



February 27, 2007

Ms. Meg Johns
c/o Forest History Society
701 Vickers Avenue
Durham, NC 27701

Dear Meg,

A teleconference for private forestland owners was held last week to discuss what messages would, in their opinion, be important to include in Module 10 of the "If Trees Could Talk" program and to make comments on the current draft. The nationwide teleconference was hosted by the Alabama Forest Owners Association which for several years has carried out a quarterly telephone conference of landowners around the country. Participants included forest owners from Pennsylvania, Florida, Wisconsin, Idaho, Alabama Texas and other locations. The Moderator was Henry Barclay, (FHS Treasurer) and I was the discussion leader. We are grateful for the opportunity since a consistent concern of private landowners has been the public doesn't understand the economic and environmental values of, or the care and attention given by the owners to, private forests.

The following is a listing of the comments on what students should know about private forestlands;

- Private forests are renewable and produce many goods and services.
- Students are consumers of many products from trees.
- Forests help the economy and the environment.
- Owners are proud of their forests and want to give good care.
- Owners make many decisions in connection with managing their forest.
- There is no one way to manage (care for) a forest.
- Forests are diverse and always changing.
- Most forests are natural, some have been planted.
- Owners are diverse and eventually sell or leave the land to their family.
- Some owners live on their property and some live far away.
- Owners may sell some timber every year or only once in their lifetime.
- Owners, their friends and family may enjoy bird watching, camping or hunting.
- Private forests have been improving in quality and quantity for over 50 years.

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- The smallest tracts may not produce income, but have important value to the owners.
- Most large tracts must be profitable for the owners to be able to keep and to manage.
- Managing a forest is like managing a business or a farm.
- It costs money to manage forestland.
- Owners need advice from foresters, lawyers, accountants, bankers and others.
- There are many sources of private business help and advice.

The following few paragraphs have been written to further explain and to put comments into context;

It is important to know that private forestland produces 92% of the trees used to make the thousands of products made from wood which every man, woman and child in the country needs or wants. In the process private forestland produces income to the owners who have protected, managed and cared for those trees, and income for the millions of people employed in the many steps involved in cutting, transporting, milling or manufacturing, selling and distributing wood and products we see and use every day, such as cardboard boxes, furniture or crossties.

Some private forest properties are owned by one man or woman, others by several individuals or a family. Larger ones may be owned by a company or group of investors. Each one of them takes a great deal of pride in owning and caring for their forestland, but there is a wide diversity in the forests and in their owners. Some own 5 acres, some own 25,000 acres. Some are interested in growing trees to make paper, some to make lumber or telephone poles. Others are more interested in using their property for hunting or other recreation, or just to look like a park or be a natural area.

There is no one management method suitable to the conditions and needs of the millions of different forest ownerships. The kind of trees to grow and how often to cut them or the kind of wildlife to be encouraged can vary and are decisions of each owner. The result of many, many individual decisions has created a diverse and healthy mix or mosaic of ever changing forest conditions in the country as a whole. The 430 million acres of privately owned forestlands in the country as well as the 319 million acres owned by the state or federal government constantly grow and change. Forests are dynamic. They are changed by natural forces such as hurricanes, fires, insect or disease outbreaks and they are changed by actions of the owners. Yet nature always works to grow new trees. Tree planting by man can quickly create a forest on open farm or pasture land. Replanting an area where all the trees have been cut, can help establish the kind of new forest the owner wants to have. Over 90% of the forestland in the U.S. is natural forest. About 7% of U.S. forestland has been planted, some because of government programs designed to reduce the amount of farm land used for crops or to encourage wildlife or other environmental values.



The following lists ideas expressed about the current draft of Module 10:

General

- The tone is negative, regulatory and to some even hostile to private ownership.

There was little or no mention of:

- The idea of economics, the market and private property rights in motivating landowners.
- The long list of products made from trees.
- Hunting, other recreation or aesthetics.
- Forestry consultants or any private source of forest management advice.
- Environmental care given by landowners.
- Individual decisions.
- Landowners having different and distinct personalities.
- Business aspects and the need for advice from many professional areas.
- Record of improvement over time.
- Landowners contribution to the economy.
- Top ranking of the forest products industry in many states.

There was over emphasis on:

- Tree planting
- Regulations restricting rights (no mention of laws protecting private property rights).

There was gross over emphasis on:

- The USFS programs and their impact on private lands.
- The Tree Farm Program.

It is our hope the flavor and tone of the current draft of Module 10 can be changed. We have not made specific edit suggestions concerning the description, essays, projects and questions and feel it is important adequate time be allowed for thorough review of this Module before it is finalized. The next draft should be seen by private forest owners themselves and those with extensive exposure to private forest landowners. Some reference information which could be helpful is being sent by U.S. Mail

Very truly yours,

Keville Larson