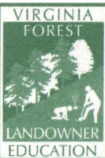


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VIRGINIA FOREST LANDOWNER UPDATE

Events, news, and information promoting the stewardship of Virginia's forest resources.

VIRGINIA FOREST LANDOWNER EDUCATION PROGRAM

Jennifer L. Gagnon, Editor

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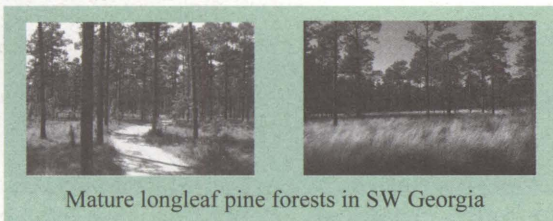
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New Landowner Education Program Coordinator Jennifer Gagnon, Virginia Tech Dept. of Forestry

Hello! Once again, because of personnel changes, we have gone a while without a new issue of the *Virginia Forest Landowner Update*. Shawn Baker, the Virginia Forest Landowner Education Program's previous coordinator, left last January to travel abroad. I took over the position in August, and have been busy familiarizing myself with the program. I intend to maintain the newsletter (4 issues per year) from here on out, making the *Virginia Forest Landowner Update* a resource you can depend on again.

I have recently relocated from Southwest Georgia where I worked at the Jones Ecological Research Center, a private research station, studying forest and fire ecology in mature longleaf pine forests. Prior to that, I earned both my Bachelor of Science (Forest Resource Conservation and Management) and Master of Science (Silviculture) degrees at the University of Florida. My education at UF provided me with a broad background in the management of southern pine forests. I am looking forward to working with pine plantation and hardwood forest landowners in Virginia, as well as assisting with start-up longleaf and shortleaf pine restoration projects. I am also enjoying the cooler weather and the fabulous scenery in southwest Virginia!



Mature longleaf pine forests in SW Georgia

Due to the lack of a program coordinator for the past six months, the fall forestry and wildlife field tours will be limited this year, however they will be back in full swing in 2006. Continue to check our website: www.cnr.vt.edu/forestupdate for details. We are still offering our short courses series,

SW District Agent Retires James Johnson, Virginia Tech Dept. of Forestry

James R. Willis, Forestry and Natural Resources Extension Agent for the Southwest District of Virginia Cooperative Extension, retired in June. Jim joined the Extension family five years ago, after a 27-year career as a forester with Chesapeake Corporation. Jim was known for his outstanding educational work with loggers, forest landowners, and youth, and his poignant articles in local newspapers. Based in Russell County, Jim continues to reside in Abingdon, where he plans to pursue personal interests and forestry consulting. A search is underway for his successor.

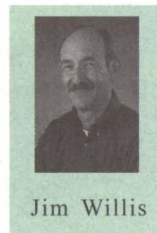
James Johnson is an Extension Specialist and Associate Dean of Outreach (jej@vt.edu). U

including: Woodland Options for Landowners, Sustainable Timber Marketing and Harvesting, Wildlife Options for Landowners, and the latest, Financial Assistance Options for Landowners. We are in the process of developing a 5th short course on forest land conservation which will be available next fall. If you do not see a workshop you are interested in being offered in your area, please contact me. Also, the Woodland Options class is offered on the Web, for those of you interested but who do not have the time or opportunity to attend one of our face-to-face courses. We intend to offer the web-course in winter/spring 2006. Details will be posted on the website as more information becomes available.

Finally, I am in the process of updating our database. If you are receiving more than one newsletter or if any changes need to be made to your contact information, please let me know. We would like to try and replace the paper *Update* with an electronic format for those of you with Internet and e-mail access. This would save the VFLEP a tremendous amount of money, which could be used to expand some of our other popular programs. An e-mail would be sent out every time a new issue is available. If you are willing to receive the *Update* in this format, please send me an e-mail and I will place you on the electronic distribution list. If you like the paper version of *Update*, do not fear – we will be continuing the mailings for the foreseeable future.

