Tree School Umpqua coming  
March 26, 2015

Tree School is back in Douglas County and will be held Thursday, March 26, 2015 on the campus of Umpqua Community College just north of Roseburg. This year’s event will feature 24 classes on a wide variety of topics of interest to family forestland owners, professional foresters, loggers, arborists, teachers, and the general public.

The day-long event offers classroom sessions taught by Extension foresters, professional foresters, and other resource management professionals. Classes are 1.5 hours in length and you can participate in up to four over the course of the day. All sessions this year will be held on campus.

Registration must be done in advance by March 13 (no walk-ins allowed), so act now to reserve your spot in this fun and informative forestry program. The registration fee is just $50 per person. This year, late registration is available from March 14th through March 20th, however the fee will go up to $70 after March 15. Bring the family so you can take advantage of as many class offerings as possible. This year, we’ve brought you some new and exciting classes, including:

The Science of Biochar as a Soil Amendment
Forest “wastes” as feedstock to make charcoal; bench top demonstration of pyrolysis--heating wood with limited oxygen to degrade wood into charcoal. Home-scale techniques to make charcoal; ways to biologically “charge the char”; effects of biochar on soil moisture, plant nutrients, and tilth of garden and farm soils. Local, national, and international sources of information about biochar as a soil amendment. One and one half hour indoor demonstration and discussion with samples and handouts.

Instructors: Jim Long, small woodland owner, convener of the Biochar Study Group and Scott McKain, biochar maker and user, Roseburg, OR.

Rare and Unusual Plants of the Umpqua National Forest
Southern Oregon is one of the most botanically rich areas in the United States and includes many species that grow nowhere else in the world. Join Forest Botanist, Richard Helliwell, as he leads the class through an informative and entertaining discussion of our diverse and unique forest plant species.

Instructor: Richard Helliwell, Forest Botanist, Umpqua National Forest, Roseburg, OR

Forest Management Plan: An Introduction
A written forest management plan takes many forms and serves many purposes. It is required for Oregon Tree Farm System participation, helps you qualify for cost-share funding, and it forms the foundation for sustainable forest management. A plan is an invaluable communication tool for your family, can help you focus your work and see whether you are accomplishing your goals. Writing a plan that suits your needs take a little time, but you gain a wonderful communication tool and a deeper understanding of your property. This class will help you understand the components of a management plan, identify available resources to help you, and get you started articulating your goals and objectives.

Instructor: Nicole Strong, OSU Extension Forester, Redmond, and Mike Atkinson, woodland owner and Tree Farm Inspector.

We are pleased to deliver this material as part of the educational activities of the OSU/Douglas County Extension Service.

Steve Bowers
Forestry Extension Agent
Are you interested in how your lands can better suit wildlife, timber production, or recreation? Do you want to make sure your forest is resilient to fire, pest or disease? Are you interested in making sure your roads are well-built, that you are prepared for conducting logging or other operations, that you file your taxes correctly?

Master Woodland Manager (MWM) shows you how to “read” your woodland by understanding local ecological factors (soils, historical land use, tree and plant species and associated wildlife) as well as how to conduct assessments to determine where your woodland is heading as it grows and matures. You will also learn how various management activities will help you meet your long term vision for the property.

Service

After taking the MWM program, volunteers are expected to provide 80 hours of volunteer service, which is done in many different manners, depending on the interests and strengths of the volunteers.

Stewardship

MWM volunteers represent a 20 year legacy, and include a wide array of people and woodlands throughout Oregon. Whether you own 5 or 1,000 acres, the MWM program will help you gain skills for tending your woodland, and provide you with opportunities to share your passion for stewardship.

Register Now!

Training is scheduled to begin approximately September of 2015. To sign up for the upcoming 2015 Douglas county MWM training, please contact:

Steve Bowers, OSU Extension Forester:
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541-682-4243

Property boundary disputes are one of the most contentious of all subject areas for woodland owners. Reasons are primarily two-fold. First on the list is the concept of value. Real estate and trees are a valuable asset to those lucky enough to possess either of the two. Not only do the owners place a monetary value on these possessions, but we oftentimes forget the intrinsic qualities placed on land and timber.

