

Southern Maine Forestry Services

FALL 2019 Newsletter

Forestry isn't rocket science. It's harder!

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Welcome

We hope you enjoy our fall newsletter. We would like to thank all of you for an excellent spring/summer/fall season. June was wet and that delayed harvest jobs we had planned for you. Once the calendar turned to July the weather became somewhat normal and loggers were able to work on most sites. Some wetland soils, however, never got dry enough to take the weight of heavy equipment without damage, and we had to bypass having those areas cut.

This is the first newsletter that will be primarily distributed via email. Our intent is to have spring and fall newsletters, with the fall edition being primarily distributed by email. The list of email addresses used was built out of address books from multiple machines. We tried to capture all the addresses of our clients and associates who have forestry interests, and to remove those we recognized who do not.

If you are not interested in getting this information, Constant Contact makes it easy to remove your address, as well as to add your address, that of another interested party, or to forward friends or other forest owners. Please help us spread the word. Following Rene's lead, we believe educated landowners are the best means of having our forests better managed.

Markets

Stumpage markets have remained good through the summer and early fall. Pulpwood in particular has seen a strong demand, and prices have started to climb. Hardwood pulpwood and firewood are competitive products and both markets have been good.

Hardwood log prices have held gains, with red oak sawlogs seeing a small decline in prices. Demand for hardwood logs suitable to saw into cants to be made into construction mats has come back. Prices remain good for low grade hardwood logs which traditionally would have been marketed as pallet logs. This product even competes with lower grades of hardwood sawlogs, keeping prices good across the board.

Softwood log markets remain steady. Hemlock log supply is still exceeding supply and small logs are hard to move. Spruce and fir held steady as did the market for white pine. The market for white pine seems strong for both good grade logs and pallet grade. Most mills have adequate inventory but are actively buying as we are entering fall mud season. We are moving crews to the woodlots of clients with better drained soils. Our crystal ball suggests that current market conditions will hold to at least mid-winter.

Check out more market information at someforest.com/timber-market

Never Do This to Your Forest!

High-grade harvesting, “take the best and leave the rest”, “butcher the woodlot”, and the closely related practices of diameter limit cutting and “select” cuts (of just the most valuable timber) – These are terms that generally describe some of the worst things you can do to a woodlot.

Most forest stands have just 20 to 100 stems per acre with the most potential. These are the trees to be favored when thinning a forest. Harvesting these “A” quality stems has a very negative effect on productivity of a forest. Most often we treat forests to favor these “A” stems and let them grow to their highest potential.

Sometimes in life we have to do things we’d rather not. When circumstances force a landowner to harvest their woodlot in a way that extracts maximum value, what can be done? As usual in forestry, it depends. Are there smaller, younger “B team” stems that have potential to grow into an “A” team? The answer may be a heavy thinning with care taken by the stumpage buyer/logger to preserve this younger component. Is there an existing understory of desirable seedlings and saplings waiting to be released? Then an overstory removal might be the answer. Again, quality young growth needs to be preserved. When no younger age class of quality trees exists, it might be best to clear cut or make large patch cuts, and allow forest regeneration to start over rather than leaving behind inferior stems. Often, all three situations exist on a forested property. The consistent theme across these scenarios is that the correct strategy is never to leave a stand of smaller stems of low quality and/or less desirable species. A forest that has been reduced to its lowest-quality stems does not recover to a productive state for a very long time, and our rule when administering sales with an objective of maximizing income is to ensure that the low quality stems are cut too, rather than left behind to dominate the growing space.

For more info, this publication from the University of Massachusetts in Amherst is an oldy but a goody, and is a great companion piece to the recent publication by the Maine Forest Service on what to expect a woodlot to look like after a timber harvest. It is titled *High Grade Harvesting*. http://masswoods.org/sites/masswoods.org/files/pdf-doc-ppt/High_Grade_Harvesting_1.pdf

Here is an example of the effects of high-grading on a woodlot adjacent to one that we manage:

The property abuts a client property. Before it was cut, the forest was similar to our client’s, with 12” to 16” DBH white pine and red oak making up major component of the stand. The value of the wood on our client’s property is about \$1,500.00/acre, and I estimate the timber on this adjacent lot was in the same ballpark.

Almost all of the timber of any value was cut from this lot about 4 years ago, with only the lowest-quality stems left behind. A cruise line perpendicular to the boundary was run and 5 sample plots were taken 200 feet apart to obtain the metrics noted below. Sadly, this forest now cannot recover to its potential without significant investment, despite its soils consisting of somewhat excessively well drained tills in which white pine and oak are well adapted to grow. It is destined to become a forest largely dominated by low quality, low value beech which won’t even provide very good wildlife habitat. Beech is not heavily browsed, and after providing some low cover for a few years it will close in and create dense shade in which few understory plants can grow. There will perhaps be a few beech nuts produced many years down the road, but not much else of value.



High graded residual stand

Sawtimber/acre	Pulpwood/acre	Basal area/acre	Value/acre
292 board feet	7.5 cords	32 square feet	\$136.00

This forest will only grow a few dollars per acre per year in value. Not enough to even pay the taxes. The abutting forest we manage is growing about \$100.00 in value per acre per year!



Here is a picture from another property that had been treated similarly 25 or 30 years ago

This was likely a 4 or 5 inch diameter beech similar to those in the picture above when this lot was high graded. It responded, grew and dominates the area beneath and around it. The only young growth are a few spindly hemlock and beech suckers. It is a low-quality tree, straight enough to at least make a mat log, but not much else. This is the best that can be hoped for from the residual stems in the stand described above. Behind Aiden is the boundary line with a client's forest. Notice the nice straight hardwoods and abundant pine regeneration beyond.