Please feel free to contact me by e-mail (forester@vt.edu) or phone (540-231-6391) if you have any questions or comments about this newsletter, the website, any of our programs, or forest management in general. I am here to help. I am excited to be here and I look forward to working with all of you!
Jennifer

Jennifer Gagnon is an Extension Associate. U



Jim Willis

EVENTS CALENDAR

For the most complete listing of natural resource education events, visit the online events calendar at: www.cnr.vt.edu/forestupdate. See also: www.conted.vt.edu/forestry.

event contact	date/location	event/description (Preregistration requested unless noted otherwise; TBA=to be announced)	time	fee
AD	November 7-8 Germanna Community College, Fredericksburg, VA	Forest Visualization for Natural Resource Professionals Mr. Paul Roth, a former Extension Associate with Penn State, and currently the Spatial Information Specialist with the PA Bureau of Forestry, will provide in-depth, hands-on training on how and why to use Forest Visualization tools to communicate with landowners. Overnight accommodations and lunch on the 8th are provided. Pre-registration is required.	7th: 1 - 5:00 pm 8th: 8:30 - 3:00 pm	Free
AH/BR	November 9-10 Virginia State University, Petersburg, VA	Small Farm Family Conference A 2-day educational program about agricultural diversification, marketing and farm production management. All farm families, landowners, and representatives from rural counties are encouraged to attend! Farmers from Virginia and other Southern states will share innovative farming practices and proven marketing techniques that have made their operations successful. Professionals from USDA and other agricultural organizations will also be on hand to provide valuable information about various farm assistance programs. Pre-registration is Required	9th: 11 - 6:00 pm 10th: 8 - 4:00 pm	\$ 2 5 . 0 0 per person
EG/SB	November 19-20 Holiday Trails camp, Charlottesville, VA	Sustainable Forestry Seminar On the 19th, Clint Trammel, long-time manager of the Pioneer Forest and founder of the Forest Stewardship Guild, and other foresters, will make presentations on sustainable forest management. A half-day field trip to a sustainably managed forest will be conducted on the 20th. Registration fee includes lunch and breaks. Pre-registration is required	All day each day	\$ 3 0 . 0 0 www.virginia-forestwatch.org

If you have an upcoming event you'd like to see listed in the *Update*, please submit details to: forester@vt.edu

Upcoming Submission Deadlines for Printed Calendar

<i>Edition</i>	<i>Events Occurring...</i>	<i>Submission Deadlines</i>
Winter 2006	Feb., Mar., April	Dec. 3, 2005
Spring 2006	May, June, July	March 9, 2006
Summer 2006	Aug., Sept., Oct.	June 9, 2006
Fall 2006	Nov., Dec., Jan.	Sept. 9, 2006

EVENT CONTACTS

for more information or to register for a specific event, please contact:

event contact	name/affiliation	phone	e-mail
AD	Adam Downing, Extension Agent, Forestry & Natural Resources, VCE	540/948-6881	adowning@vt.edu
AH	Andy Hankins, Extension Specialist, Alternative Agriculture, VSU	804/524-5960	ahankins@vsu.edu
BR	Berran Rogers, Field Coordinator, Small Farmer Outreach Program, VSU	804/524-6964	brodgers@vsu.edu
EG	Eric Gilchrist, Virginia Forest Watch	434/293-8039	ericg@ntelos.net
SB	Steve Brooks, Virginia Forest Watch	540/231-5212	vafw@mounet.com

4-H Virtual Forest

by Dan Goerlich, Virginia Cooperative Extension

The importance of forests to Virginia's citizens is well-documented. In addition to their economic significance, Virginia's forests protect water quality, provide recreation opportunities, and provide habitat for a diversity of wildlife species.

Unfortunately, forest management is not well-understood by much of the general public. For example, foresters and forest landowners have continually expressed concern that "what is taught in the schools" about forestry and natural resources is often based on emotion and misinformation rather than science. With 75% of the U.S. population located in urban areas, and the majority of today's youth being raised without a connection to the land, the availability of science-based natural resources educational material is critical.

One way to introduce youth to forestry is to build a virtual environment that exposes students to forest management activities. In fact, research - now several years old - showed that 65% of children aged 3 to 17 live in homes with computers. Between home and school, 91% of 6 to 17 year old youth have access to the Internet. While not a substitute for hands-on field experience, the World Wide Web is a useful medium to present a variety of materials to youth. With this in mind, a team of foresters, youth development specialists and technology experts from Virginia Cooperative Extension and Virginia Tech developed 4-H Virtual Forest.