One of the most often encountered “encroachments” woodland owners deal with involves timber harvesting. Timber cruisers establish boundaries when laying out harvest units subject themselves to provisions of land surveyors registration laws. Normally, the duties of a timber cruiser do not include a legal survey of the land, but merely the examination of timber on that land. The practice of professional land surveyors is “...in charge of the surveying of land for the establishment of of corners, lines, boundaries, and monuments,...and/or the preparing of maps and accurate records and descriptions thereof.”

Should a timber cruiser undertake the authority to establish boundary lines, corners or monuments, or locate corners, lines and boundaries, they are functioning as a land surveyor and are subject to the provisions of land surveyors’ registration laws. Any individual planning on removing timber from a given area, and relying on a timber cruiser to mark a harvest boundary and who is not a professional land surveyor, does so at their own peril. In the event the harvest boundary encroaches upon the property of an adjacent landowner, such encroachment amounts to a trespass. Any trees removed, or damage inflicted, renders the party guilty of trespass and liable for damages.

Additionally, if there is no evidence the individual harvesting the trees made an effort to locate the boundaries prior to the trespass, then that individual is guilty of a trespass. The exact location may not have been apparent from any existing physical evidence at the time of the trespass, but at all times the location could have been re-established by a survey. It is the responsibility of the landowner to determine in advance the exact location of their boundary line.

Oregon statutes state that damages can be assessed against a party guilty of removing trees on the property of another, and double or triple damage may be obtained depending on the circumstances under which the timber was removed. So the moral of the story is: look before you leap: survey before you cut: and use the right people for the right job.
Paying Your Logger: 
$/MBF versus Percentage

Portions of the following article appeared in the Spring 2014 Woodlander. In consideration of high log values, though the trend downwards, and the expected activity on woodlands this coming dry season, the article is appropriate and timely for those of you considering harvesting any timber in the future.

So is there a correlation between log values and logging costs, i.e. does the logger get paid more because the landowner is getting paid more by the mill? If so, it should be based on the concept of supply and demand: mills are offering more $/MBF in their demand for logs, correlating to an increase in the supply of logs from the landowner and the need for a logger. Loggers can, and will, demand more money for their services if there is an increase in market activity. Loggers can, and might, obtain more money based on an increase in market values. Woodland owners cannot regulate the supply of loggers, but you can, and should, regulate the pricing structure on how these loggers are paid for their services.

Logging contractors are paid through a variety of methods: by the job, hourly, daily, a percentage of log values or $/MBF. Traditionally, the vast majority have been paid on a percentage basis or $/MBF, with the percentage basis being in the majority. Before we proceed; anyone that performed a timber harvest and was satisfied with the method of payment to the logger, then all is well. We have no qualms if both parties in a contractual agreement are satisfied with the results: but hear us out, nonetheless.

Does a landscaper charge for mowing a yard based on the value of the home? How about a farrier shoeing a horse based on the animal’s value? Does the auto detail person charge more to wash a Honda versus a Cadillac? Extrapolate the logic of the argument by submitting the logger should not base the cost of a job based on the value of your timber. Historically, logging on a percentage basis has been the norm. And we know that old habits die hard, particularly among a demographic group (loggers) where many in the occupation are multi-generational participants and many of their clients (woodland owners) are advanced in years.

Consider the premise of paying on a $/MBF versus percentage of timber value from the logger’s perspective. The most frequent argument is if they have an incentive to do a more efficient job, i.e. felling and bucking logs to maximize value, because they receive a percentage of the revenue. This provides an incentive to make as much money as possible because they “have a dog in the fight.” The logger and landowner are “equal partners,” both motivated by maximizing the value of the harvest based on the specifications of the purchase order(s). This is a specious argument.

Why? Because loggers are a production oriented business. Their definition of success is how much wood can they “move” in a day. From the loggers perspective, at the end of the day, a bigger deck of logs is better than a smaller deck that has been bucked to take advantage of quirks in the Scribner Volume Table. A more careful application of bucking to maximize scale (based on today’s purchase orders, there is an extremely close correlation to volume and value) will generate more revenue to the landowner….at the logger’s expense.

