

Utah Forest News

Utah Forest Landowner
Education Program Newsletter

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Preserving Sixfeathers Ranch for Future Generations

Just east of Coalville in the south fork of Chalk Creek, you'll find what landowner Don Blonquist often refers to as "the love of my life," otherwise known as the Sixfeathers

Ranch. Made up of a mixture of rangelands and spruce and aspen forests, the 3700-acre Sixfeathers Ranch is Don's most beloved place in the world. It was his devotion to the land and desire to manage it for future generations that earned him the award of Forest Landowner of the Year for 2005, presented by the Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands. Although he has only been fully managing the property since his aunt passed away in 1999, the ranch has been a part of him

since his childhood days building fence and caring for the sheep.



Don Blonquist discusses his hazardous fuels reduction project with area forester, Mike Eriksson, of the Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands

Looking back over the past six years since the ranch was left to him, Blonquist can assure you that proper estate planning is worth tenfold to your heirs after you've passed on. Shaking his head, he recalls "that first year after I received the property was a living hell. My uncle got some poor planning advice back in the sixties and when the ranch was left to me, I was suddenly

facing probate court, appraisals, capital gains taxes, and inheritance taxes amongst other things." The situation became so drastic that Blonquist feared he might be forced to sell the property just to get his head above water again. After facing one of the hardest times of his life, he was determined to keep his family from having to deal with those same issues again when the land was passed on to the next generation.

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In his desperate search to eliminate the burden to his family, yet still preserve the land as a tribute to his aunt, Blonquist learned from a neighbor about the Trust for Public Lands (TPL) and conservation easements.

Conservation easements are voluntary, yet legally binding agreements that limit development on a property in an attempt to preserve its scenic qualities and ecological benefits. Landowners with conservation easements are free to continue using the land as they always have. They can still sell the land or pass it on to heirs as with any other

property. The primary exception is that the land can no longer be commercially developed or split up and parceled out. Landowners who enter these agreements essentially sell the development rights and are compensated accordingly. Conservation easements provide the dual benefits of guaranteeing the land will be preserved, while helping the landowner financially by lowering the assessed value of the property and therefore the estate taxes. Blonquist sums up conservation easements by saying they “are about preserving the rural way of life and the properties it depends on. Farms and ranches no longer have to be sacrificed in the event of someone’s death, but can be rescued and preserved for the family and family members to come...conservation easements are fantastic!”

Five years later, he could not be more pleased with how things have turned out. With the help of Deb

Frey of TPL and Ann Price of the Utah Forest Legacy Program, his property was accepted into the Forest Legacy Program and a conservation easement was created. While Blonquist understands why many

landowners are hesitant to enter such agreements with the government, he feels they should not be looked upon as an intrusion, but as an opportunity to preserve the land in perpetuity.

Blonquist takes comfort knowing that his property will never fall victim to encroachment by summer homes and various other forms of sprawl. Now he can begin to focus more

on the important aspects of being a good steward of his property. With the help of Mike Eriksson, area forester with the Division of Forestry, Fire & State Lands (DFF&SL), Blonquist has developed a Forest Stewardship Plan for his property, to inventory his land and create management objectives specific to his own goals for the property. He and his wife felt it was critical to involve all five of their children and their spouses in all the decisions regarding the property. “We had several meetings and visits to our property and everyone became involved in the process,” Blonquist said.

Two of the primary objectives the Blonquists determined for the land were to enhance the property for wildlife and to maintain its aesthetic qualities. Blonquist is delighted to have an abundance of wildlife on his property such as deer and elk as well as a healthy cutthroat trout population that uses the



Spruce stands surrounding the Blonquist cabin have been thinned and pruned to reduce the threat of wildfire and promote a healthier forest

streams and ponds on the ranch. He is following the advice of wildlife biologists by building bridges as stream crossings instead of the typical culverts, which can impede fish movement. Ponds and other springs have also been developed in an effort to reduce the impacts of cattle and wildlife on riparian areas throughout the property.