The 4-H Virtual Forest is an interactive, web-based learning experience that introduces forest management concepts to youth aged 9 through 13. Seven learning modules cover the following subjects: land-use management, renewable resources, photosynthesis, tree identification, old-field succession, tree measurements, and timber harvesting. The 4-H Virtual Forest website also includes user's guides, student activity sheets, teacher answer sheets, additional resources, and the Virginia "Standards of Learning" addressed by each module. In addition, student and adult evaluations can be completed and submitted on-line.

Completed in late-summer 2004 after a lengthy development period, 4-H Virtual Forest has since been marketed on a wide scale. In September 2004, each Virginia Cooperative Extension 4-H agent received a letter, CD, and enough Virtual Forest promotional bookmarks for every third through seventh grade teacher in their counties. Sets of 25 CD's have been sent to each Extension district office, where they will be loaned to agents interested in working with teachers in a computer lab setting, thereby circumventing the initial download time associated with modules on the website. An e-mail announcement was sent to 2,000 members of the group Building a Presence for Science. The Virginia Association of Science Teachers agreed to run information on 4-H Virtual Forest in their newsletter, which is distributed to 1,700 K-12 Science teachers. Announcements were run in the *Halifax Clover Chatter* (distribution 730), *Forestry Forum* (distribution 640), and *Virginia Forestry Association News and Notes* (distribution 1,300). Promotional information was also disseminated to 1,100 southern regional Extension professionals via the Southern Forestry Extension e-mail newsletter, and nationwide to the Association of Natural Resource Extension Professionals (ANREP) membership. Following a formal pilot testing period, newspaper articles were released statewide.

Thus far, school teachers are pleased that 4-H Virtual Forest stimulates student interest in natural resources while addressing natural resources related Standards of Learning. Natural resource professionals appreciate that the project deals with common misconceptions, like the one that harvesting trees will make the earth run out of oxygen. Youth responding to the on-line evaluation have given 4-H Virtual Forest positive marks as well. For

example, 94% percent of youth admitted to learning either "a lot" (56%) or "some" (38%) by visiting the web site. One hundred percent of youth described the site as some variation of cool, such as "extremely cool" (12.5%), "pretty cool" (62.5%), or "sort of cool" (25%). And, 94% indicated that 4-H Virtual Forest increased their interest in forestry either "a lot" (44%) or "some" (50%).



Although designed with Virginia's youth in mind, 4-H Virtual Forest is receiving national and international exposure. A recent search of the web revealed that the following universities and Extension services currently link to - or disseminated information about - 4-H Virtual Forest: North Carolina State, Washington State, Cornell, the University of Minnesota, the University of Georgia, Purdue, Texas A&M, Iowa State, the University of Florida, Oregon State, the University of California, and the University of Tennessee. More importantly, the following public school systems currently link to 4-H Virtual Forest as an SOL reference: Virginia Beach City Public School System, Norge Elementary School (James City County), Francis Mallory Elementary School (Hampton), Harrisonburg City Public Schools, and Cleveland Elementary School (Russell County). Other notable links include North Carolina Project Learning Tree, the West Virginia Division of Forestry, and Virginia Naturally. Web usage statistics show that during the period from July 1, 2004 through July 1, 2005, 4-H Virtual Forest received 498,106 successful requests from 7,980 distinct hosts. These hosts included users from 39 foreign countries. Samples of unsolicited feedback received thus far include the following:

"I LOVE the 4-H virtual forest. I opened the old field succession and it was great. It even had some information about John Smith that could tie in with Virginia Studies SOLs....I plan to use it this afternoon with my entire class using the LCD projector....IT IS GREAT..."

- Christie Barker Lewis, 4th Grade Teacher, Sinai Elementary School

"...this is terrific stuff! I teach in the 4th grades and do a module on forests as part of VA Natural Resources in the fall and in the spring we do a unit on horticulture which includes photosynthesis. I'll be incorporating the virtual forest site in both units!"

- Lynn Elizabeth Grosz, Extension Agent, 4-H Youth Development, Virginia Cooperative Extension

"...I do school programs about trees for kids. I am going to tell the kids I teach, about 2,000 a year, about this website. It will be a great way for them to learn more after my program ends. Thanks for putting this together."