Note: this is not disparaging loggers or their incentive(s) for doing a “good job.” Successful loggers have felled and bucked enough timber to have a good understanding of log length and diameter combinations that maximize revenue, and small woodland owners should expect these results. What woodland owners cannot, or should not expect, is a logger to make excessive measurements on an individual tree, hoping to gain an additional 10 board feet in a log or “tape-out” the entire stem before bucking to utilize the entire length. Without further elaboration (this is a subject for another day), maximizing the entire merchantable length of a tree stem, especially in larger timber, is one of the worst things you can do if maximizing revenue is your primary objective. And it should be!

How ‘bout speaking in dollars and cents? The past few years, there have been no substantial increases in equipment, fuel and labor costs, resulting in negligible changes in logging costs. A woodland owner conducting a logging operation two years ago for $250/MBF should expect to pay approximately the same amount today. For the sake of argument, let’s assume the bid is “fair.” Based on Douglas-fir values in the spring of 2012 ($550/MBF), the bid correlates to 45% of the log value. Today, a $250/MBF bid would correlate to about 33% of current log values ($750/MBF). If the 45% logger performed the same harvest today, based on a bid of 45%, they would receive $340/MBF from the landowner, a difference of $90/MBF. In short, markets have nothing, and should have nothing, to do with how much you are going to pay the logger.

Too many times, too many rely on antiquated information, information passed down through the generations by individuals who obtained their information the same way, which exacerbates the issue. This “knowledge by proximity” (believing something to be true merely because it has been stated or read over and over again) is one of the greatest intellectual faux pas. And if you are not interested in the intellect, think about the ramifications on the pocketbook: an interest to all parties.
Bark Beetles and Ponderosa Pine

California Fivespined Ips a Potential Threat to local Ponderosa Pine

Pine trees in Douglas county, and elsewhere, may be prone to insect attack as a result of non-management (too many trees/too small of area), marginal sites (putting additional stress on trees) or Spring logging operations (improper slash disposal). And the past couple years, we’ve witnessed particularly dry, hot summers, placing even greater stress on trees of all species. Enter the California Fivespined Ips (Ips).

The Ips may be a threat to managed and non-managed stands of Ponderosa pine. Ips have been reported in young planted stands, as well as scattered attacks on saplings and larger trees. Southwest Oregon has seen populations of this beetle build-up in thinning slash and emerge to attack residual trees. This species of Ips is also very aggressive in drought years and can kill the tops of mature trees or clumps of overstocked pole-size pine. Additional plantings of Ponderosa pine in our area carries the possibility of this insect becoming a significant pest. The following is a report on the biology, life cycle, and management of the California Fivespined Ips.

Hosts of this pernicious pest include Ponderosa pine, sugar, western white and lodgepole pine, Scotch (Scot’s) pine, and the knobcone/Monterey hybrid, better known and admired as the KMX!. The Ips does not attack any of the fir species, including Douglas-fir. And while Ips are usually found in sapling-sized trees, they are known to attack virtually any sized/aged pine.

Unlike most insect infestations, the Ips has the potential of two generations per year in many regions of Douglas County. The beetle seeks out fresh slash, blowdowns, or snow breakage in the spring to use for breeding material and they can be found in limbs as small as a couple inches in diameter. The first Ips flight likely occurs from April into June. Up to half of these beetles re-emerge after egg laying to continue their attack and produce a second brood.

The Ips ability to establish more than one egg laying session results in the potential for explosive increases in population if they have adequate breeding material. Most of the attacks on pine come from the more numerous second generation that flies from mid-June into September. Periods of warm weather may increase the susceptibility of pine to successful Ips attacks. These second generation beetles overwinters in the bark, emerging the following spring to repeat the cycle.

Preventing the build-up of Ips populations is the best method to minimize damage from this beetle. If tree mortality is occurring, rapidly removing pines with yellowing or orange foliage can reduce bark beetle populations. Pine trees with yellowing foliage often contain Ips colonies, and removing these off-color trees will assist in removing the beetles. Remember, once you see a dead top in any pine species, that tree is doomed.

