Utah Forest News

Utah Forest Landowner Education Program Newsletter

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What You Should Know: Choosing a Consulting Forester

Private forest landowners sometimes need the assistance of a professional forester. The State of Utah Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands service foresters provide professional forestry assistance to Utah forest landowners free of charge. However, there may be situations where private forest landowners prefer to hire a private consulting forester to assist them with management of their forest lands. What follows is a brief examination of what to consider when choosing a consulting forester.

A private consulting forester works for the private forest landowner as a professional representative. Generally, these individuals have college degrees in forestry and represent more than one individual at a time. As professional consultants, they are obligated to represent your best interests during the time they work for you.

A consulting forester should evaluate your forest with your goals and objectives in mind. They can provide a variety of services, including inventorying your resources; helping you develop a forest management plan; marking timber to be removed; laying out roads, log landings and skid trails; marketing the logs; administering the timber sale; ensuring proper timber sale close-out; and tracking all payments to the landowner.

There are important differences between private consulting foresters, log purchasing agents, and timber or log brokers. These individuals might all refer to themselves as consulting foresters, but their actual role will greatly affect their ability and commitment to serving your best interests. A private consulting forester is the agent of the landowner, contractually obligated to ensure your best interests. A log purchasing agent is a representative of a mill dealing in the sale and purchase of timber, and works for the log purchaser, not the landowner. A timber broker is an individual or business that buys timber for the purpose of selling logs to other log brokers or to mills. These individuals generally do not manufacture the logs they purchase, but instead act as middlemen between the landowner and the log purchaser. It is important to be aware that the primary obligations of log purchasing agents and timber brokers may rest with another party.

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

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In Utah today, anyone can legally claim to be a forester or forestry consultant. There are no state licensing nor minimum educational requirements which a forester or forestry consultant must satisfy. One way to assess a forester's qualifications is to check whether the consultant is affiliated with one or more organizations of their professional peers. Both the Association of Consulting Foresters and the Society of American Foresters promote high standards of professionalism through their membership requirements and ongoing programs. Membership in these organizations requires a professional forester to abide by a code of ethics. Membership also serves as an indication of a forester's level of professional commitment.

Choose a consulting forester in the same way you would select any service-related business. Check the phone book and classified ads, ask friends and professional acquaintances, including other forest landowners and your lawyer or accountant, or call one of the professional groups just mentioned.

Once you have selected several candidates from which to choose, determine whether an individual has a conflict of interest that may influence the representation of your interests. Ask each to submit a resume, including documentation of professional experience, list of local client references, and estimated cost of services. Call selected clients and inquire about their satisfaction with the job performed and, with their permission, visit their property to see for yourself the nature and quality of service provided relative to the landowner's objectives.

Consulting foresters are generally paid a fee for their services, either on a per day basis, total bid basis, or on a percentage of the total volume or dollar amount of a timber sale. The method of payment may affect the consulting forester's ability to objectively advise you on the management of your forest resources and should be carefully considered. For example, if the consultant is paid based on a percentage of the total value of a timber sale, he or she will gain by increasing the volume and quality of timber to be removed. Though this might be appropriate, it also may result in high-grading your resource (removing only the biggest and best quality trees), and may have serious implications for the future productivity and value of your forest.

Once you have chosen a consulting forester, insist on a written agreement, with fees, services, obligations, terms, and principal parties clearly identified. Read the agreement carefully and make sure you understand it. Ask questions. Have an attorney review the conditions of the agreement with you.

Only you can select a consultant that meets your needs. Choose someone you can trust and feel comfortable with. The consultant needs to understand and respect your objectives, interests, and limitations. If you pick the right consultant, you can enjoy a long-term relationship that should prove profitable to both of you while ensuring the sustainability of your forest.

