



Pennsylvania Forest Stewards News

A bi-monthly newsletter of the Pennsylvania Forest Stewardship Program

Volume 16, Number 1

July / August 2009

A Preemptive Strike

By Dennis Nebgen, PA Forest Steward '08

Many of us have concerns about the emerald ash borer making its way through the forests of Pennsylvania and the Northeastern US and Canada. I remind myself of its spread every time I walk through my woods and see the many young ash trees I have here on my property, even though it hasn't been found close to me yet – the key word being “yet.” Another twenty, thirty years and I would have a nice population of large ash trees throughout my woods – that is if I have another twenty or thirty years before this pest makes its way here – an unlikely scenario at best, especially since news came out on July 14th that we now have the emerald ash borer only two counties away and in nine PA counties, with more new infestations reported often. I try not to think about it, but, each walk in the woods, and each time I see these beautiful trees reaching skyward, I am reminded I could be the last generation to see their beauty here in the US. This is sobering news for PA forest landowners. Perhaps most sobering is that there is not much we can do about this... Dirty BUG. There is a treatment to keep healthy trees from being infested. However, the cost and labor for annual treatments to a timber stand would be very significant. Here is a link to some interesting pdf files on treatment: <http://www.emeraldashborer.info/treatment.cfm>. This may help if you want to protect a few trees in your yard, but will probably not help with your timber stands.

I am really hoping someone finds a feasible treatment for our woodlands soon or our beautiful white ash trees may go the way of the American chestnut. Other than a witch doctor's spell or dancing around in your woods with a large gourd filled with beads while wearing a loin cloth and war paint to ward off evil spirits, there is not much we can do at this time. So far, this hasn't worked...(don't ask).

One thing landowners may want to do is begin planting other types of trees in

their woodlands where white ash trees are predominant. This will in no way assure your ash trees' safety but it will allow other trees to get a jump start on replacing ash trees to maintain forest canopy. This may be especially important if you are growing non-timber forest products that require shade, such as ginseng and goldenseal. This will provide enough time before canopy dieback to get other trees established. You may not replace your ash trees, but you may protect what is on the forest floor under them, as well as get a head start on replacing some trees you will lose. This action may also help keep out, or keep in check, unwanted or invasive species from taking over sections of your forest floor like hay-scented fern, striped maple, or Japanese stiltgrass.

Replanting trees need not be a costly endeavor. If you are blessed in some areas with an abundance of seedlings from other species, you may have a source for replanting right on your property. For example, I have a chestnut (or rock) oak right behind my house that has produced many bumper acorn crops over the years and as a result there is an over-abundance of seedlings right next to our house. These will grow too close to the house if left here and, rather than just uproot and discard them, I have decided to replant many throughout our forest land. They may not be the ideal replacement based on timber value or type of desired forest tree, but they are a very cost effective way to begin replacing a valuable, endangered resource. I will try to concentrate my planting in areas where I have several white ash trees currently, but also in areas where I would like to see more trees. Last year in our area we had an abundant black cherry seed crop. As a result, some may be blessed with seedlings to transplant strategically to help repopulate areas threatened by the emerald ash borer. The cherry seedlings, which will require good sun, may not survive in the shade of ash trees, but if there is sufficient dieback in the canopy to allow sunlight through the branches, you may establish a cherry forest for future generations. Other, more shade tolerant, species might be sugar or red

maple that can sit in the shade of your ash trees just waiting for their chance.

This certainly isn't the solution that we forest owners want to hear or consider, but until someone develops a way to overpower this invasive insect, we may have very few options on the table before us for our woodlands' future. For those wanting to try the gourd, war paint, and loin cloth approach, may I suggest two words to you? Mosquito repellent!

Hmmmmph! I wonder... perhaps more rattles and a larger gourd?

2009 Annual Meeting and Basic Training

The 2009 PAFS Annual Meeting was a huge success. This year nearly 150 PAFS and guests participated in all or part of the three day event. We want to thank the Campbell Family for hosting us this year. The location and fellowship were outstanding. We have yet to determine the location and date for next year's meeting. We'll try to get the notice out soon enough, so you can get it on your calendar.

The next “happening” in the PA Forest Stewards' year are the 2009 Basic Training weekends. They are September 18-20 and October 2-4. This year we'll be using Camp Susque located along Route 14 just north of Williamsport. This is a very central location and we hope many PAFS can join us for dinner on Saturday, October 3. After dinner, some of the trainees will have a chance to share with the group insights to their properties and visions for reaching out to other forest landowners with the forest stewardship message. We hope you can find the time to take part in the evening's events. To register, please call Allyson by September 25. See you there.

2009 Annual Meeting Keynote Discussion

Susan Stout, US Forest Service Project Leader for Research, Northern Forest Research Station in Irvine, Pennsylvania, closed out this year's annual meeting by sharing the life stories of two unique individuals in our nation's forest research history: Theodora Cope who did a descriptive study of the Heart's Content Wild Area for her Doctoral project in 1936 and Ben Roach a US Forest Research Scientist who during his career identified and documented the impacts of "selection harvesting," also known as taking the big ones and leaving the little ones, on forest structure. The stories were interesting and go beyond the space we have in this newsletter.* Her take home message was simple: observing the impacts and documenting what we do can have long-term benefits to others, especially those who follow us and steward the land.

Susan encouraged forest owners to keep a journal of observations. By doing this, you leave a legacy from which both you and those who follow can observe and understand change. No doubt, even if you've only been on the land for a short time, you know of change. Some of this change is real – you stopped mowing a field in 1990, which led to successional change as the grass yielded to shrubs and then to the first trees. The other change you observe reflects your changing knowledge. For example, you learn to identify a new tree or plant species and its habitat, or you are able to identify and name a new mushroom in your woods. Another idea offered by Nancy and Marvin Baker was to go through the family's archival photos of the land and revisit those places to record with new pictures changes on the land. Lacking the archives, consider starting the process – take pictures to pass forward and be sure to identify the places and always date the photos. These seem like small things, but they do contribute to telling your story about the land. This story will become

more valuable as our decisions and actions affect the lives and options of tomorrow's forest stewards.

*Susan plans to write about these individuals in upcoming issues of *PA Forests*. We'll be sure to let you know when this happens.

Dates for Your Calendar

Saturday, October 3, 6:30 p.m. Join new PA Forest Stewards volunteers for dinner and slide sharing at Camp Susque, Lycoming County.

Saturday, November 21, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m., Best Practices for Woodland Owners Associations Conference, School of Forest Resources, Penn State, University Park.

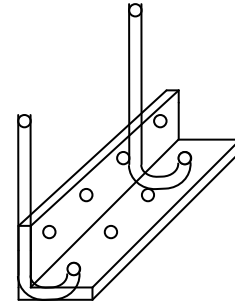
The Stem Stomper

Remember the crop circle fraud perpetrators? Jill O'Neill, PA Forest Steward from Westmoreland County, copied their idea to make a mechanical weed control tool. She calls it the stem stomper. Jill uses the stomper to tramp down wingstem and knotweed – laying it flat to discourage seed dispersal.

It is simple to make. Just use some corner brace (if you have it) or some other kind of right angle type of metal bar that has holes going up the middle (like a stop sign post).

Then after you have found your metal angle bar, next find two metal rods that can be made into a sort of "L" shape.

Together, the pieces should look like this:



Move it around with the metal rods to the vegetation you'd like to tramp on; stomp on the bar with your shod foot. You can even copy this design using a board and string. Jill uses the stomper where she had previously used her scythe. She's found it less unwieldy and more efficient. Stomp Away!

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