Proper timing of slash creation during thinning and harvesting operations can prevent Ips attacks on residual trees. The rule for timing slash creation is not to leave green slash with diameters greater than three inches during the months of January through June. If slash is created during these months, there is the potential for Ips infestations into nearby standing trees. Slash with diameters less than three inches can be created anytime because the diameters of the tops and branches does not allow a breeding area sufficient to produce large Ips populations.

Other rules for slash management include scattering material in openings rather than making piles. Scattering the slash in openings facilitates rapid drying and lowers the attractiveness to Ips. Make numerous cuts with the chain saw, severing the stem and limbs in as many pieces as possible, further reducing the ability of insects to successfully breed. It is also advisable not to leave green slash around the base of any remaining trees in the stand. The volatile materials released from green slash are attractive to Ips as well as red turpentine beetles and may result in attacks on nearby trees.

Small pines can be treated with the chemical insecticide carbaryl to prevent Ips infestations. The solution should be applied to run-off the main stem of the tree. Because Ips have multiple generations, treatment anytime during the spring and summer months may be beneficial. But keep in mind all pesticides have a half-life, so indiscriminate applications may or may not have the desired outcome. Carbaryl is not registered for application to slash piles.

Ponderosa pine is often the preferred pine species in reforestation projects in the area, particularly on marginal sites. With it comes a rise in the awareness of potential problems of growing this tree and the need for information to avoid potentially harmful consequences in forest management.
Perspective on Log Values

Remember the early 1990’s and the spotted owl crisis? Domestic log prices increased from the $300 range to $1000/MBF by mid-summer? And exports were even higher! Behavioral economics took-over and the law of supply and demand didn’t seem to be working: people kept cutting trees and prices continued to escalate. Eventually, common sense and tightening mill procurement budgets prevailed and we saw domestic values for Douglas-fir between $550-$700 for the next few years.

Then we suffered with the onset of The Great Recession beginning somewhere around 2006, when log values declined below $300/MBF: the lowest number we can recall was $288/MBF. Woodland owners quite cutting trees, mills quite buying logs, want-to-be homeowners went without, and the general state of the economy looked bleak. Various reports circulated in local newspapers about how the timber industry had not seen things so bleak since pre WWII and the Great Depression. The doomers and gloomers were out in mass.

But as the old saying goes: ‘what goes around, comes around’, or something along the lines of ‘tis darkest before the dawn,’ when low and behold, things slowly began to improve. Log values surpassed $400/MBF and some thought we were on our way. Happy days are here again! Optimism is similar to pessimism in terms of a person’s mindset: when surrounded by negativity we think negative and when everything appears bright and hopeful, that’s where are attitudes gravitate. Doug-fir values climbed-up to the mid $500/MBF range and everyone was feeling pretty good.

Let’s face it folks, $550/MBF was not a bad price for your trees. Some log buyers thought the new “trigger” for harvesting on small woodlands would be in the $500/MBF range. But most things of this Earth are relative in nature, so any “trigger” to sell logs is going to be determined by the time perspective of the seller. Regardless, when a person looks at what woodland owners were getting for their logs a few years ago, today’s values look awfully good from just about anyone’s perspective.

Perspective? How ‘bout 60 years worth? My father purchased and logged some timberland in 1960. The going rate for logs coming off the property had a camp run value of $60/MBF. I remember the proceeds coming from the harvest paid for the land and a rock road over the entire length of the property, slightly over one mile. In case you’re curious, he paid approximately $50/acre for the property. And after all was said-and-done, Dad really thought he was in tall cotton.

Remember what we said about perspective: his reference came through the perspective of setting chokers for “a couple bucks an hour” with a gyppo logger on some adjacent property “just after the war” (That would be World War II for us). And a little side note: during the war my Grandpa would go up to cut his firewood on the property that was soon to be logged. Gramp said they’d cut up to the first limbs, then on to the next tree because who wanted to split a bunch of knots!

