

LLCOA Forestry Report, June 2023

As an introduction for new folks, we own about 680 acres, and 660 of those are classified as farmland, a tree farm from which we harvest large mature trees to sell to lumber mills, and gather firewood from dead trees. Since we bought the property we have saved a lot of money due to this low-tax farmland status, which is called a “Woodland Management Plan.”

By carrying out this Plan, under the direction of our former forester, Duke Grimes, we have also accumulated significant capital from many tree harvests over the years, carried out using selective cutting that leaves the forest healthy and able to generate more timber as fast as we take it. We also engaged in other efforts demonstrating “devotion to agriculture,” such as charging cabin owners a “firewood fee” as part of the annual maintenance, and going out in work groups to carry out “timber stand improvements,” cutting down weed trees to leave more space for the valuable trees to grow.

Much of this has changed over the last two years. Emerald ash borer has killed almost all the ash trees on our land, and many of the dead trees endangered our roads and public spaces, so we had to take them down. We did, and a lot of this is still good firewood, available along or near the AT&T right-of-way for any cabin owner who would like to help themselves.

Also, Duke Grimes, who has been our professional forester since we bought the property, retired last year, and the Forestry Committee (see the Roster) worked from a list of New Jersey foresters to identify who could best meet our needs. We interviewed several candidates, and selected Ridge & Valley Forest Management (R&V) of Lafayette, NJ. Andy Bennett, the owner, is assisted by Dylon Borger and Laura Nywening. They currently serve more than 600 landowners in New Jersey and nearby Pennsylvania, and have been doing great work for us.

With R&V’s help, another major change has occurred: there are two ways to manage a tree farm in New Jersey. One, based on a “Woodland Management Plan,” was described above. The second way is to use a “Forest Stewardship Plan.” With this certification, there is less emphasis on sales and more on creating a beneficial woodland environment. R&V prepared a Woodland Management Plan for us, and it is available for download on the Forestry page of the LLCOA website. Our plan has been approved by the New Jersey Forest Service, the National Conservation Resources Service (NRCS), a federal agency that supported our Habitat project, and Jefferson Township. Our work last summer was accepted as demonstrating compliance with the new plan. The NRCS reimbursed us enough to cover most of the cost of R&V creating our Forest Stewardship Plan, and will provide some reimbursement for future activities.

This year we will carry out three forestry activities. The first two will be done by (paid) volunteers: we will cut down undesirable trees (already marked by Andy) on a three acre lot uphill from the AT&T right-of-way, and we will cut all vines climbing trees on a different three acre lot. We will also remove invasive shrubs, principally winged euonymus, Japanese barberry, and multiflora rose, but will not do this work ourselves, as it is arduous without special

equipment. Rather, we will hire R&V to remove the invasive vegetation from about two acres mechanically. There will be no use of glyphosate or other herbicides, due to environmental and health hazards. Requests for volunteers for the paid work will be emailed to all cabin owners, and you may have already seen them by the time you read this.

Feel free to contact me if you have questions or concerns, and consider joining the Forestry Committee if you are interested.

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