Association of Consulting Foresters
732 N Washington Street, Suite 4-A
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703)548-0990
http://www.acf-foresters.com

Society of American Foresters
5400 Grosvenor Lane
Bethesda, MD 20814-2198
(301)897-8720, ext. 122
http://www.safnet.org

Source: Lisa Dennis-Perez, USU Extension Associate

Classifieds

This classified section is intended as a service for forest landowners. Listing of these services, companies, and individuals here in no way implies endorsement by Utah State University Extension. We suggest that you use the same precautions you would use in the purchase or sale of any goods and services, including asking for and checking references and using a written agreement to clarify the obligations and responsibilities involved in a sale or service contract.

Wasatch Timber Products – looking for raw logs 2 - 40 inches in diameter in Douglas-fir, spruce, and pine. Prefer dead standing, will take green. Also looking to purchase land with timber on property. Call 435-654-6688 or e-mail at LL133@aol.com or contact us at 2045 S Hwy 40, Heber City, UT 84032.

Stoltze Aspen Mills – looking for aspen saw logs to buy by the ton. Call 435-896-6402.

Triangle E Consulting / Merlin Esplin – provides timber inventories and cruising, land and timber management prescriptions, timber marking, road layout, boundary identification and marking, timber sale administration, and other natural resource analysis and implementation services. Call 435-648-2109, fax 435-648-2509, or contact us at P.O. Box 48, Orderville, UT 84758.

Do you have forest resources you are looking to sell? Are there specific timber resources you are looking to buy? Do you offer services useful to forest landowners? This is the place to advertise your needs! Advertisement is free. If you would like to place an ad, call Lisa Dennis-Perez at 435-797-0560 or e-mail lisadp@ext.usu.edu.

Utah Farm Bureau Forms Forestry Advisory Committee

The Utah Farm Bureau Federation recently formed a Forestry Advisory Committee to address issues facing private forest landowners and the forest industry. The Committee will meet periodically to discuss forestry issues and offer suggestions for the private forest landowner education program conducted by Utah State University Extension. The Utah Farm Bureau's formal policies regarding forest practices will be one of the topics to be discussed at the Committee's next meeting, to be held in conjuction with the Farm Bureau's mid-summer meetings in Vernal July 16th and 17th. For more information on the Utah Farm Bureau or the Forestry Advisory Committee, call Reed Balls at 801-233-3011 or John Keeler at 435-835-9421.

Forest Landowner Workshops a Success!

USU Extension and DFF & SL completed a series of regional workshops for forest landowners in February and March. Information was presented on basic silviculture, forest management planning, forest pests and diseases, and timber sale contract provisions. In total, 52 individuals attended the workshops. Participants shared experiences with other landowners, made contacts with timber consultants and mill operators, and gathered information to help them make decisions about managing their forest resources. These workshops will be held on an annual basis, so watch for announcements in the future. If you were unable to attend this series of workshops but would like to receive copies of the handouts distributed there, please call Lisa Dennis-Perez at 435-797-0560 or lisadp@ext.usu.edu.

Dealing with Dwarf Mistletoe

Dwarf mistletoes (Arceuthobium spp.) are natural parasitic enemies of western conifers, slowly weakening the trees and eventually killing them. They are widespread in the forests of western United States. In Utah, they affect ponderosa, lodgepole, bristlecone, limber, and pinyon pines; blue and Engelmann spruces; white and subalpine firs; and Douglas-fir. The information in this article will help you to identify dwarf mistletoe infestations, treat affected trees, and minimize the spread of the parasite into healthy trees.

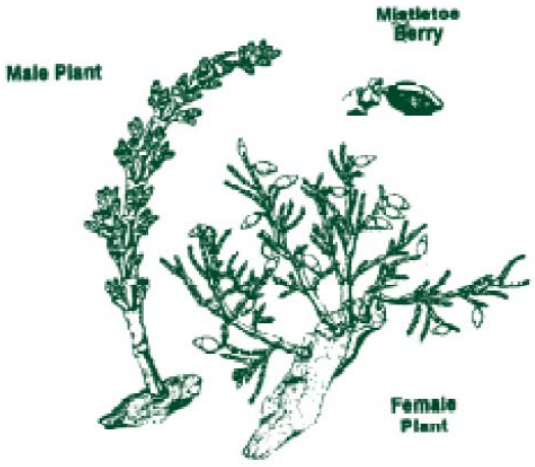
Is Your Tree Infected?

