

Woodland

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A Publication of the



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– Larry Beauregard, Brewer, Maine

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Fall 2022

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BY RITA HITE
PRESIDENT & CEO
AMERICAN FOREST FOUNDATION

I have been fortunate in my career to interact with family forest owners, industry leaders, and lawmakers in various ways. I can remember one of my earliest experiences, working to staff the Forestry Committee working on the Farm Bill. Recently, I had the opportunity to testify in front of the committee where I once worked and apply the perspectives and feedback I've heard over the past six months as President and CEO of AFF.

While I have more to say about what we'd like to see in the Farm Bill, I focused my remarks on how the next Farm Bill can unlock significant private sector support for family forests and their economic and environmental benefits. Like the recent Inflation Reduction Act, I believe that lawmakers in Washington recognized what you, as donors to AFF, have long recognized. Our forests are powerful forces which can help bolster global resilience in the fight against climate change.

Most people think that the government and corporations own the bulk of our forests in the United States; however, families and individuals—not government or corporations—own nearly 40 percent of these lands. One in four rural Americans owns forestland, and many family forests—nearly 75 million acres—are part of a farm operation. Family forests contribute to the

rural economy by supplying more than half of the wood that goes into supply chains, as well as clean air and climate mitigation, wildlife habitat, and recreation.

Family landowners come from all backgrounds, with the common goal to care for their land and have an impact on the planet.

They are the families we profile in our "Walk in the Woods" section in every edition of *Woodland*, which you can find starting on page 18. They are people like the Hartmans, three teachers in Western Pennsylvania, who inherited 250 acres but struggle to know how to care for it.

They are people like Kedren Dillard from Virginia, a third-generation African American owner who shares ownership with a dozen other relatives but struggles to find a way for the farm to pay for itself.

They are people like Sutter and Taylor Rogers in California, who operate an outdoor summer camp for kids, but who cannot afford to tackle the overgrown fire-prone stands at their camp. They are people like the Boutwells from Alabama, who manage sustainably for timber. They look for voluntary options to help their land remain economically viable.

Family forest owners want to care for their land and they need help with technical and financial matters. And this is not a problem among a few landowners; we are talking about 21 million family forest owners in the United States and 85 percent of whom do not have a management plan in place and are not working with a professional.

Continued On Next Page

The Farm Bills have helped. And you can read more about our ongoing policy work on page 10. A few big wins have already been put in motion, like the Inflation Reduction Act, providing unprecedented levels of incentives and financial levers including access to carbon markets. You can read about our affiliate, the Family Forest Impact Foundation, issuing the first green bond explicitly designed to support the generation of nature-based carbon credits on page 17.

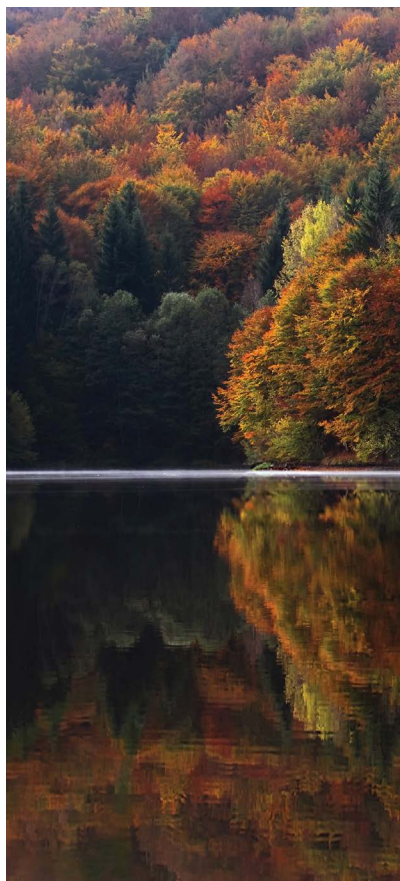
You have heard us talk about how we are partnering with The Nature Conservancy on the Family Forest Carbon Program (FFCP)—an innovative initiative for small-acreage forest holders with as little as 30 acres. It pays landowners annually to implement climate-friendly forestry practices. The program offers lots of professional expertise and support over the next two decades.

Enrolled landowners are improving the overall health of their forest, increasing the value of their trees, stimulating the local economy, and helping to fight the global climate crisis (by increasing the carbon we

capture and store), all things that help your land have a lasting legacy.

Today the FFCP is open for landowners in the Central Appalachians, Vermont, and Massachusetts with plans to expand into the Midwest and the Southeast. You can read more about landowners participating in the program, beginning on page 14. You can also read more about how the program inspired a long-time donor and volunteer of the organization, Scott Hayes, and his wife, to make a planned giving commitment to the organization recently and join our Seedling Society. You will find that story on page 6.


Thank you for sharing your stories which help encourage lawmakers and continue to help us advocate for future investments for family forest owners and for our planet. Thank you for your financial support and all of the ways that you are helping AFF and our partners to tackle these challenges today and into the future we share together. 🌲



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FEATURE

Pragmatic Planning:

Scott and Marge Hayes Make Pledge to AFF's Seedling Society

BY MARY LOU JAY

Scott Hayes loves spending time in the forest. He's been working in and around them, both professionally and personally, all of his adult life, so he understands the importance of woodlands in preserving wildlife habitat and mitigating the impact of climate change. AFF's planned giving program—the Seedling Society—has provided Scott with the opportunity to specify how a portion of his own forest acreage will be used after his death to fund programs that protect and preserve woodlands into the future.