Fast-forward 20 years to the first logging I did on my own land in 1982. At that time, Douglas-fir was valued between $200-$250/MBF. I remember my Dad didn’t think I would leave a stick on the place with a truck load of logs bringing over $600! But I didn’t make a lot of money, and I did leave plenty of trees for future harvests, planted more where trees did not previously exist, and retained plenty of habitat for all the little critters. First, my father though he was making a killing, then I thought I was taking a beating, but like we say; it is all a matter of perspective.

Let’s turn back the clock another generation. Recently, I ran across an old timber sale contract between my grandparents and the Yellow Fir Lumber Co., a sawmill that used to be located in Harrisburg, about 15 miles north of Eugene. The contract was dated February 1947, and after reading the contents, I would have liked to have consulted with my Granny and Pop on their enterprise. It was a camp run agreement that went for the staggering sum of $3.00/MBF!

Yes, that’s a “3” with no zeros behind it. I also recovered the payment statements that showed the average truck load of logs was about 5,000 board feet. Some of the tickets had a log count, and the average log contained about 600 board feet. That equates to a 16’ log nearly 30” in diameter or a 32’ log over 20” in diameter. For you log scalers, that’s a bunch of Special Mill and Peeler grade logs. Total volume of the sale was almost 1.5 million feet, valued at $4313.63 in 1947.

Holy smokes, what would I do with a million and a half foot timber sale of high-grade logs. Based on today’s values, a high grade stand of timber would be worth well-over $800/MBF, so a 1,500 MBF sale would gross the seller over a million dollars! However, it’s all a matter of perspective. But what a perspective!

We often pine for the ‘good-ol-days’, but today’s private woodland owner are getting, and keeping, more of their timber harvest proceeds (excluding the Great Recession) than nearly at any time in the past. The spotted owl crisis remains the bell-weather of log values, but give it time and a new perspective.
We can be reasonably certain that squaw wood denotes a conifer other conifer. It stays dry even in wet weather, is easy to snap off wrist-size and smaller branches on the bottom trunk of a spruce or Klondike. The most common references to squaw wood involves deep to a tall Indian and it's colder than a well-digger's butt in the winter. It's the best kind of wood to start a fire when the snow is knee high. The demonym for people of Scotland is Scot or Scottish. Great Scot; enough Scot's!

But the underlying motive for our response is the usage of the common name for the tree under consideration: Scotch pine. Scotch is a whiskey made in Scotland. A Scot is a person of Scottish origin. To call someone of Scottish descent a Scotch is speaking in the pejorative. We can properly interchange Scot, Scot's or Scotch pine for the Pinus sylvestris, but the demonym for people of Scotland is Scot or Scottish. Great Scot; enough Scot’s!

However, as in most cases, there are exceptions to the rule. In the 60s John Kenneth Galbraith reported that pioneers from Scotland settling in regions of Canada were referred to as Scotch. But also keep in mind Galbraith was a Keynesian economist, thus an inaccurate and unreliable source of information. He appears to believe money grows on trees; even Scot’s pine.

Dear Treeman,
I was reading your article about which are the most popular Christmas trees around the country. You say that the Scotch pine is the most common Christmas tree in the country? No way. Noble fir man

If we are to take offense of the term squaw, what about referencing the indigenous male of our country as a buck? Buck is associated with a far wider usage; a near ubiquitous term and slang for a dollar or male deer, the lowest rank of military personal (buck private) and yes, cutting a tree into merchantable lengths. A young buck commonly describes an adventurous, impetuous; a dashing and daring, high-spirited young man. No negative connotations here.

Some legitimize usage of the colloquial term, squaw wood, as an example of pidgin English. Fundamentally, a pidgin is a simplified means of linguistic communication, spoken impromptu, or by convention, between individuals or groups of people. Historically, squaw is a simple, non-pejorative descriptive word, a classic example of the same Pidgin speech that gave us powwow, tipi and mocassin as generic terms, universally applied to all Native American people.