- James Nichnadowicz, 4-H Agent, Rutgers Cooperative Extension

"I LOVED your new interactive 4-H program on the forests! The sounds and animated characters are sure to motivate kids; interactive format will keep them involved, inspired, and thinking; your suggestions for taking care of the environment are well done; information is presented in a clear and educational format; and I really enjoyed the obvious 'kid input!' Congratulations on a job well done!"

- Linda Manka, Education Ranger, Shenandoah National Park

To explore 4-H Virtual Forest, visit <http://www.ext.vt.edu/resources/4h/virtualforest>

Dan Goerlich is the Central District Forestry and Natural Resource Agent, Halifax County Office (dalego@vt.edu).

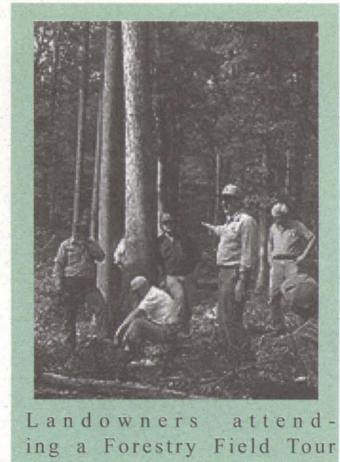
How are we doing ?

An assessment of VFLEP's impact in Virginia

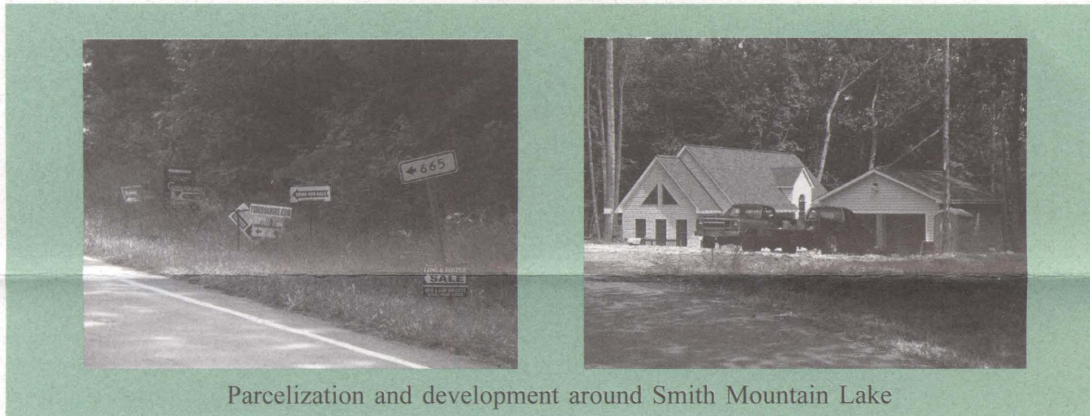
Jennifer Gagnon, *Virginia Tech Dept. of Forestry* and Maminaiaina Rasamoelina, *Virginia Tech Department of Forestry*

In Virginia, private landowners own the majority of the Commonwealth's 15.5 million acres of commercial forestland (almost 12 million acres; compare to: forest industry - 1.5 million, national forests - 1.5 million, and other government organizations - 0.5 million). The implications of these landownership patterns are increased forest fragmentation and parcelization, and land use changes, making proper forest management extremely important in order to maintain functioning ecosystems. The Virginia Forest Landowner Education Program (VFLEP) was developed to provide these private landowners with information, tools and contacts to help them improve forest management practices on their lands. One way in which we try to do this is through our short-course program, which was implemented in the fall of 1997. As with any successful program, periodic evaluations to assess who we are reaching and the program's impacts and effectiveness are needed. The VFLEP is currently working with a PhD student in the Department of Forestry, Maminaiaina Rasamoelina, to do just that. Rasamoelina began his studies at Virginia Tech last year and is starting his second year of classes and teaching. He has conducted preliminary analyses on results from the pre- and post evaluations short course participants completed. The following is a summary of his results.

Almost 2000 people have participated in the three short courses offered from 1997-2003. Based on participant responses to the pre-course evaluation, 85% were landowners with a total of more than 334,000 acres (average ownership was 228, with a range of 1-6250 acres). More than half lived near their property and average ownership length ranged from 10 to 14 years. For a third of the participants, this was not their first forest education program, a third already had written management plans, roughly half had already sought technical and/or professional assistance, and half had harvested timber from their property at some point.