Scott didn't grow up in a forest-owning family. His father worked in the oil industry, and Hayes spent his early years in Odessa, Texas, before the family moved to Oklahoma in time for him to start junior high school. He learned to love the outdoors during his years in scouting. "We also visited Oregon almost every summer, since my dad lived in Newport as a child and we had a lot of extended family there," he said.

After graduating from high school, Hayes attended Oregon State University in Corvallis, where he earned a bachelor of science in forest management in 1974. He then joined the Oregon Department of Forestry, where his role as a service forester in southern Oregon was to assist private forest owners with the management of their properties. During this time, Scott met his wife, Marge who was working as a fire dispatcher, during this time.

The couple lived and worked in Central Point then moved to Salem, where Marge was able to attend Oregon State University and earn her degree in textiles. In 1995, while Marge was working for Nike, they had the opportunity to live in Singapore for three years. Hayes took a leave of absence from his forestry role during that time.



Arbor House Tree Farm located in Northwest Oregon.



Marge and Scott Hayes.

FOREST OWNERS

The Hayes had looked for forest land before they went overseas but hadn't found the right property. When they returned to the U.S., however, "We were actually lucky enough to find our perfect forest—40 acres near Forest Grove," said Hayes. Forest Grove is about 30 miles west of Portland in the foothills of the Coast Range mountains.

Oregon has unique land use planning that strictly limits what forest owners can build on their property. "You can build a house on your forest land under certain conditions, and we were lucky that the land we bought included a building permit," said Hayes. They built their house on the property and began living there in 1999.

The forest itself hadn't been managed for many years. It was originally part of a homestead (owned by a man named Timmerman) beginning

in 1888. He farmed the property, growing hay and raising livestock. The homestead was later divided and the Boyd family purchased 80 acres. "Instead of farming it, Mr. Boyd planted Christmas trees. But he later let the Christmas trees grow wild. So when we bought the northern 40 acres, there were 20-to 25-year-old Christmas trees, too close together, on half of it. The other half had been heavily logged," Hayes said.

"So one of our goals, even before we got the property, was to put it under the Tree Farm System," he added. "For the first ten years we worked in the forest in the evenings and almost every weekend. It was just a love of the land. Our goal was to increase forest diversity and to improve the wildlife habitat." Scott and Marge have spent even more time working on the property since they both retired in 2005.



Scott Hayes with Dianne and Salem Saloom, May 2014.

The Hayes also actively manage the property to produce periodic income. Since purchasing the property, they've harvested about 250,000 board feet of Douglas fir. Following their ATFS certified management plan, they thin the trees on the property to focus on structural diversity and to create patch openings. They have replanted some areas in a variety of hardwoods, including alder, maple and western red cedar. They actively manage chokecherry, cascara, hazelnut and Pacific Madrone, which are very good species for providing food for small mammals and birds, especially band-tailed pigeons, which are native to the Pacific Northwest.

Oregon's climate is very conducive to good tree growth, with plentiful rain in the winter and dry months during the summer. "But we have seen some climate change impacts; we had an acre of Douglas fir that suddenly died about five years ago due to drought," We were able to salvage the fir and then converted the land to Oregon white oak under a grant from the Natural Resource Conservation Service," Hayes said.

"We actively work with NRCS under a conservation stewardship plan. Over the past ten years we've received cost-share funding for several different projects on our property," he added. They are currently thinning a nine-acre, 60-year-old Douglas fir stand to create a shelterwood and structural diversity, plus they've agreed to manage 28 acres for carbon storage under a NRCS program.

AFF INVOLVEMENT

Despite his land's ATFS certification, however, Hayes didn't become active in AFF until 2008. "Our neighbors, Richard and Anne Hanschu, were Western Regional Tree Farmers of the Year, and they hosted the 2008 National Tree Farm Convention Field Tour. I helped with the logistics and met Tree Farmers from all over the country. It was a great time," said Hayes.

The Hayes enjoyed that experience so much that they attended the 2010 convention in Vermont. Hayes welcomed the opportunity to learn about how tree farmers in that part of the country operate and about the issues they face. During that meeting, they met Salem and Dianne Saloom.

In 2011, Dianne Saloom chaired AFF's National Public Affairs Committee and recruited Scott as a member. He was very active on that committee for several years, and in 2015 he was tapped to become a member of the Woodland Operating Committee. He served as vice-chair and chair of the committee, and these leadership roles allowed him to serve on AFF's Board of Trustees.

"It was eye-opening and a lot of fun, because from 2015 on, with President and CEO Tom Martin's guidance, AFF re-focused their vision and mission. The American Tree Farm System was the flagship program, but the board challenged all private landowners to accomplish real on-the-ground conservation practices," Hayes said. Fast forwarding seven years, he is excited about the Family Forest Carbon Program and the climate work that AFF is now doing under the new President and CEO, Rita Hite.

