

The Forest Steward's Journal

Winter 2017

Volume 26

Journal of the Forest Stewardship Foundation

The MISSION of the Forest Stewardship Foundation is to “educate and inform landowners, natural resource professionals and the general public about the science and ecology of forest lands, the many values derived from forested lands and the principles of sustainable forest land development.”

DISCLAIMER: As in the past, we again advise that this information is submitted for your interest only. The Foundation's mission, as indicated above, is to “educate and inform”, not to advocate or persuade. The Foundation takes no position, either endorsing or opposing, approving or disapproving, any of the assertions or arguments in the contributed information.



From the Chair

The focus of this journal edition is collaboration. This is a word that has been used a lot the past few years and it may mean different things to our readers. Unfortunately, there is still some stigma to the word stemming from the supposed collaboration of the puppet governments resulting from the Nazi invasion of European nations during the Second World War.

Some people think of collaboration as simply a compromise between different ideologies or positions on issues. My thought on the subject is that true collaboration is working with all the different factions on the issue to come up with an acceptable decision to all. It may not be the perfect solution to me as a stakeholder, but it is one that I can live with and support. Collaboration must start from the beginning of issue discussions or it will end up being a compromise decision with no real commitment or no decision at all. Collaboration that does not include all of the reasonable stakeholders is doomed to failure.

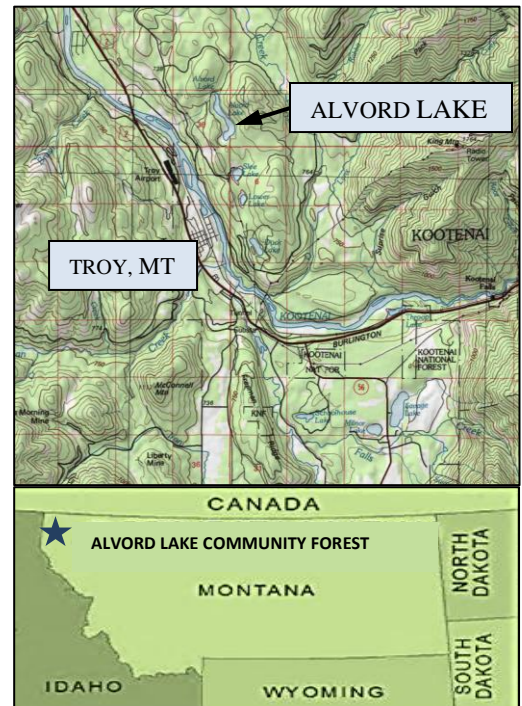
It is imperative that to have meaningful, lasting decisions, true collaboration must take place. You will see how the process works in the enclosed articles on the Haskell Basin acquisition and the Alvord Lake Community Forest. The newly formed Montana Forest Collaboration Network sponsored a workshop on collaboration in Helena on December 5- 6, 2016. The workshop shared success stories as well as failures across the state and made recommendations that will help all of the many collaborative efforts become more efficient. If you are interested in finding out more about this effort, or to register for future Montana Forest Collaboration Network workshops, check out their website.

In other foundation news, our board has slowly moved into the electronic age. Our first such attempt was in 2015 when we set up a Facebook account, but in 2017 we will actually launch our first web site. This promises to be exciting even for some of us old duffers. Want to read the Forest Steward's Journal, go online. Want to apply for membership or register for the landowner conference, go online. Check out the web site development article to follow in this journal edition!

We will also continue our successful landowner conference in Helena on April 21, 2017 and another Ties To The Land workshop on succession planning the following day. Another activity is providing supplemental funding for a video that will provide landowners a step by step guide for implementing a timber sale. We also contributed a modest amount of funding for the earlier referenced “first workshop on collaboration” by the Montana Forest Collaboration Network on December 5-6, 2016 in Helena. And of course, we will keep up our bi-annual Forest Steward's Journal. If the 2017 stewardship workshop program has a serious budget issue, we also have agreed to help out financially to some degree.

So after wrapping up 2016, I must say that we had a very successful year, with your help, and I look forward to our continuing service in 2017.

