



AGROFORESTRY RESOURCE CENTER

WE'RE NOT SEEING THE FOREST FOR THE TREES!

In the Hudson River Valley and Catskill Mountain region of New York State trees are the dominant vegetative species of the terrestrial environment, representing 65% of the landscape. This is particularly true of the upland areas and tributaries. In addition, private forest owners (PFO) control over 85% of these forest lands, the balance being in parks, preserves, other protected areas and the forest industry. Many of these landowners are unaware of the responsibility they have as stewards of forested property and the role their forests play in providing crucial ecosystem services to the community at large.

Values of Forested Land

Drinking Water Supply- Privately owned forested lands help to serve as natural filters and reservoirs for water, helping to save billions of dollars in filtration and storm water control.

Clean Air & Carbon Sequestration—For every ton of wood about 1.5 tons of carbon dioxide are removed from the air and replaced with 1.1 tons of oxygen. A single tree can absorb more than 10 pounds of carbon dioxide per year. Trees also remove other air pollutants.

Endangered species and Biodiversity- Approximately 90% of endangered species depend on forests for the habitat they provide. Biodiversity is sustained in healthy diverse forests.

Healthy Rural Economies and Working Forest Landscapes- Well managed private forested lands contribute jobs and healthy economies in rural areas. Recreation, tourism, hunting, fishing, and forest products bring income to private forest owners and the communities where they reside. In return, these communities supply the workforce and infrastructure needed to maintain privately owned forest lands.

Recreation- Privately owned forests provide healthy recreation opportunities including camping, fishing, birding and hiking. For example, there were almost 4 million participants in wildlife-watching in New York State in 2001, who spent a total of \$1.4 billion in wildlife-watching related expenditures.

Hunting- More than 642,000 people hunted in New York State in 2001 and spent over \$822.2 million in hunting related expenditures.

Challenges & Threats to Forested Land

Increasing Development Pressure- Forests are lost forever once they are converted to development. From 1963 to

2002, the US experienced a 13 million acre net loss of forested land, larger than Vermont and New Hampshire combined, to non-forest uses.

Shrinking Parcel Size- In New York State the average acreage has dropped steadily from 44 acres in 1978 to less than 30 acres today. This trend is expected to continue, with an average of 17 acres per owner predicted by 2010, although today, in the eastern Catskills, it is 12 acres! As tracts of private forest land become smaller and more fragmented their ability to provide important ecological services, such as filtering water and providing suitable wildlife habitat decreases.

Minimal Land Management Planning- Management planning helps private landowners make a long term commitment to the land. Yet current estimates suggest that only 3% of PFO have a written management plan.

Harvesting without Professional Advice- Without professional forest management advice PFO may engage in management practices that degrade the quality and productivity of their land for years to come. Only 22% of PFO have sought professional advice prior to timber harvesting on their land resulting in 8 out of 10 harvests being exploitive.

Declining Forest Health and Ecological Values- Unhealthy forests can lead to degraded water quality and wildlife habitat and limit the opportunities for recreation. PFO are threatened by invasive species, insects, diseases and wild fire threats. PFO also often lack the financial and technical resources needed to treat their land and minimize these threats.

Reduced Income Opportunities- Without income from their lands, PFO often find it difficult to resist development pressures. Today, globalizing markets and other factors reduce opportunities for PFO to sell products and get income from their land.

Changing Private Forest Owner Profile- PFO are changing from largely resident farmer and blue-collar worker to non-resident, white collar, professional, and retired. The average age of private forest owners is 60+ years. Consequently, a significant portion of private forests will soon change hands, from current owners to heirs and new owners, often splitting forests among several heirs or selling smaller parcels to other owners.

Diverse ownership objectives -Many PFO cite scenic beauty, hunting and fishing, biodiversity conservation (wildlife enhancement/conservation), preservation, privacy and family legacy as the primary reasons for owning land.

Global Climate Change- Consequences of global climate change may allow more insect pests and diseases to spread north, severe weather disturbances will impact certain tree species and species ranges will move northward.

THE AGROFORESTRY RESOURCE CENTER

Our Mission Statement

The mission of the ARC is to *sustain the economic, ecological and aesthetic values of forested land*. This mission is pursued through education and research that supports integrating economically and environmentally sound farm venture, woodlot management and market development for forest farming products as well as the expansion of a land use ethic capable of sustaining both the economic and ecological values of forested land.

Past Program Examples

- Diseases of Pests of the Forest
- Streambanks and Buffers: Trees, Landscaping and Healthy Streams
- A Municipal Officials Guide to Forestry
- Wildlife and Forestry
- Tree Defoliation Workshop
- Ginseng: A Primer for Beginners Workshop
- Trained Logger Certification Program for regional loggers.
- A Tree Huggers Guide to Forest Stewardship
- Forestry Self Study Series
- Enhancing Forest Financial Value (A Financial Management Primer for Forest Landowners)
- Forestry Practices and Creating Pasture
- Heating with Firewood: A Workshop for Homeowners
- Growing Oyster Mushrooms for Fun and/or Profit
- Land Use Seminar Series
The Role of Forestry in a Healthy Rural Economy
- Grazing Goats in the Forest

Facility

- ◆ Interpretative displays of state and regional organizations relating to forestry and agriculture.
- ◆ Modern conference and classroom featuring distance learning and internet video-conferencing capabilities.
- ◆ Field laboratory
- ◆ 142-acre demonstration forest.
- ◆ Conference and meeting room space. This facility is available for use by outside organizations. Contact us for further information regarding availability and fees.
- ◆ Easily accessible from the New York State Thruway and other major routes.

Partners

Watershed Agricultural Council
Cornell University
Columbia-Greene Community College
Hudson Mohawk RC&D Council
Greene County Soil & Water Conservation District
New York Forest Owners Association
Catskill Forest Association
Catskill Center for Conservation & Development
Greene County Maple Producers
Catskill Mountain Beekeepers Club
Greene County Legislature

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If precious forested land declines we all lose!