Attempts to eliminate a word or phrase will not purge the past, and may allow the instigator to define a language, thus by extension, influence other’s thought processes. Acknowledgement of perceived insults directed towards a demographic group, often instigated by individuals exclusive of the targeted group, discredits those who feel no remorse at hearing or using such language. Prohibiting indigenous words discriminates against Native people and their languages. And those who feign offense may well be the most egregious party of such accusations!

Everyone can find legitimate examples of amelioration and pejoration in our English language. But to take political correctness to such a degree is not only wrong, but dangerous. The very fact knowing someone, somewhere is ready to pounce on anything even slightly contentious results in changed behavior of the perceived transgressor. Colloquialisms are part of everyone’s heritage and to deny the fact is to deny the nationalism that serves as a common bond.

Meanwhile, this publication will continue to rattle on like the clapper on a goose’s butt. And for those of you who would like to see more forestry and less pontification, well, Shakespeare said, “Such stuff as dreams are made on.” Sorry folks; you can’t make a silk purse out of a sow’s ear.
Log Prices & Trends

Spring has sprung, Winter has past. Log values are high, But can they last? The preceding was included in *The Woodlander* a couple years ago, and at the time of printing was a pretty accurate verse. The only difference today is that values have risen even steeper during the late winter months and have failed to stay there even during the early/wet spring. The past two years, we have seen Douglas-fir values peak in February, while in previous years the tendency was for prices to reach their zenith in April or May.

Last Spring, log buyers were reporting on how the market was strong and look for prices to “hold” into the dryer months. I thought that was a bit overly optimistic, which proved to be true. 2013 values did remain reasonably attractive, but there was a 26% difference between the year’s highs versus lows. I am not copyng last spring’s report, but yes, been-there-done-that. 2014 showed an 18% difference in values. And if you ask me, which I’m gonna tell you anyway, highs/lows will surpass the difference recorded last year and might even exceed those of 2013.

January 2015 Doug-fir values got up to near $800/MBF, just a tad higher than the previous year. This report is being written in mid-February and we’re now in the $700 ballpark. By the time you read this newsletter, we’ll be south of that figure and trending downwards. Exports don’t look very favorable, both for the lower quality China sort as well as the better Japan log. Current issues with the Longshoreman’s Union could plug the docks and put even more pressure towards lower values.

Today, we’re looking at Doug-fir values nearly $100 less than at this time last year. Last year, buyers were prognosticating fairly strong prices, and while January 2015 values were comparable to those of last year, the big difference is looking ahead. This time around, buyers aren’t very optimistic about what lies ahead, exemplified by lack of interest in creating new purchase orders.

So, if anyone is planning on a harvest, the sooner the better. As we’ve stated many times before, for several years, annual prices peaked during March or April. The past two years they peaked in February and this year, by the time you are reading this report, January will have proved the high for the foreseeable future. But even a 25% drop in values is still better than $600 wood and up until a couple years ago we’d have been elated at those values.

And there seems to be no variables that help chip values. Conifer chips continue to bump along in the low/mid $20/ton.

Incense cedar in Douglas County has remained stable. Look for incense to bring in the upper $600s and the 5” - 11” log just over $500. Wormy-free redcedar up in the Willamette Valley is $1200-1400, driven by the buyers in WA. Remember, wormy redcedar values are highly variable, and we have a lot of that kind of material down here, thus highly unlikely one can just the excessive trucking to access higher values up north.

We’ve seen higher values for Doug-fir the past couple years than markets justify and the reasons have been discussed previously. Keep in mind we tend to be somewhat subdued in our prognostications on log prices, but have been pretty accurate as of late. So we will continue to say that as long as government continues pumping money into the stock market, the weakness of economies in Europe and the Pacific Rim, interest rates at all time lows (because individuals have no money to invest) and housing starts far below historical averages, log values will continue as they have the past few years. It would be nice to see some stability in annual trends so everyone could share in some $700+ wood, but it won’t happen ‘till REAL employment rises and take-home income increases. Until next time…….
* Remember *

Tree School Umpqua is coming Thursday, March 26th at the Umpqua Community College.

You have until March 13th to register and avoid any late fees. The 20th is the deadline for late registrations, so don’t delay!