



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*



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Condolences

MFOA extends special condolences to Steve Arno and his family as they mourn the loss of Bonnie Arno. Bonnie was a loyal supporter of tree farm and well recognized in the forest community.

2019 Legislative session

HB441 – Repeal of timber conservation license in lieu of sale

Thanks to all who were prepared to ask your senators and representatives to override a veto should Governor Bullock had vetoed this bill. Governor Bullock signed the bill on May 9, 2019, so no override was required. Thanks also to those MFOA members who provided input to MFOA regarding HB441.

Policy statements

We intend to develop and publish position papers which set forth the position of MFOA on important topics. The website <http://www.montanaforestowners.org> sets forth positions, but only in one or two lines, or in letters that MFOA sent to legislators. We wish to publish more expansive positions for the purpose of making MFOA more valuable as a source of information.

Enclosed is a draft of our first position paper. This covers the topic of prescribed burning. There seems to be a consensus amongst many that prescribed burns can be beneficial but then there is the issue of who pays for burns-gone-bad. We ask for your input (by email, U.S. Mail or telephone – see above letterhead) on this draft policy statement. Please freely provide your thoughts and desires. Tell us what you want and don't want. Once we gain your valuable input we will do our best to draft a consensus for your further review. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Forest Advisory Council

Governor Bullock signed an executive order on May 20, 2019, creating a 21-member Montana Forest Advisory Council. This Council will meet over the next year to update the 2010 Montana Forest Action Plan. It will also implement programs aimed at increasing the State's role in forest management statewide. State Forester Sonya Germann said "We're charged with two things: one is to create an assessment of forest conditions for the state of Montana, and the second part is given those conditions, what do we need to do, what are priority areas for active forest restoration and management to mitigate wildfire risk?" The Council will cease to exist on September 15, 2020, unless rescinded or renewed by subsequent executive order. The order may be found at https://governor.mt.gov/Portals/16/docs/2019EOs/EO-07-2019_Creating%20MFAAC.pdf?ver=2019-05-20-123310-520.

Forest Recovery Act

Two forestry-related bills (S.1687 and H.R.1444) are pending in Congress. H.R. 1444 is identical to bill H.R. 4962 introduced in 2018 which died at the end of that session. The stated purpose of these bills is to allow forest owners to deduct tax losses based upon their economic loss and without being limited to one's tax basis. These bills are a step in the right direction; however, the bills could be improved if the

deduction did not require the timber be reforested within five years, would not be limited to uncut timber, and (as worded) would not create other inconsistencies in the tax laws.

Forest Stewardship Workshops

The remaining 2019 workshop locations and dates are listed below. The workshops fill fairly quickly so register sooner rather than later! For more information go to <http://forestry.msuextension.org/mfsp.html>.

| <u>Location</u> | <u>2019 Workshop dates</u> | <u>Register by</u> |
|-----------------|----------------------------|--------------------|
| Kalispell | July 11, 12 and 19 | June 28 |
| Lewistown | August 8, 9 and 16 | July 26 |

Landscape Priorities

It appears that the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is directing its Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding for forest remediation toward landscape projects, in contrast to funding projects of individual landowners who are not a part of a designated landscape project. Although landscape projects can be valuable in terms of forest health and fire reduction, the private forest owners should not be forgotten. MFOA is concerned that the pendulum may be swinging too far toward landscape funding to the detriment of individual stand-alone projects.

See https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/975c71_95f1770382d34f5a99f68ad3d70f61fb.pdf for a letter the MFOA sent to the NRCS Montana State Conservationist expressing concern. We also have a meeting scheduled in early July with the State Conservationist to discuss our concerns. Please provide us your input on this issue.

Glyphosate/aka Roundup

Glyphosate is an active ingredient in a product sold under the brand name “Roundup” and was patented by Monsanto. After Monsanto’s patent expired, several companies started selling products containing glyphosate as an active ingredient. One can only determine whether a product contains glyphosate by reading the label of active ingredients. The word Roundup has become a household word to some homeowners. It is considered by some as the go-to product whenever one wishes to treat weeds. Some users are unaware that there is indeed a difference in herbicides. And indeed the brand Roundup does dispatch weeds. More informed people are aware that glyphosate not only kills weeds; it also kills lawns and desirable plants. There are now news reports of a myriad of law suits alleging that glyphosate is carcinogenic. Some suits claim that employees were subjected to repeated exposure to glyphosate to their detriment. The point is to be cautious when using glyphosate. Actually we should be cautious when using any herbicide and to carefully read, understand, and follow the labeling and warnings.