Blonquist is always open to new ideas when it comes to managing his property. When Eriksson approached him with an idea to regenerate aspen, Blonquist agreed to let the DFF&SL use a decadent stand of aspen for a chainsaw training, which has since encouraged the growth of new aspen suckers. This past year they have also worked on fuels reduction projects to reduce the threat of a wildfire near the

cabin and increase the health of the nearby timber. Blonquist actively manages his property for invasive weeds such as musk thistle, as well as constantly helping neighbors control their weeds.

Blonquist's style of management involves leaving the smallest possible footprint on the land. He considers himself a steward of the land who does whatever he can to assist Mother Nature and keep the property as beautiful as possible. Nothing has given him greater satisfaction than knowing that this property will remain undeveloped and preserved in its great beauty for generations to come.

by Morgan Mendenhall, Extension Forestry Educator

2005 Agro-Forest Landowners of the Year: Kresha and Blair Eastman – Elmo, Utah

Kresha Eastman is known for teaching people about the benefits of trees – at least as far as the coffee shop regulars in Elmo, Utah, are concerned. Kresha and her husband Blair Eastman are ranchers in this small community south of Price, and recipients of the 2005 Agro-Forest Landowner of the Year, awarded by the Utah Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands. They are award winners not only because their 76-acre ranch is a showcase of the benefits of blending agricultural production and natural resource management, but also because they are enthusiastic proponents of agroforestry principles.



Kresha Eastman

The Eastmans, along with their son Clint, own and operate the ranch, producing alfalfa, corn, and small grains, and they over-winter a 25-head cow/calf herd. Soon after purchasing the property in 1996, they contacted the Utah Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands and the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) for help. They have since developed a plan to protect their property from the high velocity, cold winds that frequent this part of Emery County. With the help of area forester Bill Zanotti, and folks from the NRCS, they planned windbreak locations, design, and species selection with an eye toward improving wildlife habitat. One of their windbreaks is now five years old, and both rows of 100 trees are alive and growing vigorously. This is resulting in better crop production with less crop damage. They have also identified and set aside several areas for upland game birds and waterfowl. The Eastmans are leaders in balancing production agriculture with wildlife habitat improvement.

2005 Forest Stewardship Achievement Award goes to Scott Truman – Utah Rural Development Council

Scott Truman, Executive Director of the Utah Rural Development Council (URDC) at Southern Utah University, is the recipient of the 2005 Forest Stewardship Achievement Award, presented by the Utah Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands.

Among Truman's more recent and notable efforts is the creation of the Forest Stewardship Center, (see UFN Spring 05). The goals of the Center include promoting healthy forests and a healthy forest industry in southern Utah. Truman was instrumental in obtaining a grant for a portable sawmill known as a micromill, owned and operated by Skyline Forest Products, which is designed to process small diameter material from thinning projects. Truman is involved in biomass utilization projects, including testing pinyon and juniper trees in the production of ethanol.



Scott Truman

Truman was one of the principal forces who attempted to develop a sustained yield unit in Southern Utah and Northern Arizona. This would have been a Forest Service-designated unit where preference is given to local operators and mills within the unit for offerings and manufacturing of forest products from National Forest land. Although unsuccessful, this effort led to the development of the Stewardship Center.

Truman helped to create a Memorandum of Understanding for Forest Restoration and Community Capacity Building Partnership between the State of Utah and the

Intermountain and Southwest Regions of the U.S. Forest Service. Truman has also been instrumental in the creation of the Utah Forest Products Association. This award provides recognition to Truman for his leadership in forest stewardship in the State of Utah.

Silviculture Conference Proceedings Available

A new national silviculture publication is available from the USDA Forest Service Rocky Mountain Research Station in Fort Collins, CO. *Silviculture in special places: Proceedings of the National Silviculture Workshop* includes articles covering forest management, use of genetics in silviculture, forest restoration, prescribed fire, fuels treatments, cutting methods and white pine blister rust.

