



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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National Woodland Owners Association

The National Woodland Owners Association (NWOA) recently published the results of its annual survey of forest owner associations nationwide. The Top Ten Family Forestry issues, in order follow:

1. Income, Estate and Property Taxes
2. Timber Markets, Biomass and Fair Trade
3. Extension Education and Service Forestry
4. Invasives & Forest Health
5. Right-To-Practice Forestry & Private Property Rights
6. Keeping Forests as Forests
7. Water Quality & Quantity
8. Stewardship Incentives: Cost-Sharing & Tax Credits
9. Wildfire: Suppression, Fuel Reduction, Early Detection
10. Certification of Loggers, Foresters & Forest Practices

You may access the report at <http://woodlandowners.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/TopTenFamilyForestryIssues2017.pdf> or learn more about National Woodland Owners Association at <http://woodlandowners.org/>.

Montana's #1 top forestry issue

Although listed nationally as issue #5, Montanans may soon consider “public access” and private property rights as issue #1.

The Bozeman Daily Chronicle on August 1, 2017, published its own editorial in which it voiced its opinion that

“Lost access will become the public lands issue of the 21st century.”

The Chronicle went on to reaffirm this issue by stating

“Stop the steady drip, drip, drip of public lands access lost to moneyed landowners who throw up gates across traditional public access roads and trails.”

“In recent years, tracts of what were once farm and ranch land have been bought up and converted to private hunting and recreation sites.”

Governor Bullock recently announced the creation of the Office of Outdoor Recreation with efforts to expand and protect access to public lands. He created the new position of “Public Access Specialist.”

We at MFOA saw this coming when we monitored and testified before Senate and House committees on the subject of public access. It became apparent to us that there is a movement to legislate a means to prevent outsiders from buying land and erecting gates. We predict that Montana's 2019 legislative session will be rife

with bills designed to increase public access through private lands. It appears that a few bad actors (so-called “moneyed landowners”) have stirred up a hornet’s nest.

MFOA witnessed the arguments for and against increased access while attending and testifying at Montana’s Senate and House committee hearings. Following is a summary of the salient testimony.

- Those supporting greater access testified of their experiences. Where they previously enjoyed access, they found gates. These supporters of greater access appeared to assert their “rights” to access because they enjoyed access in the past. Those supporters expressed little concern about the property owners’ rights, as the supporters are “fed up.”
- Those opposing greater access expressed their concerns about losing private property rights.

The average private forest owner is caught in the middle, feeling the pressure resulting from a few bad actors, caught between the groundswell to maintain and open access to more public property and the desire of private owners to maintain their own property rights.

The access issue is fraught with emotion. This is precisely an issue which is difficult to equitably resolve through legislation.

See http://www.bozemandailychronicle.com/opinions/editorials/governor-s-new-office-must-focus-on-access/article_aa798dce-b6cf-5f6b-95f8-469f549efd2a.html for the Chronicle’s full editorial.

New Collaboration Network Aims to Assist in Solving Natural Resource Management Issues

Debra Parker Foley, MFCN Administrator and Past MFOA President

The Montana Forest Collaboration Network (MFCN) held its 1st Annual Workshop in Helena on December 5-6, 2016. This Workshop introduced the new organization to the citizens of Montana and to representatives of 17 different collaborative groups across Montana engaged in natural resource management. MFCN’s mission is to assist Montana’s collaborative groups in forest and grassland restoration, conservation and resource utilization for the benefit of the public.

MFOA is a participating member of the MFCN—which includes community-based collaboratives, conservation organizations, private landowners, forest products industries, State and Federal agencies.

The public benefits from the collaboration method as projects move more efficiently from ideas to boots-on-the-ground. Successful outcomes from this collaboration effort include better communication; brokered agreements; support of agency officials during legal challenges; community-driven development of conservation and forest management plans; and providing input and feedback to agencies.

MFCN will convene its 2nd Annual Workshop on November 6-7, 2017, at the Missoula Hilton Garden Inn. For more info on the Montana Forest Collaboration Network (MFCN) go to <http://montanaforestcollaboration.org/>.

Autumn forestry tasks

Many of us put away our herbicide sprayers after spring, thankful that our weed eradication was over for another year. Think again! Some weed experts say that autumn is the best time to conduct weed management on many weeds. What weeds? The list generally includes those weeds which germinate in the autumn or are active in preparing for the winter.

Weeds to spray in the fall

Our thanks to Mike Jones, Gallatin Valley Weed Department Coordinator, and Jane Mangold, Associate Professor and Extension Invasive Plant Specialist, Department of Land Resources and Environmental Sciences,

Montana State University, for providing us the following information for weeds that respond well to herbicides in the fall.

- Weeds with rhizomatous roots that are still green will be sensing shorter day lengths and cooler night temperatures, sensing them to put on fat for the roots.
 - Canada thistle
 - Spotted knapweed
 - Leafy spurge
 - Russian knapweed
 - Field bindweed
 - Dalmatian toadflax
 - Yellow toadflax

- Short lived perennials, biennials, tap rooted plants. Look for seedlings that have germinated, wait a bit for fall moisture such as after mid-September, then spray in September or October. Spraying in the fall will eliminate the need to deal with these plants in the spring. These plants are easy to kill; but remember there may be a bank of seeds on/in the ground that you will have to address for years to come. Missing a year will set you back years.
 - First year houndstongue rosette
 - Spotted knapweed regrowth
 - Oxeye daisy rosette
 - Hoary alyssum rosette

- Annuals.
 - Cheatgrass – This is not classified as a noxious weed, but rather a “regulated plant.” Regulated plants have the potential to have significant negative impacts. The state recommends minimizing the spread of regulated plants. It is acceptable to pull small patches of cheatgrass in the spring or spray in the fall. Wait for cheatgrass to emerge in the fall and spray when there are one to two leaves per plant. Spray with Plateau or Panoramic SL (active ingredient is imazapic). In the first two weeks of April (or a bit later if you have a later spring), seed with grass. Wheatgrasses are particularly tolerant to imazapic. The Plateau label lists species that are tolerant/susceptible. Or, you can spray with glyphosate early in the spring and seed grass immediately thereafter.

Noxious weeds

The Montana Department of Agriculture yearly publishes a list of noxious weeds that land owners are required to control. These weeds are segregated by “Priority” level.

See <http://agr.mt.gov/Portals/168/Documents/Weeds/2017%20Noxious%20Weed%20List.pdf?ver=2017-05-18-140910-367×tamp=1502561907968>

Each county has the option to designate additional weeds as noxious, so also be sure to check with your county’s weed department. Gallatin County offers Weed Management Tips. The Weed Management Tips describe the weeds and offer suggested control measures. We have found these Weed Management Tips to be very helpful. See http://gallatincomt.virtualltownhall.net/Public_Documents/gallatincomt_weed/WeedTipLinks.

Your input?

We would like to hear from you. Please tell us what you think and what you want.