PRAGMATIC PLANNING

Scott is starting his seventh decade, and he hopes to have many more years to care for his land. But, being a pragmatist, he has thought carefully about what will happen to their woodlands beyond that time. Scott and Marge have no children, but they do have several nieces and nephews who have enjoyed spending time in the forest. But they live far away and wouldn't be able to maintain the property. Hayes notes that many older landowners today are facing the same scenario, with no children or relatives who want to take over the management of their property.

"Looking ahead and thinking about what will become of our property in the future is important to us," Hayes said. "My Dad's advice about property and money was, 'I've never seen a hearse with a luggage rack, so get things in order before you die.'"

In earlier iterations of their wills, the Hayeses had planned on giving the land to the Oregon State University Foundation. "But that became problematic, because the value of the land and the house have increased dramatically," Hayes said. When they heard about the Seedling Society, the couple decided it was a good way to support AFF's many critical initiatives.



Scott Hayes & Dick Courter, April 2015.



Scott Hayes, Rep. Bonomici (OR-1), AFF's Melissa Moeller, May 2014.

After their deaths, their executor will sell the land and home, with proceeds added to the estate. Half of the estate is bequeathed to Scott and Marge's extended families; the balance is given to several non-profit organizations whose causes they support. One such organization is a Forest Grove art gallery cooperative where Marge, an encaustic artist, volunteers her time. Together they decided to contribute 10% of their estate to The Seedling Society.

Hayes said the process of making the donation to the Seedling Society went smoothly, as AFF was able to supply the necessary donation language.

Salem Saloom said that the Hayes' gift reflects their commitment to woodlands and to AFF. "Scott and Marge have given their time, talent and treasures to the American Forest Foundation. They have gone over and beyond being supportive in their committee work on the Woodland Operating Committee, the National Policy Advisory Committee, and Scott as a representative on the AFF Board. They have been engaged in special projects over the years," Saloom said.

"Their generous gift to the Seedling Society speaks of their commitment and enthusiasm for the future for AFF and future generations. Their labors in stewarding their Oregon Tree Farm have been a testament to their commitment to conservation and preserving family forests to remain as forests."

"We know our gift will help AFF fulfill its mission into the future," said Hayes. AFF is a great organization dedicated to helping private forest landowners become better stewards of America's woodlands." 🌲



AFF Policy Team Update

BY JAMES MCKITRICK
SENIOR POLICY MANAGER,
AMERICAN FOREST FOUNDATION

With the cooling of the hot summer air and the leaves just beginning to turn, the 117th Congress trudges onward while the nation inches closer to November's midterm elections. Despite the relatively uncertain future of which party will control the committee gavels, AFF's Policy Team has been fast at work engaging federal lawmakers on both sides of the aisle to move the ball forward for family forest owners.

Determined to make a bipartisan effort, Congress's Agriculture Committees have ramped up their work to gather nationwide feedback on the Farm Bill—a multiyear policy that governs a range of agriculture, conservation, and forestry programs—as they prepare to launch into discussions this fall around what the next iteration could look like. AFF's President and CEO, Rita Hite, testified at a hearing of the House Agriculture Committee alongside key forestry partners, emphasizing directly to policy leaders that there is more the Farm Bill can do to support stewardship of private and family-owned forests.

Through the last four Farm Bills, Congress has made great progress of unlocking the potential in family forests. In fact, we estimate that family forest owners are today accessing roughly \$100 million from various Farm Bill programs. However, that equates to less than 35 cents an acre if it were split across all family lands, an investment

that does not adequately reflect the value forests provide to the public nor the level of investment needed to address climate change, the wildfire crisis, or improve other natural benefits.

Increased funding and improvements to Farm Bill programs can help and Congress should pursue this, but we cannot rely solely on government funds for forest stewardship. There is an opportunity to leverage the rapidly expanding voluntary carbon market, estimated to grow to a \$90 billion market in the coming decades, to significantly expand support for family forest owners and forest conservation. Given that carbon markets' outcomes align with the same goals as those of Farm Bill programs, AFF is pursuing a Farm Bill that catalyzes more of these projects in communities across rural America by including tools for low-cost financing such as the Rural Forests Market Act as well as tools for leveraging private sector dollars such as the SUSTAINS Act.

Throughout the fall, AFF's Policy Team continues to diligently lead the Forests in the Farm Bill Coalition. Boasting close to 100 member organizations and approximately 300 individual participants from across the nation, the Coalition—alongside the advocacy of private forest owners like you—will ensure these priorities are incorporated next year into Congress's new law. ▲

Take a Walk with Us in The Family Forest

AFF launches a virtual community especially for family forest owners

BY ANGELA WELLS, DIRECTOR OF THE AMERICAN TREE FARM SYSTEM

It's eight o'clock in the evening. Your workday is over, the kids are in bed, and you finally have a minute to do some research on ways you can improve the health of your family's forestland. Trouble is, you're really not sure where to start. You remember a conversation you had with a group of other landowners about this very topic during a virtual conference last year, and you find yourself wishing there was somewhere you could go again to hear about others' experiences and get some peer advice on what to do next.

One of the things the American Forest Foundation hears consistently from family forest owners is that the most valuable conversations they have are with other forest owners, even before deciding to consult a natural resource professional. They wish they could connect more often with landowners like themselves to share ideas and ask questions. Opportunities for those kinds of connections have been limited to in person or virtual real-time events.