The proceedings include a compilation of 20 manuscripts and five posters summarizing results of

research studies and management projects conducted throughout the United States in areas with special natural resource values.

To order copies, contact Richard Schneider by email at rschneider@fs.fed.us (include full mailing address) or by phone at 970-498-1392. There is no charge for this publication.



Common Weeds of Utah Forests

USU Forestry Extension announces the availability of the newest Utah Forest Facts: *Common Weeds of Utah Forests*, the twelfth in the series of fact sheets addressing forestry issues in Utah. Authored by Extension Forestry Educator Morgan Mendenhall, the six page full-color publication offers explanations of identification, origin, spread, ecology and control of eleven of the most common weeds invading Utah forestlands. It features photographs of these colorful invaders. The fact sheet covers knapweeds, thistles, hoary cress, toadflax, leafy spurge and dyer's woad.

Thistles stand out as one of the most disliked weeds by Utah landowners. Max Blackham and Leif Parrish, the landowners that hosted our most recent Timber Harvest Tour, explained their ongoing battle with musk thistle, and their multi-day attack strategy that is carried out annually. Following is an excerpt from the fact sheet that covers musk thistle.

Musk Thistle

Identification

Musk thistle (*Carduus nutans*) is an introduced plant of the sunflower family that originated in western Europe. It is easily identified by its large purple, or occasionally white, flowers that are surrounded by triangular, spine-tipped bracts resembling shingles folding down and away from the head. These large heads often bend to one side demonstrating the plant's other common name of nodding thistle. Each plant can reach heights in excess of six feet and produce thousands of seeds yearly.

Ecology

Reproduction is achieved almost entirely by seeds, which have a cottony appearance and are able to travel several miles by wind. Musk thistle is considered a noxious weed due to its aggressive growth habit and unpalatable nature for wildlife and

livestock. Left untreated, a few plants can turn into dense stands that crowd out native plants and reduce productivity. Areas most vulnerable to invasion are disturbed sites and roadsides with plenty of sunlight and moisture.

Control

The key to successfully controlling musk thistle is to prevent seed production.

Mechanical, chemical and biological control methods are available for musk thistle. Mechanical control can be achieved by simply hand grubbing or tilling the weed before flowers begin to develop. Populations have been successfully controlled using mechanical methods as long as the plant is severed below ground. Mowing and other surface treatments are typically less efficient. Some of the more effective herbicides used for musk thistle include picloram (Tordon) or clopyralid plus 2,4-D (Curtail). Herbicides need to be applied either in spring or fall when plants are still in the rosette stages. A seed weevil that was a natural predator of musk thistle in Europe has been brought to the U.S. and is now being used as a valuable biological control agent.



Musk thistle

To obtain a copy of NR/FF/012, *Common Weeds of Utah Forests*, contact Morgan Mendenhall at 435-657-3233, or at morganm@ext.usu.edu. A link to the pdf version of the factsheet is on the Web at www.extension.usu.edu/forestry/Reading/FFIindex.htm.

Stimulating Aspen Growth

Methods for restoring aspen woodlands overrun by conifers are being studied by Agricultural Research Service (ARS) scientists and cooperators in Oregon.

With its fiery fall foliage, quaking aspen has thrilled generations of leaf watchers. But it's more than just a pretty face: this delightful deciduous tree is an influential member of its environmental community.

Unfortunately, aspens are rapidly losing ground to coniferous woodlands in an arboreal turf war.

Like the mythical phoenix, aspens rely on fire to promote regeneration. New shoots arise from parent root systems in response to disturbances. But as fire suppression has increased, other species have begun to invade the aspen territory, according to

(Image courtesy Jon Bates, ARS)



Scientists in Burns, Oregon, use fall burning to promote aspen regeneration and remove competing juniper



Conifer overtaking aspen above the Weber River

rangeland scientist Jon Bates at the ARS Range and Meadows Forage Management Research Unit in Burns, Oregon. He is cooperating with the Bureau of

Land Management and private landowners to investigate the effects of cutting and burning invading conifers on aspen regeneration.