Dwarf mistletoes are related to common Christmas mistletoes, but are smaller, leafless, and grow only on branches and trunks of cone-bearing trees. Many kinds of dwarf mistletoes are found in the western United States; they range from about 1-8 inches tall, but are usually 3-5 inches tall. Dwarf mistletoes also vary in color, but most are green, yellow, brown, or orange. Typically, a host tree can be infected by only one species of mistletoe. The easiest way to tell if your tree is infected is to look for mistletoe shoots. Bunched growths of branches called “witches’ brooms” and branches with swellings are frequently caused by dwarf mistletoe, so they are good places to check for mistletoe shoots.

How Trees Become Infected

Dwarf mistletoe plants are either male or female. Only the female plants produce seeds that spread the disease, although both female and male plants damage trees. Mistletoe seeds are produced in small berries. Pressure builds up within the berries as they ripen. By late summer or early fall the pressure is so great that the berries break away from their stems and the seeds shoot out. Seeds take off at speeds up to 60 miles an hour and usually travel for horizontal distances of 10-15 feet, sometimes as far as 35 feet. A sticky coating on the seeds enables them to stick to whatever they land on. Mistletoe infestations usually come from seeds produced in nearby infected trees, some of which may have died. Birds can also spread seeds over long distances, but most infection is from nearby infected trees.

The length of time it takes for mistletoe to kill a tree depends on several factors – how many mistletoe plants there are in the tree, how vigorous the tree is, how old the tree was when it first became infected, and whether insects, particularly bark beetles, are attracted to the tree. Damage develops slowly until the trees are heavily infected. Tress are usually killed within about 10-15 years once they become heavily infected throughout the crown.



Control Methods

The control recommendations given here apply to all dwarf mistletoes since their life histories are very similar. Control of dwarf mistletoe does not require eradication of the parasite. Not all infected trees have to be cut; instead, the aim of control should be to reduce the amount of mistletoe to a low level. By cutting heavily infected trees and pruning lightly infected ones, your trees can continue to live for many years, providing shade and enhancing the beauty of your forest or homesite. Cut heavily infected trees first, then prune other infected trees and apply any additional

control measures that may be needed. Pruning generally is not practical in most forest stands, but may be appropriate to extend the lives of selected high-value trees.

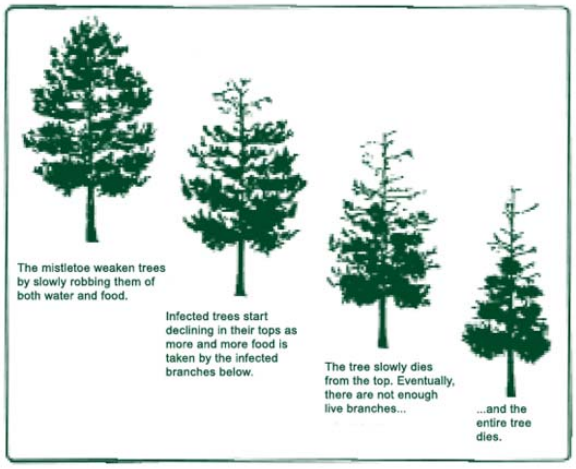
Cutting – Trees that are severely infected with mistletoe in the upper branches or those with only a few live branches should be felled, because dead branches or tops may fall onto people or property. Also, infected branches that are high in the canopy shower seeds on nearby trees and start new infections up to 40 feet away. Infected trees can be retained if they are isolated from healthy trees or surrounded by resistant tree species within 40 feet. Felled trees or cut branches do not have to be burned or destroyed because the mistletoe shoots die quickly and cannot spread the disease.