That changed in June of 2022 when AFF launched The Family Forest, a virtual community created to encourage those valuable interactions to happen more regularly. This platform is designed to bring forest and woodland owners and the people who support them into closer proximity, to share advice and resources, and to recognize and celebrate one another.

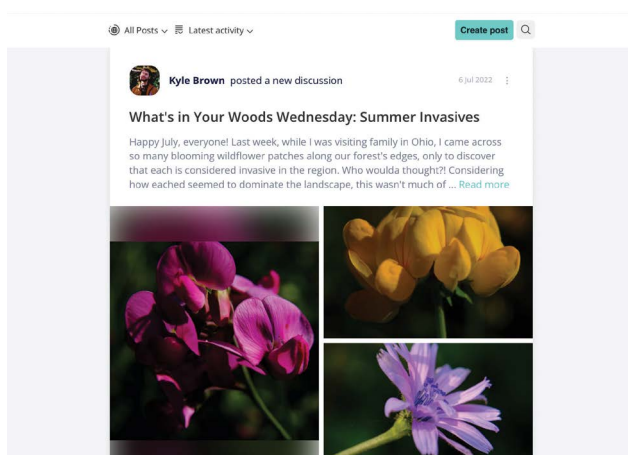
The value of this type of venue for connecting landowners manifested almost immediately in the weeks following its launch. Landowners struck up threaded conversations asking how others were generating revenue from their forest land

or what invasive species they were dealing with and how they were attempting to eradicate them. A popular feature, Forest Professional Friday, provides answers to some common landowner questions weekly.

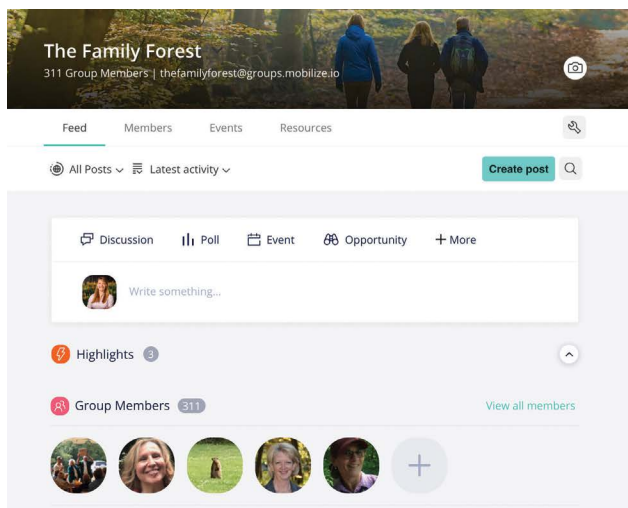
The community also features subgroups designed for landowners' special interests. Subgroups include a Carbon and Climate Hub for those interested in learning more about managing their forest to address climate change and a Wildlife and Biodiversity group for landowners and professionals to share their stories on promoting habitat and biodiversity on their lands. A new member also suggested a subgroup for non-timber forest products, an idea met with enthusiasm by the community managers who would like to launch it later this year.

The Family Forest is open to all family forest owners, conservation professionals and people who are invested in the stewardship of family forest lands, regardless of affiliation with AFF programs. Conservation professionals and organizations can also use it as an additional channel to share resources about forest stewardship with a broader audience. Meanwhile, AFF's team of community managers is actively cultivating a safe space for community members to share their experiences and receive information that is timely and credible.

"The Family Forest will allow us to reach the family forest owner community at a scale that was previously unattainable," shared Rita Hite, President and CEO of AFF. "To have a positive impact on the planet, like tackling climate change, reducing wildfire risk, or protecting biodiversity, we need to



The Wildlife and Biodiversity sub-group to The Family Forest includes a popular “What’s In Your Woods Wednesday” feature and is a place where landowners share their stories, experiences, and tips for promoting wildlife habitat on their forest land.



The main “lounge” of The Family Forest looks similar to other social media platforms, but members’ data is not sold to third-parties. The community was designed to mitigate common and justified concerns about privacy and data use, and community managers moderate content to assure accurate and relevant information.

build and support relationships with landowners and the people who serve them, from all walks of life, across broad geographies and over time. The Family Forest holds enormous potential for helping us address that part of our strategy.”

The community is hosted on a third-party platform created by Mobilize and is accessible from web and mobile applications. “While we value gathering in person,” notes Alastair Jarvis, AFF’s Vice President of Entrepreneurship and Technology Strategy, “one of the positive impacts of the COVID pandemic has been a realization that through technology it is possible foster peer learning and fellowship in ways that are accessible and inclusive.”

Other public social media platforms, while free to use, operate on a business model that commercializes its user data and insights. AFF understands that privacy is vital to family forest owners and has chosen to implement a different platform committed to helping achieve the organization’s mission. The Family Forest is supported by license fees paid by AFF instead of advertising, user data is not shared with third parties, and community guidelines prohibit advertising and marketing on the site. These precautions all ensure the highest quality experience for family woodland owners.

AFF understands that family forest owners are diverse in their need for information and their ability to access resources to help them on their stewardship journeys. We are proud to be on the leading edge of innovative solutions that meet landowners where they are, and empower them to invite friends, family, and neighbors to join them in the work of caring for our forests.