Bates wanted to compare the effects of burning in autumn versus burning in spring. Within selected aspen groves, he cut a third of the invading juniper trees, then set them ablaze. Burning in autumn, he discovered, stimulated the aspen

and removed all remaining juniper. Initially, it also removed almost all ground cover. Spring burning partially stimulated the aspen, and only removed 90 percent of the mature junipers and 50 percent of the seedlings, while promoting rapid recovery of the “understory”—the species growing under the trees.

Aspen groves support many wildlife species. They have a more diverse and productive understory than conifers, providing more forage for livestock. In addition, they generally release more water into the watershed, aiding anglers and agronomists alike. Bates’ research proves that spring and autumn burning successfully promotes aspen growth, with different effects on surrounding vegetation. Public land managers and private landowners can choose either option, depending on their objectives.

By Laura McGinnis, Public Affairs Specialist, ARS. ARS is the USDA’s chief scientific research agency. Thanks to Chad Reid, Iron County Extension Agent, for suggesting the article.

Doug Page Receives National Field Forester Award

Douglas Page is the recipient of the Presidential Field Forester Award, presented to him by the Society of



Doug Page

American Foresters at their National Convention in Fort Worth, Texas, this October. The award recognizes foresters who have displayed uncommon talent and innovative methods to achieve excellence in forest management.

Page received his masters degree in forestry from Utah State University in 1981, and is known to some as “T.W. Daniel’s last graduate student.” (See UFN Summer 04.) His thesis dealt with uneven-aged silviculture in spruce-fir forest types. Page began his career as a forestry technician in 1980 and held

seasonal technician positions with the USDA Forest Service in Utah, Oregon, Wyoming and Arizona. Page’s career also included experience with state forestry agencies in Utah, Texas and Colorado. His permanent professional career with the Forest Service included various forestry positions on the Targhee, Uinta, Wasatch-Cache and Ashley National Forests.

Recently, Page has begun a new career with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) as the Southwest Utah Zone Forester, serving six BLM Field Offices and assisting the one other BLM forester in Utah with the development of a forestry program for BLM in the state of Utah.

Page has been an enthusiastic cooperator with the Utah Forest Landowner Education Program, devoting professional as well as personal time to the benefit of Utah landowners.



For more information regarding any of the information presented in this newsletter, please call Darren McAvoy at Utah State University, 435-797-0560, write to him at 5230 Old Main Hill, Logan, UT 84322-5230, or email darren.mcavoy@usu.edu.

The Utah State University Forestry Extension Web site, found at www.extension.usu.edu/forestry/, is an excellent source of technical forestry information for woodland owners. Check the “What’s New” section periodically for new postings.

State of Utah Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands (DFF&SL) service foresters for your area can be contacted by calling 801-538-5555.

Ideas and written contributions to this newsletter are encouraged. Send your contributions or comments to the return address above or call 435-797-0560, or email darren.mcavoy@usu.edu.

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COMING EVENTS

- **Utah Forest Products Association Conference: Integrating the Business Community with Healthy Forests – People, Products and Practices.**
 February 2 & 3, 2006: Greenwell Inn, Price, UT.
- **Bioenergy and Wood Products Conference II: Restoring Forests and Strengthening Economies.**
 March 14 -16, 2006: Denver, CO. This conference will focus on utilizing biomass removed from public and private forests to provide a reliable supply for bioenergy production and wood products businesses. Details at www.nationalbiomassconference.org.
- **Smallwood 2006** – May 16-18, 2006: Richmond, VA. The objective of this conference is to provide state-of-the-art information on small-tree utilization and to foster peer-to-peer learning. Sponsored by the Forest Products Society. For more information, email conferences@forestprod.org.



Participants of the Fourth Annual Timber Harvest Tour examine logging equipment and methods south of Scofield in October. One objective of this harvest was to remove fuels around the landowner's cabin to reduce wildfire potential.