Landowners attending a Forestry Field Tour



Parcelization and development around Smith Mountain Lake

The exit survey had a 53% response rate. Ninety-nine percent of these respondents felt that they would be able to manage their natural resources more efficiently as a result of attending the short course, and anticipated earning an additional 30 to \$40,000 from improved management techniques. Additionally, 74-92% said they would seek professional assistance in writing a land management plan. The good news is, people who had harvested in the past were more likely to have participated in previous natural resource education programs and have sought professional assistance than those who had not harvested, increasing the likelihood of sustainable management occurring on these lands.

Since Virginia Forests provide over \$30 billion annually in benefits to the Commonwealth, managing these assets wisely is in every citizen's best interests. The VFLEP was formed to assist private landowners with their management needs and to increase awareness of sustainable forest management techniques. According to the preliminary data, we are working towards this goal. However, although we have reached almost 2000 landowners through our short-course program, with over 400,000 private forest landowners in Virginia, there is still a long way to go. Our ultimate goal is to reach as many landowners as possible and encourage all of them to seek professional land management advice, regardless of their management objectives. To find out more about our programs, check out our website www.cnr.vt.edu/forestupdate.

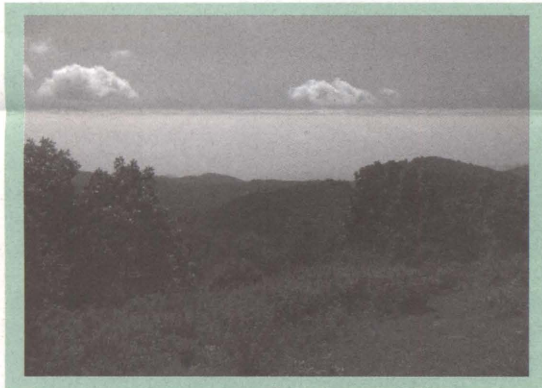
Maminaiaina Rasamoelina is a PhD Student in the Virginia Tech Dept. of Forestry. 

Natural Areas Stewardship on Private Forest Land

David Richert, *Virginia Department of Forestry*

The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) operates one of the finest natural areas stewardship programs in the country - 42 dedicated natural area preserves boasting such natural features as caves, intertidal systems, cliff faces, sinkhole ponds, alpine balds, and wetlands. While these are among the finest of the state's natural areas, deserving of full time maintenance by a team of natural resource agency professionals, they are not the only ones. Many of Virginia's significant natural areas occur on private forest land and these also can inspire feelings of both pride and humility, while adding to the assets of the landowner's (and the Commonwealth's) balance sheet.

What does a natural area look like? A natural area on forest land may come in many shapes and sizes. It might be a sheltered cove with rich soils and lush vegetation. It might be a groundwater seep high in magnesium and iron, supporting vegetation that thrives in these unusual conditions. It might be an area with very thin, droughty soils that barely sustain trees - a barren or glade. It might be a riparian area, a cliff face, a cave, a sinkhole pond, or just an area of natural forest surrounded by plantation forest. Regardless of soil type, moisture conditions, the presence or absence of trees, natural areas show little evidence of past conversion to agricultural or residential uses, are often high in native plant and animal diversity, and have few or no weed species or naturalized species introduced from other countries. Finally, they may be maintained by naturally occurring but somewhat unusual conditions such as thin drought-prone soils, groundwater discharge, extreme high or low soil pH, or fire.



What is natural areas management? Though seemingly antithetical, management in natural areas is sometimes necessary. The abundance of introduced (often invasive) species such as kudzu, Japanese honeysuckle, tree-of-heaven, Japanese stiltgrass, and multiflora rose, have created many challenges for natural areas managers and private forest landowners alike. Mechanical methods (girdling, cutting, mowing, or pulling) are often the simplest solutions, though they may be labor intensive. Specially formulated pesticides are often combined with mechanical methods - cut stumps may be treated with herbicides to prevent resprouting, pre-emergent herbicides help prevent germination of annual weeds, and certain selective herbicides can kill invasive species that are mixed in with desirable species. The Nature Conservancy is one of many sources of information on how to control unwanted invasive species (<http://tncweeds.ucdavis.edu/>).