You can help AFF spread the word and join The Family Forest at community.forestfoundation.org. 🌲

The Family Forest Carbon Program helps landowners **care for their woods while helping the planet.**

In addition to the habitat and quality water family forests provide, they also help the planet by sequestering and storing carbon. The Family Forest Carbon Program creates a marketplace for landowners by selling carbon credits to environmentally-conscious companies who are working to reduce their carbon footprint, so landowners can bring in income to help them achieve their goals for their land.

The Family Forest Carbon Program is uniquely designed to help forest owners adopt long-term sustainable management that improves carbon sequestration and storage while balancing other important forest benefits. The program provides expert guidance from a forest professional, creation of a forest management plan, and annual payments to implement practices.

Now available in Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and West Virginia.

Learn more at www.familyforestcarbon.org



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IMPACT FEATURE

Northeast Expansion of Family Forest Carbon

The Family Forest Carbon Program to Offer Resources and Assistance to Improve Forest Resiliency and Help Mitigate Climate Change

BY NICOLE GOODMAN & BETHANY MUELLER

© photo courtesy of Shutterstock.com

In July, the American Forest Foundation (AFF) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) announced that the Family Forest Carbon Program (FFCP) is open for enrollment to rural small woodlot owners with as little as 30 acres in Vermont and western Massachusetts. The program will be available in all counties throughout the state of Vermont, Massachusetts counties of Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden, Hampshire, and Worcester, and Counties of eastern New York including Columbia, Dutchess, Rensselaer, and Washington.

The FFCP provides annual payments to family and individual landowners with small forest holdings to implement scientifically proven climate-friendly forest practices that increase the carbon sequestered and stored on the land. In addition, the program provides expert consultation from foresters and creates a customized forest management plan for those who need one.

The FFCP provides payments and expert advice to family forest owners who manage their forests to both store more carbon pollution from the air and balance their other forest goals.

Tim Stout, a landowner in Vermont, had been exploring ways their forest could play a greater role in carbon solutions. “We’re excited to have the Family Forest Carbon Program now available to use as a well-designed tool for identifying specific practices we can apply to our forest to enhance sequestration and storage,” he said.

Last year, Tim participated in the FFCP pilot under which he thinned some of his acreage with carbon sequestration as part of the goal. The experience motivated Tim to actively promote the program. “I often offer field trips on my property to focus on carbon and more traditional land management objectives and have found that these trips are a highly effective way to



© photo courtesy of Shutterstock.com

assist others in understanding the foundations of sequestration and storage and what exactly they can do to build a larger carbon sink (a place where carbon is stored) on their land. I'm also excited that this program focuses partly on smaller landowners, a sector that traditionally has not had access to carbon markets."

Families and individuals collectively own the largest portion—39 percent—of U.S. forests in parcels of ten to 2,000 acres. Yet, carbon markets have historically been accessible only to large landholders with at least 5,000 acres of property. As of 2019, less than one percent of the land in forest carbon projects was on properties under 1,000 acres in size. This is mostly due to high upfront costs, complexity, and contract length.

"Family forest owners care about their land and want to do the right thing," said Richard Campbell, National Director of Landowner Engagement for

the FFCP at the American Forest Foundation. "But most run into roadblocks, like the high cost of management and finding the right technical assistance, that prevent them from taking active steps to improve their forest. The FFCP is designed to democratize access to a critical revenue stream that can help them achieve their personal conservation goals and make a meaningful impact for our planet."

Enrollment to the FFCP is being offered in 20 year contracts with two possible management improvement practices: Enhance Your Woodland, which supports growing a more robust forest through sustainable harvesting; or Grow Older Forests, which defers harvests for the length of the contract. The practices were developed in consultation with a team of regional forestry, wildlife, and climate experts in line with the Healthy Forests for Our Future guidelines. Both



© photo courtesy of Shutterstock.com

practices will not only support increased carbon sequestration and storage but will also build resiliency against the already-occurring impacts of climate change.

"Vermont's forests provide a wide range of critical benefits for our communities, wildlife, and the planet. The Family Forest Carbon Program allows small-scale forest owners to tap into carbon markets and technical resources to help them sustainably manage their forests in order to balance all of these benefits," said Jim Shallow, Director of Strategic Conservation Initiatives at The Nature Conservancy in Vermont.

"We depend on Massachusetts' forests for a range of benefits for our communities, wildlife, and planet," said Laura Marx, Climate Solutions Scientist for The Nature Conservancy in Massachusetts. "The Family Forest Carbon Program provides payments and expert advice to family forest owners who manage their forests to store more carbon pollution from the air and balance their other forest goals."

The carbon sequestered by enrolled properties will be measured and verified through a new carbon accounting methodology developed by TNC and AFF under Verra's Verified Carbon Standard that is on track to be approved this year. This new methodology advances the accuracy of the carbon calculation to ensure the program is providing a true and transparent climate benefit. The program then sells the carbon as verified carbon credits to companies who are taking a comprehensive approach to their climate goals—first reducing emissions before working to neutralize those they cannot eliminate.

Landowners can log on to familyforestcarbon.org, select their property, and see if their forest conditions and personal goals match with enrollment requirements.