Ed Levert, Chair



Alvord Lake Community Forest: A Hit Out Of the Park

By Matt Hart

Last year, a coalition of partners turned a piece of northwest Montana lakeshore that had once been slated for subdivision into a new public forest. The 142 acres of land now form the Alvord Lake Community Forest, a shared resource that the Vital Ground Foundation owns and manages in collaboration with the U.S. Forest Service and the Troy community.

Just north of Troy, perched amid the fast-dropping slopes of the Purcell Mountains, sickle-shaped Alvord Lake offers a transition zone for wildlife between the ridges above and the low-elevation Kootenai River Valley below. Common loons nest along the lake during summer, while moose, deer, and elk browse the adjacent larch and pine-filled forest during winter. It's a popular spot for people, too, with the Forest Service maintaining both a three-mile trail around the lake and an outdoor classroom that local school and community groups utilize frequently.



Alvord Lake. Photo by Ryan Lutey

All but one-third of a mile of Alvord Lake's shoreline falls in Kootenai National Forest. Plum Creek Timber Company long owned the remaining lakeside parcel, but at the turn of the millennium, the logging giant harvested it, and sold it to Montana Mountain Valley, a real estate developer with plans to subdivide the plot.

"They had one thing and one thing only in mind," said Troy resident Gary Jones. "To make money." But Jones, his wife Kathy, and other citizens had a different goal. After Forest Service representatives explained the proposed development at a community meeting in 2002, the Joneses formed Friends of Alvord Lake, LLC, then fronted the \$800,000 necessary for the group's eleventh-hour purchase of the property. "That land became our IRA," Gary Jones said.

Intended as a stopgap measure, the couple's investment sat for over a dozen years. Although the community favored a Forest Service purchase of the parcel, federal funding was scarce. "I'd get calls from Gary every few years saying things like, 'The Forest Service doesn't have any money, nothing's happening,'" recalled Gael Bissell, a state wildlife biologist at the time. "He's a patient soul."

Patience would eventually meet financial reality for the Joneses, however. In 2012, with state and federal conservation possibilities seemingly exhausted, the couple faced the prospect of selling the land back to a developer. That's when Alan Wood, another biologist for Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, told Bissell about the Forest Service's new Community Forest Program.

"When I looked it up and it said public access, managed forest land, wildlife habitat, community support, education—it fit every criteria," Bissell said. "It was a hit out of the park."

The federal grant program requires that a local or tribal government, or a qualified land trust, manage the intended land, and that applicants prove local support of the project by securing at least half of its funding from non-federal sources. So Bissell approached Vital Ground, a Missoula-based land trust focused on conserving and restoring grizzly bear habitat. She also teamed with USFS District Ranger Kirsten Kaiser to conduct a meeting gauging local interest. "The community reacted very favorably," Kaiser recalled. "It's a favorite place."

(See "A Hit Out Of the Park" on page 3)



Alvord Lake Paddler. Photo by Matt Hart

“A Hit Out Of the Park”... continued from page 2

With Vital Ground signing on, the coalition recruited volunteers from the Society of American Foresters (SAF) chapter in nearby Libby to inventory the parcel and write a forest management plan. Bissell also worked with the local conservation group Yaak Valley Forest Council to detail the parcel's habitat value and educational benefits. The result was “a pretty technical application,” according to Bissell, and, in 2014, the coalition secured a \$400,000 grant from the Forest Service. More than a dozen other local, regional, and national donors completed the final fundraising push over the next year, and in December 2015, Vital Ground closed on the property, fulfilling the collaborators' conservation goal at last.

Now, the land will be managed as a demonstration forest, with the goal of increasing public education of sustainable forest management. After nearly 100 people attended a community celebration of the forest in early September, restoration work began on the parcel. A Libby contractor thinned and masticated 21 acres of severely overcrowded forest while a seven-person Montana Conservation Corps crew has been hand-thinning a 20-acre area to make room for the return of fire-adapted western larch and ponderosa pine.



“We have an opportunity to restore some of the past species composition, to make it a much healthier forest,” explained Ed Levert, Chair of the Libby SAF Chapter, who is overseeing the restoration effort. “At some point in time, we’ll have something we’ll all be real proud of.”

And with Alvord Lake providing a model of collaboration, one can hope that new community forests will become a growing source of pride across the region.

