



Partners News

Partners in Forestry Landowner Cooperative Newsletter

March/April 2005

The President's Corner

Joe Hovel, Chair

I am proud to note that Partners in Forestry is growing! What started over three years ago from monthly meetings of a steering committee is becoming an active, vibrant landowner cooperative. I am even more pleased to note the positive things that the co-op is working on. I have personally spent many hours in discussion with state officials regarding the lumber grading requirements as demanded by the Uniform Dwelling Code, now implemented across the state. There are signs of progress on the horizon for this! PIF wants woodland owners to be encouraged, not penalized, for using their own timber for their own construction use.

Vice Chair Bob Simeone has come forward with an idea for a regional forestry summit. Details are included on page four of this newsletter. All PIF members are invited, so schedule June 17th at Trees for Tomorrow. Thank you, Bob, for having the foresight to bring diverse parties to the table for the common good of sustainable forestry!

Remember, Partners in Forestry is your organization. Please ask for help—and ask to help.

Welcome to our new members

Eight new members joined Partners in Forestry in the months of January and February. We want to welcome Ted Frank of Crandon, Darrel Ruechel of Waupaca, the Dunbar Family of Brantwood, Michael Kispert of Oconto Falls, David Gunnulson of Cambridge, and James Spanbaur of Oshkosh, Cyle Guschel of Eagle River, and Debra Cisar and Carl Adkins of Crivitz.

PIF would like to thank member Ned Loar for his time and effort in recruiting members, as leader of the PIF membership committee!

Thank you to all members who have renewed for 2005, as well. We hope to continue to be able to serve you!

Grant Opportunity for Landowners

The Endangered Species Program of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service has announced that Private Stewardship Grants (PSG) are available for 2005. The majority of species that are listed or proposed as endangered or threatened depend, at least in some part, on privately owned lands for their survival. Many landowners want to help to protect these at-risk species, but are without the means to do so. These PSGs offer funding through grants and other assistance to private landowners engaged in on-the-ground, voluntary conservation efforts that benefit and seek to protect threatened or endangered species. Eligible projects include any actions by landowners on privately-owned, non-governmental land that result in habitat improvement or other conservation efforts for endangered or threatened species. Funds are awarded through a regional competitive process, and are selected by quality of the proposal.

The deadline for this program is March 21st, 2005. For information on endangered and threatened species in our region, contact Peter Fasbender at 612-713-5343. For more information on the PSG Program, or an application, please contact Louise Clemency, biologist, at the Branch of State Grants, at 703-358-2187. You can also learn more about these grants at http://endangered.fws.gov/grants/private_stewardship.html.

Please also inform PIF if you are interested in pursuing this grant opportunity.

Meet the Board

This month, the *Partners News* board member profile features June Jones, treasurer of the board of Partners in Forestry.

June Jones' experiences as a landowner in northern Wisconsin has given her a perspective from which to relate to other landowners, and her involvement with PIF is an example of the organization's success stories.

June served on PIF's original steering committee, and became involved in the formation of the organization because of her desire for information and assistance in managing her 37 acres of woodlands. She knew that responsible management was the best option for her forest but was unsure how to go about it. She was also still apprehensive from a previous bad experience. Fifteen years ago, the logger that June had contracted with to complete a timber harvest on her woodlands began cutting trees that had not been selected for harvest, and June ended the process before this management was concluded.

Since becoming involved in PIF, June has begun to actively manage her lands for sustainability. Don Peterson, former administrator of PIF, wrote a management plan for her forestlands that prescribed management for diversity, through careful thinning; wildlife, through aspen regeneration and diversity; and aesthetics. In the summer of 2003, the plan was implemented with a timber harvest that was completed by PIF Board member Bob Dunbar, and Ken Adamovich. She was very pleased with the process and results of this harvest, and appreciated Bob's and Ken's "conservation attitude", their attention to detail and the environment, and their prompt handling of paperwork.

In late 2003, June worked with DNR forester Jim Baughman to complete an application for the Managed Forest Law, and in January of 2004, her woodlands were entered in the program. Over the past several months, she has been talking with the North Woods Land Trust, and exploring options for a conservation easement, or other form of long-term protection from development, on her land.