The Family Forest Carbon Program has been open in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and parts of Maryland since 2020, and will be expanding into the upper Midwest next and into the South thereafter. ▲

IMPACT FEATURE

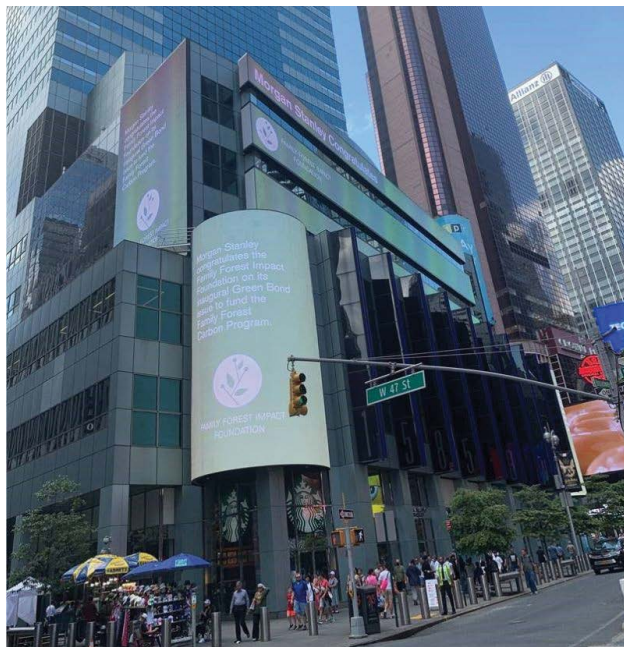
First-of-Its-Kind

\$10M Green Bond Issued to Finance Family Forest Carbon Program to Fight Climate Change

BY ALYSSA OLIVERI

Late this summer, the American Forest Foundation (AFF) announced that our affiliate, the Family Forest Impact Foundation, issued a \$10 million Series 2022A taxable bond to finance the Family Forest Carbon Program. It is the first green bond designed specifically to support the generation of nature-based carbon credits. Morgan Stanley served as the sole underwriter on the transaction.

With the assistance of Morgan Stanley on this unprecedented green bond issuance, we've figured out how to overcome these barriers and catalyze opportunities for hardworking American landowners to have an exponential impact on the health of our planet.



Morgan Stanley announces the exciting news in Times Square, New York City.

"We are at this incredible tipping point," said Rita Hite, president and chief executive officer of the American Forest Foundation. "Carbon markets are the fastest growing tool we have to incentivize climate-smart forest management in family-owned forests. Yet the biggest barrier for many landowners is the large amount of upfront capital typically required by carbon projects.

Issuance of the green bond will enable the Family Forest Carbon Program to begin moving toward its ultimate goal of reaching 20 percent of family forest owners in the United States for potential enrollment in the program, improving forest management on more than 55 million acres of land and providing approximately 90 million tons of climate mitigation annually. A portion of the proceeds from the bond is dedicated to supporting underserved and underrepresented landowner groups.

Kestrel Verifiers provided the second-party opinion for the green bond designation, affirming compliance with global green bond principles. The Family Forest Impact Foundation will provide public annual reporting on the impact of bond proceeds, including alignment with key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

"Investors are increasingly interested in driving nature-based climate mitigation solutions such as those offered by the carbon offset market," said Rob Feigenson, executive director of Morgan Stanley's not-for-profit group that led the underwriting of the bond. "We are pleased to be part of this inaugural event in The American Forest Foundation's history as it looks to expand the Family Forest Carbon Program, tapping into private climate finance from carbon markets and bringing a real sense of opportunity in the large number of American landowners being brought off the sidelines and into the solution." 🌲

A Walk in the Woods

Family Forest Owner Perspectives

BY TOM GRESHAM

A view of the Buck family sugarbush in autumn.

John Buck

When John Buck bought a 70-acre parcel of land in a remote part of Washington, Vermont in 2011, his primary motive was to have a family legacy property.

"I wanted to have a place for my family to come and gather together or to come on their own—a place where they can experience Vermont in a rural, forested setting," Buck said. "I wanted them to always have this place for that."

It didn't hurt that the property reminded Buck of the landscape he loved growing up in a secluded section of Vermont.

"It's high on a hill, so there are some really wonderful views of the Green Mountains here," Buck said. "The forest itself is quite diverse. A lot of mature trees of various species and cover types or forest types, depending on your perspective, with a few open spots that are a grassy kind of vegetation. It has a lot of charm."

As Buck hoped, the property has provided the opportunity for his family to enjoy an array of activities, including hiking, deer hunting, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and particularly sugaring. Since Buck was a young boy, he has made maple syrup, and he had taught his children the process when they were growing up.



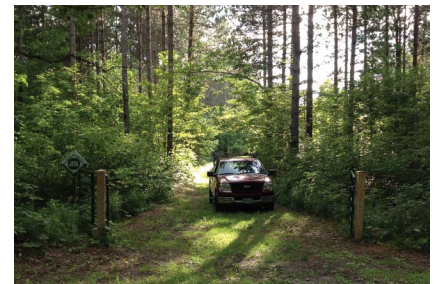
John Buck (right) with his son, James. They work closely together on the family's maple syrup operation.