Matt Hart is a Wyss Conservation Scholar in the Environmental Studies graduate program at the University of Montana and a communications intern for Vital Ground.

Alvord Lake Project.

Photo by Ed Levert

8th Annual 2017 Montana Forest Landowner Conference

Hold the Date: April 21, 2017

Location: Helena, MT - Radisson Colonial Hotel

By Gary Ellingson, Forest Stewardship Foundation Board Member

The 8th Annual Montana Forest Landowner Conference has been scheduled for April 21, 2017 in Helena, MT at the Radisson Colonial Hotel. Please hold the date as we hope you can join us for this year's event. The conference agenda is still being developed but is certain to include many topics of particular interest to forest landowners. With the conference theme of “**Becoming the Best Forest Steward Possible**”, an array of talented and passionate speakers will be on hand to make presentations and interact with attendees.

Brochures will be mailed out in early March. You may register and pay on-line at the new Montana Forest Stewardship Foundation website, www.ForestStewardshipFoundation.org, or by returning a mail-in registration. A **SILENT AUCTION** will be hosted by the FSF and is sure to have many items of interest! For anyone wishing to donate an auction item for this year's event, please send an email to Tom Jones, silent auction coordinator, at tajones2622@gmail.com, or submit silent auction donation information through our website Landowner Conference page, which will link to a form they may fill out and will automatically go to Tom. Hope to see you soon!

Haskell Basin - Trumbull Creek Stewardship and Collaboration Efforts

By Paul McKenzie

F.H. Stoltze Land & Lumber Company, Dedicated to Stewardship

Healthy Forests make Healthy Communities and Healthy Families. This is a favorite saying of those working for F.H. Stoltze Land & Lumber Co. in Columbia Falls, MT. Established in 1912, Stoltze is the oldest family-owned sawmill and forest management company in Montana. Their business model is based on the concept of stewardship and their planning horizons are for the long term.

The first of the eight Stewardship Forestry Principals Stoltze uses to guide their land management activities reads: *“To practice sustainable forestry to meet the needs of the present without compromising future generation’s ability to do so.”* Stoltze completed three major projects over the last few years that will ensure the stewardship and the benefits of active management of their timberlands endure for generations to come.

Ronald Buentemeier, retired Vice President, General Manager and long-standing Resource Manager for the company relates a story about his early career with Stoltze. He describes a pickup drive around the tree farm owned by the Company with John R. Stoltze, son of F.H. Stoltze who founded the company. Mr. Stoltze was a quiet man, and after a day of riding around, Ron turned to Mr. Stoltze and asked him how he would like to see his timberland managed. Mr. Stoltze simply replied “Manage them as if they were your own”. To this day, this is the latitude and responsibility given to Stoltze foresters managing the lands.

Stoltze recognizes that lands are not managed in a vacuum. Stoltze was collaborating before collaboration was recognized as a good thing! Building partnerships with landowners, interest groups, agencies, and the general public is essential to implementing Stewardship Forestry. Without the close working relationships with folks like Montana Tree Farm System, Forest Stewardship Program, Montana DNRC, US Forest Service, Trust for Public Lands, Forest Legacy program and too many more to mention, Stoltze would not have been as successful in meeting our Stewardship objectives.

Ron enrolled the company lands in the American Tree Farm System (ATFS) in 1966. Stoltze lands are still certified to the ATFS Standard and just recently celebrated 50 years in this program. The basic tenants of the program, Wood, Water, Wildlife and Recreation align well with the long term intentions of the Stoltze family. The Tree Farm program provides third party review verifying the right things are being done on the ground. Not that Stoltze would have it any other way!



Ronald H. Buentemeier Educational Tree Farm
Photo provided by Paul McKenzie

In the summer of 2015, the Stoltze family dedicated just over 10,000 acres of company lands in the Haskell Basin and Trumbull Creek drainages as the **“Ronald H. Buentemeier Educational Tree Farm”**. This dedication recognizes the profound impacts Ron’s long time management of this great resource has not only on the company, but the Flathead Valley in general. This act is a tribute to the lifelong commitment Ron and Stoltze have to implementing stewardship management of all of our natural resources regardless of landownership.