Pruning – Pruning generally is not done in forest stands, though pruning off infected branches can improve the health of individual high-value trees and lengthen their lives. Even trees that have deteriorated to the point where the tops are thin and off-color can be saved by pruning, if enough healthy branches are present in the tops of the trees. If more than half of the crown would have to be removed by pruning, the tree should probably be removed.

Pruned branches should be cut off near the trunk just outside the swelling at the base of the branch. Large branches should first be undercut to prevent stripping of the tree bark below the branch stub. It is best to cut off the entire branch and not try to prune out individual mistletoe plants because small mistletoe plants will usually be overlooked, and these will grow out later.

All live branches up to the highest infected branch should be cut off as they likely are infected even though they appear to be mistletoe free. If there are plenty of live branches above the highest visibly infected branch, cutting off branches for 2 feet or so above this point will help to eliminate many young infections that would show up later.

Mistletoe root systems extend for several inches beyond the mistletoe shoots inside the tree branches. Thus, if mistletoe plants occur on a branch close to the trunk, the roots of the mistletoe may have already entered the trunk, and new shoots will be produced on the trunk. Dwarf mistletoe infections on the trunks of trees about 5 inches in diameter or more at the point of infection are usually not harmful to the tree and also produce relatively few seeds. Shoots on the trunk usually can be ignored or just knocked off periodically if desired. They will continue to resprout, but if they are knocked off every two years or so, they will not produce seeds.



Follow-up Treatment

Inevitably, you will miss some small mistletoe plants and others that have not yet produced shoots on your first pruning job. For this reason, you should examine previously pruned trees every 2 or 3 years, and prune out any infected branches or knock off trunk shoots. Follow-up pruning is essential for successful control.

Dwarf mistletoe shoots die off as soon as branches are cut, so it is not necessary to burn or discard them. If you keep the wood, do not stack it against living trees because insects could build up in the wood and attack those trees.

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Other Control Measures
Measures that increase the vigor of mistletoe-infected trees will increase their survival rates. Vigor of the mistletoe plants often is increased as well, but the overall result usually is increased vigor and longevity of the host tree. Various practices that can enhance tree vigor include:

Minimize physical damage – soil compaction and physical damage to trunks and roots by vehicles or people and other such activities can lower tree vigor.

Plant resistant trees – if the disease is so advanced that most of the trees need to be cut, planting trees that are resistant to dwarf mistletoe may be your best alternative. Most species of dwarf mistletoe are host-specific and occur only on one species of tree. Because of this, it is usually possible to plant a resistant conifer that grows naturally in the area. Ponderosa pine, for example, can sometimes be replaced with Douglas-fir. Dwarf mistletoes will not attack junipers or any hardwood trees (aspen, ash, elms, cottonwood, birch) so any of these will be safe for planting even where you leave mistletoe-infected trees.

Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands service foresters are available to assist you in determining if mistletoe is present in your forest and if so, the extent of the infestation, and to offer suggestions of appropriate courses of action. Regional service foresters can be reached by calling the main office in Salt Lake City at 801-538-5555 or by visiting their web site at http:// www.nr.state.ut.us/slf/slfhome.htm.

Source: Adapted from USDA Forest Service, 1993

Upcoming Events

Farm Bureau Mid-Summber Meeting:
Vernal.....July 16-17, 1998
Call 801-233-3005 for more information.

Forest Taxation and Estate Planning Conference:
Location to be announced.....Jan. 26-27, 1999
Call 435-797-0560 or 801-538-5504 for information

For More Information...

On upcoming events or any of the information presented in this newsletter, please call Lisa Dennis-Perez at Utah State University at 435-797-0560.

State of Utah Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands (DFFSL) Service Foresters for your area can be contacted by calling the main office in Salt Lake City at 801-538-5555.