The Buck family sugarhouse at dusk.



left to right: Harvesting timber that was later used in constructing the Bucks' sugarhouse. The Bucks built their sugarhouse themselves. The Bucks' sugarhouse in winter. The maple syrup business is a year-round operation.



Clockwise: Sunset in the sugarbush. Milling the lumber at the Bucks' property. The Bucks are hands-on Tree Farmers. Henry Buck, the grandson of John and Cathy Buck, enjoys a taste of maple syrup. The remoteness of the Buck family property can cause challenges, particularly during mud season when dirt roads can prove treacherous.

Back in 2011, Buck thought the property would be perfect for "a casual little operation," with perhaps 100 taps for making maple syrup. Today, that casual effort has turned into a 2,000-tap, year-round, full-fledged family business. The Buck Family Organic Maple Farm, which is run by John and his wife, Cathy, his daughter Lauren, his son, James, and daughter-in-law Hayley.

Buck said the family has a portable sawmill on the property and manufactures its own lumber. They built the sugar house and a large woodshed, and they have a cabin under construction that will allow them to stay overnight, particularly when the maple syrup operation requires late nights or early mornings.

Buck spent 39 years as a wildlife biologist with the state of Vermont, largely working in forest habitat management. He has reveled in the opportunity to bring his professional background to managing his own property. He said the diversity of tree species and ages on the land provides a measure

of resilience to destructive natural and invasive forces and offers a wide range of wildlife habitat types. Sustainability and an emphasis on leaving the land in a better condition than they found it is foremost in the family's approach.

"We take pride in harvesting wood sustainably, the forest is very renewable, and we have great respect for that capacity," Buck said. "There's a personal pride in being able to do things ourselves and take responsibility for the way we care for the land here. I have always wanted to convey that to my children, and they're very conscious of sustainability, renewability and good long-term stewardship in general—being good custodians of the land."

Buck said managing the property has been hard work, but he feels fortunate that he gets to do it.

"I have never lost a minute of sleep thinking it was a bad deal," Buck said. "I've just been so grateful to have this opportunity. It's a very rewarding experience."

Howard Gilbert and Pamela Roberts

For Howard Gilbert and Pamela Roberts, owners of Lost Mountain Tree Farm in Sequim, Washington, the challenge of managing a Tree Farm might be the best part of the experience. After all, the difficulty of the task makes success all the more rewarding.

"Persistence is a big theme for us," Roberts said.

Gilbert purchased most of the forest land in 1966. He was living in Seattle at the time, working as a percussionist with the Seattle Symphony, and had visited the Olympic Peninsula area, which he found "enchanting." He jumped at the opportunity to own land there and bought the 50-acre property to escape city life.

"It's located in a valley that is absolutely gorgeous and an amazing place to be," Gilbert said.

Roberts, a professional cellist and later an educational administrator, married Gilbert, and together they embraced the opportunity to spend time in this bucolic location. They also purchased additional acreage to expand and more clearly consolidate the woodland farm boundaries.

A particularly absorbing test over the years for the couple has been the 25-acre section of their property that was pasture when they bought it—the other half was second-growth forest. They have worked to restore the pasture to forest, a process Roberts called, "a never-ending series of challenges."

"When we look back on it now, we realize how stimulating forest stewardship has been for our mental health and for our lifestyle," Roberts said. "We've been constantly faced with scientific questions and technical challenges to reestablish this pasture. It has kept us both in prime physical condition because we were always out working on the trees—bud capping them, putting mulch mats down, planting and so on. The challenges never ended, and they still continue."



Lost Mountain Tree Farm located in the Olympic Mountains.



Howard Gilbert bought a 50-acre property on the Olympic Peninsula as an escape from city life.

The couple, who eventually moved to a community on the peninsula closer to the Tree Farm, raised two daughters, Molly and Sophie, who grew up working on the property as a matter of routine and who increasingly are helping their parents manage the land today.

"We would pack up our children and haul them off to the Tree Farm every other weekend throughout their childhood, and we used to laugh that we had a different standard of living there," Roberts said. "We had no running water, no electricity, and they had to kind of rough it. We thought this was good for our children and established a work ethic for them to get out in the forest, help us plant and prune and have a relationship to the land. That's turned out to be true. Both of our girls are intimately connected with the property, and they've become highly resilient people."

For Roberts and Gilbert, managing a Tree Farm is an ongoing, fascinating pursuit.

"The thing about forestry is that it's evolving all the time, and it's always interesting," Gilbert said. "Every year there is new information, and there are so many young people studying forestry now. So, you keep getting new ideas, and it keeps the mind alive. You have to keep at it all the time, and that's great."



from left: Molly Gilbert and Steve Norman, Michael Nyquist and Sophie Gilbert, and Pamela Roberts take a break from planting in the pasture.

Sally Hightower

Growing up in Chicago, Sally Hightower was a city kid who loved nature—when she could find it. Her exposure largely came on occasional trips with youth organizations to places such as Warren Dunes State Park in Michigan and the Great Smoky Mountains in Tennessee and North Carolina. Even then, she dreamed of having a secluded place of her own, surrounded by wilderness.