The 3,020 acres of Stoltze land in Haskell Basin just east of Whitefish Mountain Resort is also the water source for the Whitefish Municipal Water System. This system was established in the early 1900’s to divert water from 1st, 2nd and 3rd Creeks into a reservoir just north of town to supply the water for the city. The system has been built, upgraded and maintained for over 100 years on Stoltze land on nothing more than a hand shake agreement.

(See “F.H. Stoltze Stewardship Efforts” on page 5)

“F.H. Stoltze Stewardship Efforts”... continued from page 4

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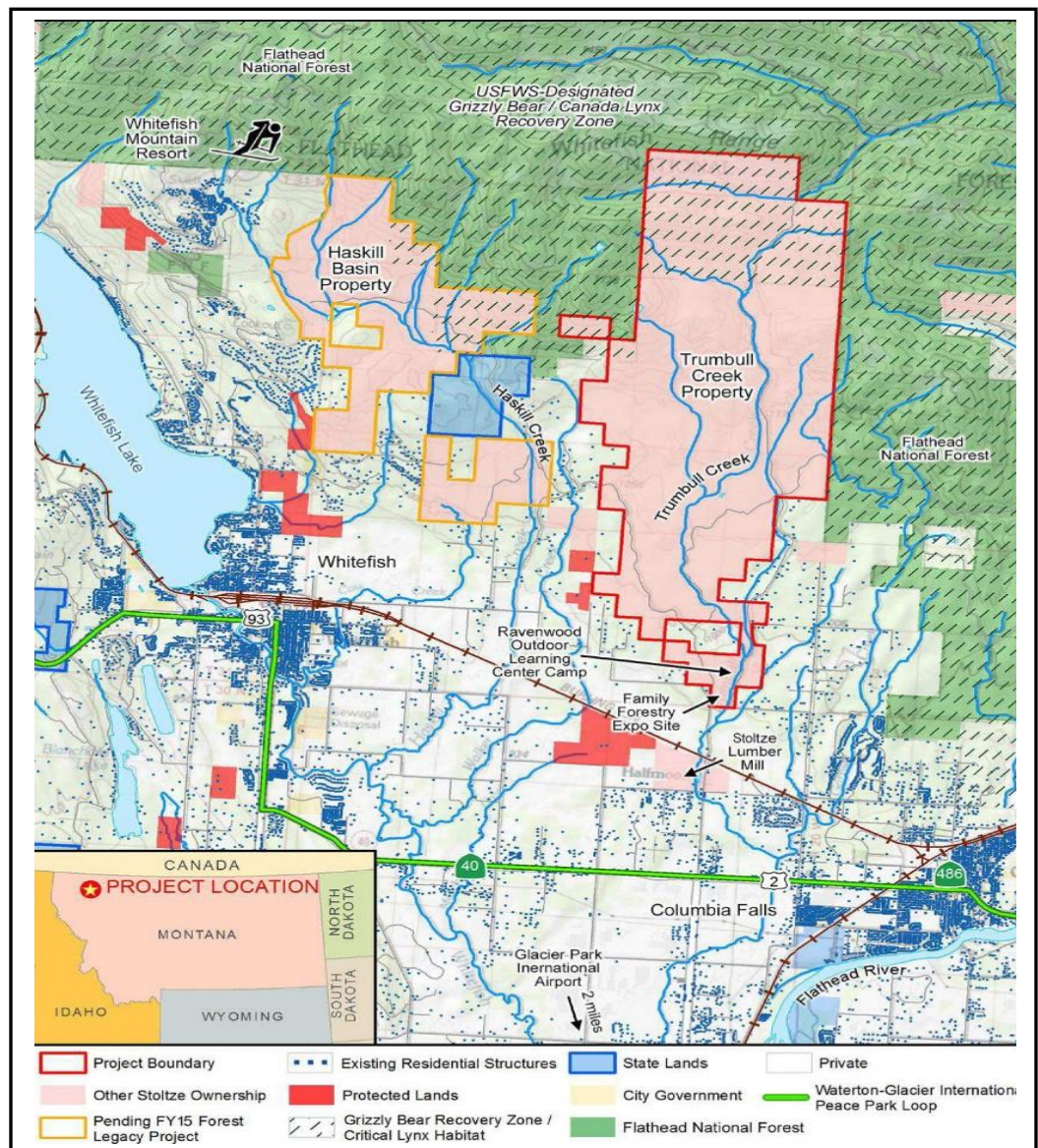
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With increasing pressure to develop these lands for other uses, many agreed it was time to add some certainty to the future of Haskill Basin.