June strongly encourages other landowners to manage their woodlands in a proactive manner, and warns of threats to non-managed forests, such as disease. She encourages landowners to become educated on their options, especially if they have had bad experiences in the past. PIF can offer advice, and suggest reputable foresters and loggers, and operates with only the best interest of the landowner in mind. The DNR can also be very helpful.

June's visions for the future of PIF include increased membership and continuing education. She wants to see PIF continue to act as a facilitator for the landowner's management process, through assistance with management plans and harvests. June's goal is for PIF to continue to adhere to its mission statement: To assist landowners in the sustainable management of their woodlands.

Opinion: "The Ultimate Invasive Predator"

Members are encouraged to submit opinion pieces on any forestry- or landowner- related topic for publication in *Partners News*. The first in this periodic feature is by Joe Hovel.

On these pages, PIF has shown much interest in controlling invasive predators. As the trend of parcelization of forestlands has become increasingly widespread, I have come to realize from my conversations with other woodland owners that the most threatening invasive is not the gypsy moth, garlic mustard, or the like. It is the developers who are after your land or property rights, with the hope of large profits on your investment or assets!

This is taking place in many different ways, but I would like to caution here of being approached for an access easement. Landowners are being contacted by agents, often not stating whom they represent, and are being asked for an easement of ingress and egress to a neighbor's property. My advice to landowners interested in sustainable forestry is to not consent to an unlimited permanent easement of access across your property.

Having said that, I do not suggest that we not be good neighbors. You have many options for helping neighbors access their lands without losing *control* of your own property. You can grant permission for an assigned time or that may be withdrawn at will, and record it. You can give them a key to a gate, while requiring occasional return of the key, or changing the locks periodically. You can grant a limited easement for a defined need that you approve of; for example, you can grant access to John and Jane Doe for the purpose of sustainable forestry or one-family recreation, but not for access to a subdivision.

Several years ago, an elderly neighbor of ours granted an easement after she was approached by an agent who told her that the access would serve a single landowner for their nature preserve. Today, that twenty-foot easement is used by owners of three small lots. Our neighbor received no compensation for giving up her property rights, and the land developer profited several hundred thousand dollars.

What I write here is not to be taken as legal advice, but a warning to other landowners. If I am further designated as an enemy of reckless development, I gladly accept that.

The fact is that in signing an easement, the hosting landowner becomes the subservient party, still paying taxes on the property, but having given up a large property right. Even if you are compensated with a one-time sum, you must realize that a perpetual easement affects all "heirs and assigns". Any buyer or successor in title must live with the agreement, on the sides of both the grantor and the grantee.

Board Meeting Highlights

All members are invited to the Board meetings. The minutes of the February meeting are highlighted here, for those unable to attend.

February 8th, 2005:

The Partners in Forestry Board discussed with Don Peterson a proposal for a grant from the USDA. PIF would use this grant in part to evaluate and develop a certification program for PIF, identify value-added opportunities for PIF, and explore feasibility for biomass fuel in northeastern Wisconsin.

The Board made a decision to pursue the grant, and asked Don to proceed with the proposal, with some revision and update to original proposal's wording.

The Board agreed for PIF to be a sponsoring organization of "A Fortune in the Forest", a workshop on non-timber products from the forest to be held in Rhinelander in early April. For more information on this event, please see the "Upcoming Events" in this newsletter.

The date of June 17th was set for the forestry summit, to be held at Trees for Tomorrow. Please see the "Northwoods Forestry Summit" feature for details of this event.

Joe Hovel gave a report to the Board on his findings on lumber grading and how PIF might play a role in grading lumber from members' forests.

Don Peterson informed the Board of an opportunity for a grant program that may be available to members of Partners in Forestry or to the Cooperative. Details on this program, and how you might be able to take advantage of this opportunity, are found on page one of this newsletter.

Upcoming Events

☞ "Fortunes from the Forest" workshop, April 9th, 2005, from 7:30 AM to 4:00 PM. Partners in Forestry is one of the organizations sponsoring this workshop, which will explore the opportunities for use of non-timber forest products. For more information, please contact Bill Klase at 715-365-2658, or visit <http://basineducation.uwex.edu/woodland/conference/ntfp.htm>

☞ **The next Board meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 5, at the Conover Town Hall, beginning at 5:00 PM. May's meeting will fall on the 3rd, at the same place and time. All members are welcome and encouraged to attend PIF's board meetings.**

☞ The Northwoods Forestry Summit will be held on June 17th, 2005, at Trees for Tomorrow in Eagle River. For more information, please contact Bob Simeone at 715-547-3304.