Today, Hightower lives on a Tree Farm of 37-and-a-half acres in Gladwin, Michigan, about 70 miles northwest of Saginaw, in the watershed of Saginaw Bay. A beautiful, shallow stretch of the Tittabawassee River runs alongside Hightower's land, which is called Twisted Oak Tree Farm, and an artesian spring-fed stream crosses the property. The area is rich with wildlife and trees—lots of trees.

"It's just trees, trees, trees," Hightower said. "It's so beautiful. It's the best thing that this Chicago kid has ever seen."

Hightower has owned the property since 1981 when she bought it at a discounted price from a motivated seller she had heard was indebted to the mob. A school counselor, Hightower couldn't believe her good fortune. She built a house on a ridge that overlooked a striking bend in the river. The first time Hightower stood on the ridge, she felt a peace come over her.

"I just knew that this is where I was supposed to be and that I would be happy here," Hightower said. "And I have been extremely happy here for 40 years."

Hightower's first harvest came in 1985, a timber stand improvement to salvage low-quality pine, aspen and birch. Dow Corning purchased the wood to use as biomass at a Michigan plant. From the beginning, Hightower has been committed to responsibly managing the property, facing whatever challenges arise, working with foresters and loggers, and occasionally cutting down trees herself for firewood and timber stand improvement. Hightower has also been active



Sally Hightower, a longtime guidance counselor and athletic trainer in public schools in rural Michigan, is devoted to the concepts of good forest stewardship.

with a range of conservation efforts, and she placed her land in a conservation easement with a local land conservancy.

The property formed the basis for one of her most profound personal relationships. During her time as a school counselor, she met a freshman named David, who was being raised by his grandmother. She learned that David loved spending time outdoors and had fished for trout in the river alongside her home since he was a young child. On weekends, he would often ride his bicycle to the river with a fishing rod and a sleeping bag and spend his days and nights there. They quickly formed a strong bond over their love of the area.

The bond was so strong that Hightower adopted David when his grandmother passed away. Today, David and his wife and children are building a house along the river near Hightower's home. One day, he will inherit the farm.

"He loves this place as much as I do," Hightower said. "It's nice to know that he's going to be here after I'm gone to take care of it."

Hightower said her farm has brought her compelling, invigorating challenges and endless joy, and she feels grateful that her childhood dream came to fruition.

"It's just enriched my life phenomenally," Hightower said.



Sally Hightower has worked with Nia Becker, a young forest scientist with the local conservation district, to develop plans to care for her land.

William Pfeiffer

When William Pfeiffer tours his property in Georgia, located about halfway between Savannah and Augusta on the Savannah River, he is keenly aware of the rich family history of the place.

Pfeiffer's parcel is part of a larger, 10,000-acre tract of land that his great-great-great-grandfather purchased in 1880 to start a turpentine business. The previous landowners had used the property as a hunting estate. Pfeiffer said he owns about 1,000 hectares, or approximately 2,500 acres, of the original property, and the bulk of the rest of the land has been divided among other family members.

Pfeiffer says he enjoys walking and driving around the property, quietly being a part of it and observing it as it evolves and changes around him.

"I love going around looking at the wildlife and the trees," Pfeiffer said. "The whole experience is just wonderful."

Pfeiffer said the property is blessed with a diversity of landscapes and tree species. The land features a deep swamp along the river, including a couple of oxbow lakes; a section of fertile, flat woodland marked with isolated ponds; a swampy area called Moon Change Swamp (the name comes from the belief that "if you go in there, you don't come out until the moon changes," Pfeiffer said). And then a sandy ridge elevated above the rest of the property called Nanny Goat Hill, which got its name because the original grant-holder of the property once raised goats on the spot.

The property has such other points of interest, such as an old Colonial-era stagecoach road, which is now a narrow trail, and a couple of former mill sites. Adjoining property that remains in the family includes a house that dates to 1800, complete with the original kitchen and dining room and a long catwalk that connects two buildings.

Pfeiffer said his family used the property for various businesses over the years. For decades, until the 1930s, it was the site of a turpentine production business. Later, under his father's leadership, the family had cattle and row crops, and a timber operation, and Pfeiffer worked on all of them as a youth.



Matthew, Stephanie and Alexa, three of William Pfeiffer's children with forester Lamar Zipperer at Nanny Goat Hill on Pfeiffer's property.



Lamar Zipperer, a forester, drives down Nanny Goat Road with William Pfeiffer in the passenger seat.



left: William Pfeiffer with an ATV at Beard's Old River. right: William Pfeiffer with three of his children at a bald cypress tree in the Savannah River Swamp.

Pfeiffer grew up on the property, and aside from stints in New York City and Atlanta in his 20s, he has spent most of his life around it, so that today he understands its intricacies and shifting characteristics.

Pfeiffer said he has worked to record the history and maps of the property to ensure that his four children thoroughly understand and appreciate it. Some of his children have taken forestry courses to equip themselves for increasingly actively caring for the property. Pfeiffer said he, too, has worked to learn new techniques rather than relying on the way things have always been done.

"I want to manage it in a way that I'm never repeating the mistakes of the past," Pfeiffer said. "We want to ensure that it's sustainable in the financial sense and also in the sense of the land itself. It's been very important to four generations of my family, and we want it to remain important for future generations." 🌲

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-Christine Mallon, Family Forest Owner and Giving Tree Member, Ardenvoir, Washington

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