In other cases, natural processes may need to be simulated. Prescribed fire may replace wildfires that are now aggressively suppressed (though justifiably so). Prescribed fire can open the structure of the vegetation, stimulating the native seedbank with light and a shot of nutrients; it can also consume dead fuel left behind from invasive species control. Risers may be installed to replenish groundwater levels depleted by well-withdrawals or al-



tered by ditching, thus restoring the hydrology of the area. Carefully coordinated canopy removal (i.e. selective timber harvest) may also bring a beneficial increase in light to the forest floor, in areas where prescribed fire is not feasible. Natural areas may not always need active management, however. In some cases, fencing out cattle, and making sure that forest roads and/or skid trails are correctly sited may be enough to ensure the viability of a natural area. Your local state forester or Virginia Cooperative Extension Agent can help you find out more about surveying for native plants and animals, controlling invasive species, and making these forest management decisions.

How can I learn more about natural areas on my forestland?

If one wishes to learn more about natural areas and native species on his or her forestland, field guides can provide general information on native plants and animals. Additionally, two state agencies track rare plant and animal species, and provide the public with rare species lists. These are available through DCR's website (<http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/dnh/nhrinfo.htm#>); additional information on animals is available through the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (<http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/publications.html>). The DCR Natural Heritage Program also operates an online database for those who want to know whether rare plants, animals, natural communities or other unique natural features are found on their forest land. If information on natural areas is incorporated into sound forest management planning, these natural areas will continue to provide benefits far into the future.

Footer: If you have an interest in natural areas stewardship, there are a number of cost-share programs available to forest landowners. Some are available through the Department of Forestry, others through the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, still others are available from federal and local government sources. Your local forester or extension agent can help you find the right program available in your area.

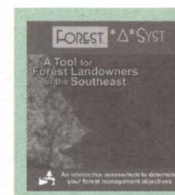
David Richert is the area forester for Tazewell, Bland and Buchanan Counties. He was formerly with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (David.Richert@virginia.gov). U

Resource Review: Forest*A*Syst: A Tool for Forest Landowners in the Southeast: An interactive assessment to determine your forest management objectives

By Kris Irwin and Tina Pagan
(University of Georgia)

Reviewed by: Jennifer Gagnon, Virginia Tech Dept. of Forestry

Forest*A*Syst was developed at the University of Georgia's Warnell School of Forest Resources and the Department of Biological & Agricultural Engineering to aid both new and experienced forest landowners. The program is contained on a single cd and combines video, audio, slideshows and pdf documents into an interactive session aimed at helping landowners determine and prioritize their land management objectives. Potential objectives include: Timber Management, Wildlife Management, and Recreation and Aesthetics.




From there, general information is provided on how to attain these objectives. Discussions include the importance and elements of a forest management plan and how to go about developing one.

Two very useful aspects of Forest*A*Syst are the glossary and contact and resource list. The glossary contains definitions of technical terms used in discussions on the cd. State-specific forest and wildlife management contact information (from Virginia south through Florida, and west through Texas) is provided. These contacts include federal, state, and private agencies. A number of useful documents on topics ranging from how to choose quality seedlings to determining stocking levels for a poorly stocked loblolly pine plantation are available in Adobe PDF from the resource list.

Forest*A*Syst is interactive and easy to use. The videos and slideshows are clear and informative. If you are a new landowner, this is a fantastic place to begin to develop your management objectives, and to obtain information on how to meet these goals. If you're a veteran landowner, this program allows you to reevaluate your management objectives, and to determine how well your current management activities are meeting those goals. The information provided by Forest*A*Syst is general and cannot serve as a substitute for the advice of a professional forester, but it does provide important topics for landowners to consider beforehand and to discuss with their forester.

You need to have Quick Time video player installed on your computer for this program to run (free installation instructions are provided on the cd). Copies of Forest*A*Syst are available free of charge from one of our district extension agents (Adam Downing adowning@vt.edu or Dan Goerlich dalego@vt.edu).

Editor's note: Please feel free to send me your suggestions on books, magazines, videos, websites and other resources of interest to forest landowners for future Resource Reviews. 

CONTACT OUR SPONSORS AND STATE NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AGENCIES:



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