Trust for Public Lands (TPL) is a national non-profit entity which facilitates conservation solutions that meet the needs of landowners while ensuring long term stewardship of working landscapes. With the help of TPL, The City of Whitefish and Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP), Stoltze developed a plan to place a conservation easement on the property.

By early 2016, there was a permanent conservation easement (CE) in place on this landscape. The CE ensures that the land will stay in active forest management, remain privately owned by Stoltze, be open to public recreational access and never be developed for residential or commercial uses. Additionally, a trail corridor was established to help complete the Whitefish Trail loop around Whitefish Lake. These agreements have the long term effect of conserving the intact municipal watershed, critical wildlife habitats, view shed of the Flathead Valley and working forests that support families and communities.



Collaboration was essential to the success of this project. The City of Whitefish voted strongly in favor of increasing the local option tax to help fund the CE. Without partnerships (See “F.H. Stoltze Stewardship Efforts” on page 6)

“F.H. Stoltze Stewardship Efforts”... continued from page 5

including the Forest Legacy program and USFWS habitat programs, the project never would have been completed.

While finishing up on the Haskill Basin CE, TPL, Stoltze and MT FWP went to work on a similar project on just over 7,000 acres north of Columbia Falls known as the Trumbull Creek block. By early 2017 another Conservation Easement will be in place on this property. Once again with a focus on preserving the working landscape and actively managed lands, by implementing stewardship forestry principals, the Wood, Water, Wildlife and recreational values of the property will be conserved for future generations.

Stoltze lands are open for public recreational use under an Open Lands policy. Stoltze lands also serve as the host site for the Flathead Family Forestry Expo, a 26-year-long tradition of getting young folks into the woods to learn about their natural environments. We feel strongly that there is no better place to talk about forestry than in the forest. Stewardship forestry is not a hard sell once folks can see it with their own eyes. We just don't know how to get all 300 million of our US residents out into the woods to see it.

These three events over a three-year period just reiterate the stalwart commitment of F.H. Stoltze Land and Lumber Company to the concept of stewardship forestry. After over 104 years of operation, this business model has proven solid in good times and bad. These lands continue to support our local economy and the natural processes we all admire. They serve as proof of the success of the practice of sustainable management of our forests and are an inspiration and educational resource for landowners, private and public alike. It is nice to know that there are 10,000 acres in northwestern Montana that will always be managed for Wood, Water, Wildlife and Recreation. The good news is the trees are still growing!

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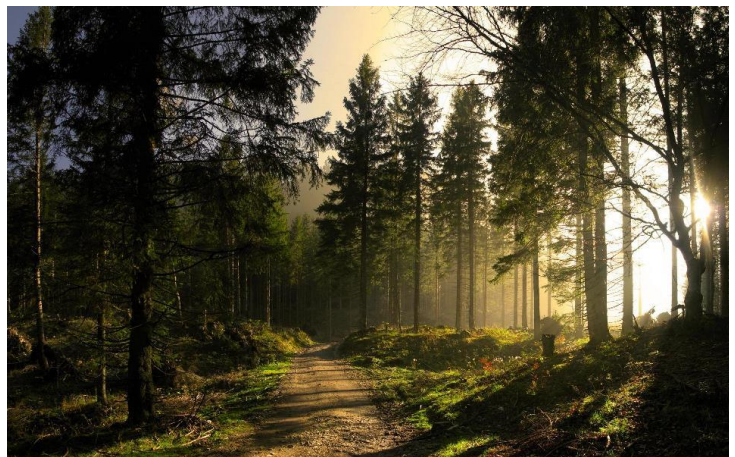
Website Development Efforts

Reaching out in this Digital Age

By Jay Pocius, Lewis and Clark County Forest Landowner, MFSF Board Member and Webmaster

There is something exciting coming soon. In light of our Mission Statement to “educate and inform” we will soon publish our own Montana Forest Stewardship Foundation website. This website was proposed for the Foundation to become more visible and accessible to the public and to reach a larger audience of those seeking information about forest management and sustainability.

