



FOREST CONSULTANT'S NEWSLETTER MAY 2001

A Quarterly Newsletter of the Department of Conservation, Maine Forest Service Stewardship Program

ICE STORM AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY

The original contract for the ice storm aerial photos at a reduced rate for consultants and landowners has expired. Unless the Maine Forest Service receives an extension of the ice storm recovery grant from the USDA Forest Service, a new contract will not be negotiated. If the grant is extended, a new contract **MAY** be negotiated. There are no guarantees.

James W. Sewall Co. has agreed to provide a soft landing to consultants who still want to purchase photos. They will provide the ice storm photography at a reduced rate through December 31, 2001. The pricing is as follows:

Minimum order (1 to 2 prints) \$50.00
Additional Prints \$ 8.00 each
Plus tax and shipping.

The reduced price provides approximately a 67% savings compared to Sewall's regular pricing.

Lynn Smith is still the primary contact at James W. Sewall Co. She can be reached at:
Phone: (207) 827-4456 ext. 281
Fax: (207) 827-8928
Email: lynn.smith@jws.com

Remember that you may also view the photos at the county USDA Farm Service Agency offices and at Maine Forest Service District Forester field offices.

MAINE CELEBRATES ARBOR DAY

The Maine Forest Service Stewardship and Community Forestry Programs will hold an Arbor Day Celebration on Monday, May 21 at 11:00 on the lawn of the Capitol in Augusta (Inside in the Hall of Flags if the weather proves inclement). Governor Angus King will present the Outstanding Forest Steward awards and the award to Maine's winner of the National Arbor Day poster contest. In addition, communities participating in the Tree City USA program will be honored. There will be displays of various community forestry and stewardship projects. Refreshments will be served. This celebration is open to the public.

COULD COMMUNITY FORESTRY BE IN YOUR FUTURE?

When you think of a forester in Maine, many people have a vision of someone walking through hundreds of acres of contiguous woods, managing for timber production and other environmental and economical benefits, from wildlife to water. The sun is always shining, the bugs are nonexistent, there is a gentle breeze and it's a comfortable 65 degrees. No one is around except the forester and the trees and perhaps a few squirrels, moose and deer.

Okay, so reality is a bit different and those hundreds of acres are being parceled off to one digit acreages (1-9 acres). Nine times out of ten, it's snowing, sleeting, raining the days you are in the field, bugs are usually around unless it's below freezing, and even in the remotest areas, people can be found. People and sprawl are occurring here in Maine, on varying levels depending on the area, but it is happening in most locations.

On top of that, ice storm dollars are dwindling, cost-share is being reduced and you've gone from more work than you can handle a few years ago to wondering what tomorrow will bring.

So what's a traditional forester to do? Lest you sit on your laurels too long, opportunity knocks just outside your front door. Literally.

Consider broadening your knowledge of forestry and your area of expertise to community forestry. Often thought of as an oxymoron, community forestry is a great field to get involved in. With smaller parcels of lands to manage, heavier use on those lands, community forestry is a much needed but overlooked area for many traditional foresters to venture into.

Concepts are the same. Community foresters manage a forest for a multitude of benefits, water, wildlife, recreation, timber, social issues, economic issues, tourism. One looks at the forest though from the sidewalk, to the backyard, to the cemetery, to the parks, schools, green spaces and then the community forest. Ideally, it should be managed as a whole. An inventory and development of a ten-year management plan is key to a successful community forestry program. Community foresters do

have the added benefit of working directly and often with the public, to incorporate their short and long-term needs as well as the needs of the community forest. The people pressure on the community forests can prove to be a different challenge than those in a more traditional forest. Compaction of soils and high use of areas can be “loved to death” throwing its own complexities into the mix of management.

But with those challenges comes some instant gratification. Pruning rotations are shorter (five to seven years), plantings utilize larger stock, trees can be removed and a new “forest” created within a day or two, and many lives are impacted on a daily basis. As Maine continues to grow, the need for community foresters will be around for a long time. Think about it.

tish carr
Community Forestry Coordinator

THE LAMMERT REPORT

Very few sawmills in Maine have not lowered their log prices in the last three months. If the mill (mills) that you deal with haven't lowered their mill delivered price, count yourself as extremely lucky.

The dimension lumber market has been off since the middle of last summer and from what I read, the home builders finally had so many spec houses ahead, that the banks tried to wean them off the advance money. Then came the election and not much seems to be normal since then. Normal may be undefinable.

When housing starts slow down, the pine market slows down. When both the pine and softwood dimension markets slow down, loggers switch to hardwood lots, and guess what, the hardwood mills are flooded. These mills plow ahead sawing to beat the band and then guess what happens? The hardwood market becomes saturated and the hardwood lumber prices fall. What do the mills do? They start dropping their prices. This brings up an interesting situation. Is a log (say a Prime 24" by 12' Rock Maple) that is worth \$212.50 today worth only \$179.85 tomorrow when the price drops from \$650 to \$550/MBF? This loss in income is one result of falling log prices. I think the log is still worth the going market rate but that is a floating number also. What are the other options left to the mills? They could change the mill specs usually by increasing the small end diameter by one (1) inch. That 1" change catches a lot of loggers off guard as very few of them ask that they automatically receive mill spec updates/ changes. Another option the mills have to reduce the volume coming in is to put the regular producers on quotas and not take any wood from loggers that are searching for new markets. A last resort is to stop taking logs, period, regardless of the producer. The reaction by loggers to this last stop can hurt some mills. If the logger absolutely

needs cash flow, he will find someone to buy the logs almost regardless of the price. He might try and make up the dollar loss per thousand by producing even more wood than normal production. If the logger likes the new buyer, he may stay with them once prices return to “normal” and the mill that shut him off loses a supplier. This is not a happy situation for either party as it usually takes the logger a while (read several or many loads of logs) to figure out just what the mill would really like to have and what defects the scaler is really death on.

If I had a druther, I would prefer the quota system over dropping the price or not buying logs at all.

This mud season might indeed be a long one. Longer than usual because the mills are full of logs and market prices for lumber are down. Not only should you call the mills before you haul, during times such as these you should be calling before you cut. If you don't cut it, you can always come back for it later when markets improve.

What can you do to avoid being caught in a price decline? For one thing you have to keep your eyes open to the fact that mills are filling up with logs and knowing the past practice of the mills you are dealing with when they get more than enough logs. If you think they are near the “critical mass” time and are about to stop buying or drop prices, ask the log buyer about getting the rest of the wood in from the lot you are harvesting. He may save space for you at the going price. If this happens and the mill does offer you the current price for the rest of the wood on the log, don't brag this up to other loggers. Keep that good news to yourself and produce the best logs you can so that the mill is happy with what you are bringing them.

It is said that the log and lumber markets are one of the purest forms of supply and demand. When mills fill up, your allegiance to one mill, your ability to consistently produce good logs, and your past production may just give you an in when others have to be left out.

MAILING LISTS

The State of Maine is required to update all of its mailing lists on an annual basis. If you would like to continue to receive this newsletter, please contact us at (207) 287-1073 or 1-800-367-0223.

Also, many addresses have changed due to E911. If your mailing address has changed, please let us know. You can write to the Maine Forest Service at 22 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333.

Plotless sampling - done from the pickup truck.