Feral Pigs/aka Feral Swine

What in the world are feral pigs, and why should one care? The very subject may be interesting to the uninformed, plus it should be of concern to many landowners. A feral pig is considered in Montana as any pig running in the wild. Feral pigs were initially introduced by persons who imported and raised wild boar for the purpose of producing meat. Over time some boar escaped captivity and others were apparently released into the wild by owners who no longer wanted them. Today herds of feral pigs contain some mixed breeds where wild boar have bred with domestic pigs who escaped to the wild.

So what is the problem? Wild pig are extremely destructive. They have large snouts and are prone to digging, uprooting pastures and anything else around them. Sometimes a farmer cannot operate haying equipment in uprooted pastures. The pigs also devour crops such as corn, grain, soy beans, wheat, and oats to name a few. They also devour feed placed for domestic animals. They can devastate orchards, saplings and vines and even damage larger trees by scraping bark off with their tusks. Fencing is easily destroyed by the pigs. Add to this the fact that they are wily, and cleverly escape anyone attempting to capture them. And they are prolific. To date there seems to be no practical method to eradicate the pigs.

The agriculture producers (including MFOA members on ranges and mixed use) in Montana are worried about the prediction that feral pigs will likely invade Montana from Canada where they are prolific. Montana has statutes that prohibit importing, possessing or transporting feral swine. The statutes also prohibit anyone from intentionally, knowingly, or negligently allowing swine to live in a feral state. Stiff penalties call for \$2,000 to \$10,000 per violation. See Montana Code Annotated 81-29-101 through 81-29-106 and 87-5-702. Montana agriculture believes that it needs to discourage and actually prevent hunting, in order to keep the pigs from becoming established.

Some states have a different philosophy – hunt feral pigs to your heart’s content! Their viewpoint is that the best approach is to encourage hunting as a method to deal with the wild pigs. Several states which allow and encourage feral hog hunting include Texas, California, Hawaii, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, Georgia, and Florida.

Should you find any wild pigs on your property, you may be well-advised to contact the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, or Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks.

Top 10 Forestry Issues for 2019

You should shortly be receiving your free yearly issue of the National Woodlands publication. The National Woodland Owners Association recently published the top 10 forestry issues determined by a poll of its 42 state affiliates. These are:

- #1 Markets: Timber, Biomass & Industry Viability
- #2 Extension Education & Service Forestry
- #3 Invasive Species and Forest Health
- #4 Income, Estate & Property Taxes
- #5 The Right-to-Practice Forestry & Regulation Creep
- #6 Stewardship Incentives: Cost Sharing & Tax Credits
- #7 Keeping Forests As Forests
- #8 Water Quality & Quantity
- #9 Wildfire Management, Funding & Climate
- #10 Wildlife Management

Your issue of National Woodlands will contain a detailed description of these issues.

Fire 2019

It seems that we had a fairly wet spring. Good news for fire prevention and suppression? Maybe not, if the wet spring supports greater growth of grass and weeds.

See you in the fall.

Draft MFOA Prescribed Burning Policy Statement 2019

July 8, 2019

The Montana Forest Owners Association (MFOA) is a voluntary membership-driven organization that seeks to represent the best interests of Montana's non-industrial private forest landowners. Among these interests are the right to practice forestry and the ability to develop forest plans and operations that reflect each landowner's background, interests and desires while maintaining the inherent conservation values of his or her forest.

The use of fire has been and remains an important tool to forest landowners to implement their forest management and conservation plans. MFOA recognizes that the use of fire, just as the use of pesticides, biological agents, and landscape alterations that affect water flow, can physically impact an area much greater than the boundaries of any specific ownership. Even though the rights and abilities of landowners to manage their properties are sacred to Montana's forest landowners, landowners must give serious consideration to actions that may negatively impact other owners' properties. A landowner (regardless of private, state, tribal or federal affiliation) should be held morally and financially responsible and liable to fully compensate for and correct forest and property damages that arise outside said landowner's property boundaries from such owner's prescribed burns or other actions, irrespective of the intention of such owner. Growing a forest on the relatively harsh landscapes of Montana may take centuries, and forest stewardship is often a multigenerational endeavor that is reflected by an existing forest condition at any particular time. Such a forest condition is not easily replaced and often, when lost, cannot be replaced within the lifespan of an affected landowner. Extreme care must be taken to protect the legacy of work and character that landowners have invested in their properties when forest management policies are developed into state-sanctioned practice and law.