The site is designed so that all visitors can be acquainted with the members of the Foundation's Board, sign up/renew and pay for their membership, contact the Foundation to comment or ask questions, as well as view a calendar of forestry-related events. The site will also provide information on the Foundation's Forest Landowner Conference and Ties to the Land Events coming this April and offers the ability to register and pay online. Looking for more information about your forested land management or your forestry business? Our website offers full-page Montana, National, Governmental and Publication resource links that will surely provide you (See “Reaching Out” on page 7)



Pine forest path. Photo provided by Jay Pocius

“Reaching Out”...continued from page 6

with answers to your concerns. Other features on our site include the most recent and archived Forest Steward’s Journals, photos, videos, and articles about and from our members, managing and working on their land. To keep things fresh and up to date, we include news reports from local and national news sources related to forestry issues.

Interested in visiting our website? We would love to hear your comments. Access and bookmark:

<http://www.ForestStewardshipFoundation.org> (availability anticipated by the middle of February 2017)

< SPOTLIGHT ON A VALUE-ADDED WOOD PRODUCTS COMPANY >

By Tom Jones, Lincoln County Forest Landowner and MFSF Board Member

Troy, Montana – Larry Chapel, owner of Chapel Cedar and his son Doug stand in front of finished cedar boards ready to be shipped. Specializing in western red cedar shakes and shingles, four different styles of siding, decking, tongue and groove, board and batten, mantles, column logs, fascia, post and rail fencing and cedar mulch, Chapel Cedar has been able to stay in business and provide local employment by producing value added products. Chapel Cedar also produces top quality products from other tree species most of which come from the local area. The products produced at Chapel Cedar are shipped all over the United States.



Doug and Larry Chapel, Chapel Cedar. Photo provided by Tom Jones

Larry’s Dad started the business in 1972 and over the years Larry has invested in new machinery to increase the number of products produced. Chapel Cedar can be visited at Chapel Flats Road, Troy, Mt. 59935, or you may contact Larry or Doug at (406) 295-5919, chapelcedar@hotmail.com

2017 FOREST STEWARDSHIP WORKSHOPS

Please let forest owners know who might be interest and/or your family members who might benefit from participation in a workshop. Workshops focus on forest ecology, wildlife habitat, fire resilience, plant identification, and forest inventory and planning as well as a personal on-site visit with a natural resource professional.

Great Falls: May 11-12 & 19 Columbia Falls: July 13-14 & 21
Libby: June 15-16 & 23 Thompson Falls: Aug 10-11 & 18

Registration is available by mail as well as on-line at:
<http://www.msueextension.org/forestry/calendar.htm>



A whitetail buck checks his back trail on the Big Hole River near Butte to see if spring is coming (?). Photo by Cindy Herzog

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The Forest Steward's Journal is a publication of the Forest Stewardship Foundation. Comments, articles and letters to the editor are welcome.

Should you join the Forest Stewardship Foundation?

By joining us you become a part of a small but energetic organization that gets things done. We are all volunteers, but since 2011 we have been able to co-sponsor the Helena Landowner Conference and several "Ties to the Land" workshops. We have also contributed, as funding is available, to MSU Extension Forestry to help fund stewardship workshops. Plus, twice a year we publish and distribute over 1,300 Forest Steward's Journals.

We know money is tight, but our dues are still only \$25. We currently have 100 members so you can do the math and see that we don't have much of an operating budget once we publish and mail the Journal. Your membership means a great deal to our continuing success. Please consider joining the foundation by completing the membership application form/envelope found in each winter's edition of the Journal.

Current members and Journal recipients please note: Help us control our printing and mailing costs! Would you prefer electronic or printed copies of the journal? Or perhaps be removed from our mailing list? Please send an email noting your preference to: Linda Leimbach, Treasurer, lleimbach@gmail.com.

<http://www.ForestStewardshipFoundation.org>

Thank you sincerely for your help.

Ed Levert, Chair

