



BIG SKY NIPF-ty NOTES



*Supporting non-industrial private forest owners (family forests)
in their rightful and responsible use, management and
enjoyment of their forested lands*

Montana Forest Owners Association
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MFOA Board Members and 2020 Officers

President	Debra Parker Foley, Missoula	Director	Peter Pocius, Helena
Vice President	Allen Chrisman, Kallispell	Director	Tom Castles, Superior
Secretary	Cameron Wohlschlegel, Columbia Falls	Director	Robin Kolb, Evaro
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Director	Peter Kolb, Evaro	Director	Dave Atkins, Missoula
Director	Pat Mandzak, Lewiston, ID		

Past President's Message

I am pleased to pass the President's torch to Deb Parker Foley who was a past president of MFOA, and who has agreed to step back into the position. Deb led MFOA for over a decade and has vast experience. Equally important is Deb's long-time support of private forest landowners. So, onward, please welcome Deb back. And, thanks for the opportunity to have served you and all MFOA members these past four years. Thanks also to the new and continuing board members. Director Tom Castles was on the first MFOA board of directors. Welcome back to the board Tom!

I was motivated to become President of MFOA four years ago because of the importance of MFOA for all forest landowners. MFOA (in existence since 1995) is the only organization in Montana whose sole purpose is to preserve and protect the interests of private forest landowners. MFOA was formed with the help of Thorn and Karen Liechty, Tom Castles, and others in 1995. Thorn told me he was motivated by the fact that landowners had no voice. An example of MFOA's effectiveness is a fairly recent legislative session in which MFOA was the only party who opposed a bill that was harmful to landowners. MFOA testified against the bill. There were several proponents; but, the bill was defeated!

Today, going on 25 years after forming, MFOA is going strong and speaking with a steady and clear voice for the private forest landowner. In Montana, there are over 39,000 private forest landowners owning over four million acres. I have been happy to support them in my time as President of MFOA and thank you for your encouragement and correspondence.

MFOA Top Issues Facing Forest Landowners for 2020 (by # votes)

At the January 9, 2020 MFOA meeting, a list of top issues for forest land owners was compiled and prioritized:

1. Concern for liability of wildfire/prescribed burning of my property from/to other lands. (13 votes).
2. Losing control over my property from new laws (federal, state, local regulatory actions) (10 votes).
3. Maintaining forest products infrastructure (markets, forestry and logging expertise) (10 votes).
4. Cross boundary management including collaborative among state/federal/private regarding forest health and fire (the needs expressed here I think are for private forest lands to have a voice and be considered equal partners in the decision making and implementation phases) (9 votes).

5. Timber land taxation/assessment policy and practice. (6 votes).
6. Consistency and increases in cost-share for forest related treatments on private lands. (4 votes).
7. Increase MFOA membership. (4 votes)
8. Keep voluntary status of landowner BMP audits. (clarification is that private forest landowners participation is essential for the audit process to work, however, this needs to remain voluntary for landowners thus more effort needs to be taken to inform and recruit landowners to be part of this process) (3 votes).
9. General landowner liability with respect to trespass, easements, etc - need clarity of rules for this (note – this is considered a separate issue from wildfire/prescribed burning liability) (3 votes).
10. Extended prescribed burning season for private lands forest practices – perhaps over the entire winter - with respect to DEQ rules and local air quality rules and regulations. (comments that the ability to burn clean dry piles from forestry operations when snow is on the ground and good air dispersal exists needs to be present all winter long, rather than the current 3 month prohibition) (3 votes).

Legislative issues To Watch For In 2020-21:

The Montana State Legislature will convene again in 2021. MFOA will be monitoring the legislature during its 2020 inter-session. Here are issues identified by MFOA to watch for:

- EQC hearings on – management of chronic wasting disease (including management of animals on private property)
- SJ30 – wildlife location database showing wildlife locations on private lands
- SJ20 – wilderness study area change in designation
- Funding for state Natural Heritage Program (additional fees and tax assessments)
- Local government as wildfire authority – additional fire suppression taxes on top of existing fire preparedness tax landowners already pay (but not municipal residents)
- Tribal cultural committee oversight for all lands
- Water rights
- Concern for liability of wildfire/prescribed burning of my property from/to other lands.
- Losing control over my property from new laws (federal, state, local regulatory actions)
- Cross boundary management including collaborative among state/federal/private regarding forest health and fire (the needs expressed here are for private forest lands to have a voice and be considered equal partners in the decision making and implementation phases)
- Timber land taxation/assessment policy and practice.
- Consistency and increases in cost-share for forest related treatments on private lands.
- General landowner liability with respect to trespass, easements, etc - need clarity of rules for this (note – this is considered a separate issue from wildfire/prescribed burning liability)
- Extended prescribed burning season for private lands forest practices – perhaps over the entire winter - with respect to DEQ rules and local air quality rules and regulations. (comments that the ability to burn clean dry piles from forestry operations when snow is on the ground and good air dispersal exists needs to be present all winter long, rather than the current 3 month prohibition)
- Increase timber management options within SMZ's

Next MFOA Meeting

MFOA will meet on March 13 (Friday) 4:00 pm at the Montana DNRC, 2705 Spurgin Road, Missoula. All are welcome.