Your Woodlot After Harvest

The Maine Forest Service has recently produced a good publication that helps landowners visualize what their stand might look like after a timber harvest. However, the MFS does not have the data required to present examples of volumes harvested in relation to stumpage received for harvested timber, and the volumes and values remaining in the residual stand. We do!

Here is a link to their publication:

https://www.maine.gov/dacf/mfs/projects/what_will_my_woods_look_like/documents/wwwwll.pdf

Our first example is a client property that has been managed by SMFS since the early 1980's. The forest is mixed in composition, with red oak, red maple and white pine making up most of the stand. This lot is well above average in quality, but is a good example of what a mixed white pine/hardwood forest growing on good soils can produce. The first treatment under our supervision was a mid-1980's harvest aiming at improving the stand by removing short-lived balsam fir and low quality stems of various species left in previous harvests, as well as thinning quality white pine and hardwood stems to promote their vigor. Cutting was done with a chainsaw, and trees were pulled out of woods with a small skidder.

In 1998 this forest had a bad year. An ice storm in January was followed by a microburst in the summer which blew down a large number of trees. Trees damaged by ice and wind were removed by mechanical equipment and processed on a landing into various products. A thinning and improvement harvest was carried out in areas where mother nature had not done too much damage. The forest recovered and grew into a mixed growth stand composed primarily of white pine, red oak and red maple. The stems ranged from saplings and small 1-4" diameter poles to mature pine over 30" in diameter (See table below).

The forest was again treated with a harvest in the summer of 2018. The treatment had three goals: harvest mature stems, release large saplings and small pole size regeneration, and thin middle age stems for better growth and vigor. About 22 cords per acre were harvested, with a stumpage income of **\$1,264.00** per acre.

Volumes harvested, and pre and post-harvest stand metrics

	Residual stand 2019	Harvested 2018	Pre-harvest stand
Basal area	95 square feet	55 square feet (est.)	150 square feet (est.)
Volume	44 cords per acre	22 cords per acre	66 cords per acre
Percent high grade	48.6%	40%	45.6%
Percent growing stock	14.5%	NA	9.6%
Stumpage Value	\$2,380.00	\$1,264.00	\$3,644.00

Note: Harvest improved composition from **56%** high grade and quality growing stock to **63%**!

Fall of 2019:

Residual stand with skidder trails growing into grass and ferns.



Stone wall preserved and high-quality residual stems



Regen, established in 1998 harvest, released in 2018 harvest



Slash used in trails to protect wetland soils



Lyme disease

Many of you know I have been dealing with aftereffects of a Lyme disease infection for a number of years now. In my case it expressed itself as chronic fatigue. I've mostly beaten it back though I still have an occasional relapse and don't have the energy and stamina I once had. My doctor says that may have more to do with my age. Humbug!

A friend of mine was infected with Lyme disease last summer and I thought her comments would be of interest as you spend time where you take the risk of tick bites. RDN

Lyme disease the ultimate imitator by Marcelle Pick:

I have been in private practice for 33 years. Over those years I've seen a number of people with Lyme disease. Until recently I did not understand the magnitude of symptoms that people can have with Lyme disease. People may not recognize they have been bitten by a tick but manifest symptoms of fever, joint pain, back pain, joints that actually swell up, infections of the ears, and a variety of other symptoms including the extreme of encephalitis.

Lyme disease is similar to syphilis of many years ago. Then known as the great impersonator because of its varied symptoms. It is also hard to diagnose and because of this many practitioners prescribe doxycycline 100 mg twice a day for two days and then testing for Lyme. That cause antibodies go up making it easier to diagnose.

For those people who spend time in the woods foresters, landowners, loggers, hikers, actually anyone who has exposure to the woods and deer habitat, even their backyards, it's important to make sure that clothing is appropriate and that one use products that will keep ticks from getting on your skin. It's also incredibly important to always do a very careful tick check. Particularly check the hair and arms, under the arms and other crevices of the body

Lyme disease is serious condition and needs to be treated as such. It can be debilitating with a lengthy time to recover.

In my clinical practice each day I am more astounded at the symptoms that are presenting with those that have Lyme disease. Many patients are really sick. Some need hospitalization. Do all you can to prevent infection. MP

Maine Forest Products Council annual meeting

I recently attended Maine Forest Products Council annual meeting. It was an excellent meeting with updates on present and future markets for timber in Maine from representatives of the lumber, pulp & paper and biomass industries. Followed by people who make their livings predicting future markets for wood products.

Lumber and pulp mill representatives were optimistic. Large investments have been made in the mills over the last couple of years and more investment is planned. A brand new highly automated mill is being built in the Dover/Foxcroft area. There is lots of optimism from these speakers that their markets and their buying of logs will remain strong in the near future. The picture for biomass is not as rosy with competition from natural gas driving down the price of electricity to below breakeven for these wood consumers.

All speakers had the same message about labor. The good news bad news is Maine is at full employment which makes hiring workers a challenge. Loggers and truckers are particularly feeling the pinch.

Longer term the pulp and paper industry has some challenges. South America with its fast growing eucalyptus and new modern mills is the hands down low cost producer of hardwood pulp in the world. Newsprint, magazine and writing paper demand is declining worldwide. Maine's mills need to find niches in which they can make a profit. Speakers were optimistic they were doing so.

For landowners the message is the same as it has always been. Low grade wood (firewood, pulpwood & biomass) should be a byproduct of growing high quality trees. Your goal should be growing the best trees your land can grow.