Ideas and
written contributions to
this newsletter are encouraged. Send your comments to the return address below or call 435-797-0560. NEXT DEADLINE:
July 9th

Regenerating Your Aspen Forest

Aspen is one of the most valuable forest types in Utah, not so much from a timber standpoint, but for its scenic beauty, grazing opportunities, wildlife habitat, and its contribution to landscape diversity. And even its wood value is increasing as more mills use aspen for pallets, millwork, and other products. Aspen also is abundant, with 62% of Utah's private forest land made-up of aspen dominated forest types.

Though abundant, aspen forests throughout Utah and the West are declining. Charles Kay (see "Is Aspen Doomed" in the May 1997 Journal of Forestry) reported that total aspen acreage in Utah has declined by 60%, from 2 million acres prior to European settlement to 860 thousand acres in 1996. A number of factors have contributed to this decline, but lack of fire is one likely cause, along with changes that have occurred in the types and timing of fires and possibly, increased browsing of young stems by elk, deer, and other ungulates.

If we are to have large acreages of aspen in the future, we need to actively manage for aspen. Some interesting facts about aspen and its regeneration include:

• Aspen is a sun-loving (shade-intolerant) species that cannot regenerate in the shade produced by an established forest stand. For this reason, it is often replaced by shade-tolerant conifers like spruce and fir that become established under the shelter provided by the mature aspen stand.

• Aspen is short-lived and regenerates by producing numerous root sprouts that are genetic clones of existing trees; it rarely reproduces from seed in the West.

• Aspen initially out-competes associated conifers following a clearcut or fire because of sprouting from an established root system. Clearcutting of a mixed aspen-conifer stand is likely to lead to replacement with pure aspen.

• Open sites adjacent to aspen stands can be slowly colonized by root system ingrowth and sprouting from neighboring clones.

• Older aspen stands or clones can get heavily diseased and weakened and may not sprout vigorously.

• Clearcutting and fire are effective disturbances that allow ample sunlight to reach the forest floor and free up nutrients and moisture to encourage aspen root sprouting.

• Successful regeneration of aspen is more likely if stands are harvested or treated in the dormant season when nutrient reserves in aspen roots are highest.

• Extensive root damage on skid trails and landings during logging operations can damage roots and reduce sprouting.

• Excessive browsing of new sprouts after burning or timber harvest can make regeneration difficult or impossible.

•Replacement of an aspen stand by existing conifers can be encouraged by cutting or girdling aspen while leaving the conifers alone.

The above points illustrate that aspen regenerates readily from root sprouts, but older overstory trees need to be killed or removed for sprouting to occur. This killing or removal of older trees can take place through prescribed or natural fire, girdling of trees (cutting around the trunk of the tree deep enough to reach wood), cutting trees and leaving in place (may reduce livestock usability and increase fire hazard), or removing trees in a logging operation. The area to be treated can range from a small patch to several acres. Conifers that are present when an aspen stand is treated also should be killed or removed to make space and light available for the aspen.

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Aspen sprouts usually appear quickly and grow rapidly after a stand has been opened up by a clearcut, fire, or other stand treatment. However, elk, deer, and livestock browsing in the first few years after sprouting can greatly reduce regeneration success. Animals especially like to browse on aspen in the fall after a frost. Livestock browsing can be controlled relatively easily with fencing or by control of timing and duration of feeding. Large deer or elk herds in an area will be more difficult to deal with and may require fencing for successful regeneration. Deer will feed-on and damage sprouts until the leader is out of reach, while elk can pull down stems and cause damage for many years with much taller sprouts. One practical approach if large acreages are involved is to treat a large enough area to avoid concentration of browsing animals in a small area. This may involve cuts or burns of a thousand acres or more.

Though aspen is relatively easy to regenerate initially, ensuring its long-term survival is not as simple. Future articles in this newsletter will deal with other aspects of regenerating aspen forests and other forest types found in Utah.

Source: Mike Kuhns, USU Forestry Extension Specialist

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