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Submissions to the Newsletter

All members are encouraged to send any articles, announcements, or items of interest for inclusion in the Partners News. For items to be included in the May/June issue, they must be received by April 20th. Submissions may be emailed, faxed, or mailed to PIF.

If you know of anyone who might be interested in PIF, or who might find helpful PIF's mission to assist landowners in sustainable management of their woodlands, please contact us. We would be happy to send them information on PIF, a copy of the newsletter, or any other information that could assist them.

Northwoods Forestry Summit: *Opportunity Within Crisis*

The following is Bob Simeone's vision for the Northwoods Forestry Summit. This day-long conference is to be held on June 17th, 2005, at the campus of Trees for Tomorrow in Eagle River, WI.

Summit Concept:

PIF will convene a small group of key decision makers representing the various sectors of the Northwoods forest economy in order to examine the forest products chain of activities from the resource base to the end user. The result of the day-long discussions will be to identify strategic interventions and investment opportunities that will move the Northwoods towards a more sustainable forest-based economy.

The Problem:

The state of the forest industry in the Wisconsin Northwoods is in transition.

Growing population, unplanned development, and an increasingly fragmented forest ownership base are removing access to large tracts of forest formerly available to production forestry.

Forest lands and industry, that were formerly regionally-based and family-owned, are being purchased and concentrated in the hands of a few large multinational corporations, many controlled by foreign interests.

Consequently, decisions about the Northwoods forest economy are being made further and further away from its source.

Locally, private non-industrial forest owners are losing confidence in the industry's ability to respect forest management objectives that place environmental and aesthetic concerns first, and thus are choosing to do nothing when it comes to making decisions about forest management.

Northwoods loggers are an aging population with fewer and fewer young people viewing the activity as a viable career choice.

Sawlog-based, value-adding forest industries (and the high paying jobs they represent) are on the decline in the region, with an increasing emphasis on pulp and fiber production as a primary objective, even on high quality hardwood-growing sites.

The Northwoods economy is becoming more and more dependent on the service-based, minimum-wage paying tourist industry.

More and more Northwoods forest owners can no longer afford to maintain unproductive forest estates. Many of these forests are being subdivided and/or converted to non-forest uses.

The Opportunity:

The good news is that there is a growing interest in how we can remedy these losses. However, conflicts arise over how the problem ought to be addressed. Conservationists seek to establish protected areas that exclude humans and their economic activities. Opposing this approach are commercial operators who depend on forest exploitation for short-term economic gain.

Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) may provide a workable compromise. SFM is based on the concept that managing forests sustainably for multiple uses makes economic sense, both in the short and long terms. It represents an alternative to the polar extremes of strict preservation and uncontrolled exploitation, and has the potential for establishing sustainable forest-based economies.

Public awareness of the concept of SFM is growing, thanks to environmental advocacy and "green" marketing efforts. Consumers are increasingly demanding forest products from sustainable, well-managed sources. In the past several years, a number of business and non-profit groups have established forest product certification schemes which differentiate wood products in the marketplace as having originated from well-managed sources. As these products become more commonplace, they have opened up new opportunities to many businesses in the forest products industry.

Unfortunately, many SFM ventures fail to show understanding of the complexity of the forest products industry. Their initiators are unaware of the many interactions that take place throughout the production cycle, from the forest to the ultimate end use. As a result, many SFM strategies fall short of their goals.

The Proposal:

Private economic interests are clearly fundamental to the long-term viability of our forest. The workings of the forest products industry are poorly understood by those not in the business. The industry itself is the critical element in achieving SFM. If viewed as an adversary, the industry will be forced to take a defensive posture. The result will be that further opportunities to improve SFM will be lost. The daily decisions of consumers, resource users, and thousands of investors and business persons collectively represent pressures on the forest. The purpose of convening this one day summit will be to gain insight into how to accomplish the realignment of individual, corporate and governmental activities (including the introduction of new legislation, policies, and administrative regulations), that will foster the development of SFM and as sustainable forest-based economy in the Northwoods.

The participants will include forest owners, resource managers, harvesters, wood processors, manufacturers, wholesale/retailers, residential homebuilders, commercial contractors, furniture makers, government, and legislators.