fourth consulting forester and the land is barely recognizable to what it was. "There used to just be hard, yellow clay," he says. "Now I can walk through my trees and watch the squirrels nesting in them."

Brown planted 7,000 trees the first year, then replanted nearly half of that total after locusts struck the following year. He prunes

his trees meticulously, uses controlled burns as a management tool, and controls the spread of such invasives as bush honeysuckle and autumn olive. "When you compare my forest to my neighbor's there's a marked difference," he says proudly. "I'm seeing regeneration of oak and across the way all you see is bush honeysuckle."

Much of the thinning, exotic weed control and pruning work has been done without cost-share (Illinois and EQIP do not allow a landowner to receive cost share for doing the same work on the same acre).

Not long after completing his first Forest Stewardship plan, Brown developed a plan for the 244-acre farm he manages with his sister and brother. Much of the property is pasture and tillable acreage, but the forest is now well kept.

Says consulting forester Chris Wittom, "Both properties have seen phenomenal forestry benefits. Bruce understands that if you have a home, car or other possession we try to take care of it and maintain it as well as possible. . . forest ownership should be given the same respect and effort.

When Wittom began working with Brown in 2008 there was a heavy mid-story of primarily undesirable hardwoods. There was very little herbaceous growth and virtually no desirable seedlings or advanced regeneration present. Today there is varied herbaceous growth along with desired tree seedlings scattered throughout. "The increased vegetation in the understory has resulted in increased cover, habitat and forage that whitetail deer and wild turkeys really seem to like," says Wittom.

Brown enjoys it as much as the wildlife. "I'm absolutely thrilled with the path I chose 22 years ago," he says. "Someday my nieces and nephews are going to appreciate the work we've done."



White oaks, black oaks and walnut trees now color a 40-acre parcel that once was nothing more than "hard, yellow clay."

**"Someday my nieces and nephews are going to appreciate the work we've done."**

*Bruce Brown*

"The Forest Stewardship, Forest Legacy, and Urban and Community Forestry programs are outstanding examples of how federal investments in the nation's state and private forests produce big public benefits for all Americans. For 25 years state forestry agencies have been proud to help deliver these programs."



Jay Farrel  
Executive Director  
NASF

"America's forests give us clean water, clean air, wildlife habitat and jobs. The Stewardship and Legacy programs have focused ensuring the biggest segment of these lands, private family forests, continue their contribution to sustainability."



Tom Martin  
President & CEO  
AFF

"Throughout their 25-year history, the Forest Service's state and private forestry programs have enabled landowners to achieve great strides in natural resource conservation on our nation's private forestlands. Working in continued cooperation with conservation districts and landowners, these programs will continue to help us sustain and improve our forest resources well into the future."



Jeremy Peters  
CEO  
NACD

# What does the future hold for forest landowners?

Forest Stewardship, Forest Legacy and Urban & Community Forestry have helped private forest landowners address a number of obstacles over the past quarter-century. These programs change how we think about managing our woodlands, and provide incentives for those willing to meet the needs of the resource head on.

So what obstacles will impact forest landowners in the next 25 years? Here are five commonly referenced issues facing private forest lands, with comments from American Forest Foundation CEO and President Tom Martin and National Woodland Owners Association President Keith Argow. These obstacles will make agency programs even more critical to preserving America's privately-owned forests in the coming years.

## It's important to plan for the future

The future of America's private forestlands is dependent upon families deciding how best to pass the land down to the next generation of stewards. Few discussions can be as tense and complicated. Any number of factors can come into play and result in liquidation instead of succession.

As Argow points out, the increasing rate of land turnover makes forestland ever more vulnerable to development and conversion. Careful succession planning not only keeps the forest in the family, but it also helps to keep tracts of forestland intact. It starts with a series of questions, followed by honest dialogue. "Family landowners need to know who they want to own the property and who they want

to manage it – and those questions may have two different answers," says Martin.

## What does the future hold for forest markets?

Wanting to maintain landownership is one thing; being able to afford to do so is another. Historically, timber harvests helped offset property tax and cost of ownership, but margins are much tighter today. "Healthy and reliable forest markets are the No. 1

concern of family forest owners nationwide," says Argow. "The highest prices are for the land, and not the trees growing on them."

Will society's growing interest in sustainable products help jumpstart the wood industry? It's hard to say, as forest markets are unpredictable. Whereas markets were often considered cyclical, Martin advises landowners not to wait for blue skies. "Markets go up, down and sideways, but cyclical suggests a pattern that repeats and I don't think we have that," he explains. "Opportunities are deeply place dependent."

## Landowners must stay current on pests and disease

Standing dead timber has plagued western states thanks to bark beetle.

The number of states impacted by emerald ash borer continues to grow. There's Gypsy Moth and Thousands Cankers Disease. Name a tree and your local forester will name an insect or disease to go with it. There are no easy cures, but

it's important to have a good gameplan for response and removal. "Creating an adaptable, resilient and actively monitored forest is the best insurance against these stressors," says Martin, "so diversity in species and age classes may offer benefits. And prompt active management where outbreaks are found can limit damage." Argow stresses the need for landowner education. "It is in the individual landowner's best interest to be able to recognize insect and disease presence early before their presence does real damage. State forestry agency detection reports help, along with visits with your forester and neighbors."

## The big 'C' will impact forest landowners, too

Landowners must at least consider how changing temperatures and water levels might impact their land. "Letting nature take its course may no longer produce the results that landowners desire," says Martin. Adds Argow: "(Conditions) will gradually change the composition of both the trees and the understory of family woodlands."

There is a growing movement in USDA to make forestry a key piece in the fight to slow the affects of climate change. This means private forest landowners – even those with minimal acreage – must be conscious of how their land fits into the big picture. Carbon sequestration is still a meeting topic more than it is a tool, but as policy takes shape and programs adapt landowners will need to adapt, too.

## The growing need to 'sell' the value of forests

There is a growing number of individuals living in urban centers, hours – if not days – away from the forest. The concern is that this population will not support the need to invest in our nation's forests because it is disconnected from them. It's less likely to recognize benefits such as clean air and clean water as the generation before it. So what exactly does this have to do with the forest landowner? Because forest landowners, same as forestry professionals, need to begin to do a better job of telling their story – to stress the need of keeping forests as

forests. "All of us are upset when we lose a tree in our yard or the park down the street," says Martin. "What folks don't fully appreciate is a forest, which is a dynamic thing, with death and new life a regular occurrence. And we haven't done a good job as a community in helping them understand that and the role that active management can play in making that dynamic forest more sustainable."

## Additional resources

### USFS Cooperative Forestry

<http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/>

### Forest Stewardship (Home Page)

<http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/programs/loa/fsp.shtml>

### Planning for Forest Stewardship

<http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/library/Forest%20Stewardship%20deskguide.pdf>

### Forest Legacy (Home Page)

<http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/programs/loa/flp.shtml>

### Forest Legacy Program Contacts

[http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/library/flp\\_all\\_contacts.pdf](http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/library/flp_all_contacts.pdf)

### Urban & Community Forestry

<http://www.fs.fed.us/ucf>

### Private Landowner Network

<https://www.privatelandownernetwork.org/>

### Women Owning Woodlands

<http://www.womenowningwoodlands.net/>

### Family Forest Research Center

<http://www.familyforestresearchcenter.org/>

### National Timber Tax

<http://www.timbertax.org/>

### National Agroforestry Center

<http://www.familyforestresearchcenter.org/>

### State Forest Action Plans

<http://forestactionplans.org/>