

Timber Talk



Newsletter of the Iowa Woodland Owners Association December 2011

Legislative Report

By Dave Bartemes, IWOA President

The 2011 legislature came to a close after one of the longest extended sessions in the history of Iowa. It was also the first time that a large group of people banded together to promote the benefits of Iowa's woodlands and trees. Altogether, 17 organizations representing about 15,000 Iowa voters formed the Coalition for Iowa's Woodlands and Trees. This coalition hired a professional lobbyist, Jim Obradovich, to advocate for a Woodland Health Initiative to be funded by the legislature and managed by the Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry,

The going was tough from the git-go. The political atmosphere was one of "cut spending" and "Don't raise taxes." It was also a year of hard stances by the various interests and very little room for compromise. Virtually every department of state government found some of their programs axed or their funding reduced.

In the end, the legislature established a line item for a Healthy Trees Initiative. A total of \$100,000 was appropriated over two years to get the initiative started. When we consider the hard stance of legislators and the condition of the Iowa budget, this is an amazing accomplishment. While we know that \$100,000 is a drop in the bucket for the battle against invasive species of insects and disease, it is a start.

However, there is a lot more to the story. Our lobbyist literally called on legislators from desk to desk every day of the session. He was a quick study of the issues facing woodland owners, nut growers, urban tree issues, hunters, nature lovers, Christmas tree growers, and all of the coalition members. He was able to identify friends and foes alike, and was instrumental in alerting our membership of key committee meetings.

Throughout the legislative session the importance of trees, both urban and rural, was emphasized to the members of the various committees that have the responsibility of moving the budget through the

legislature. There were high points and low points as budget items were introduced and either accepted or rejected.

Our success, limited as it was, was due mainly to the response of our various members. E-mails, letters and phone calls are the tools of a grass roots organization like our Coalition. When the call went out, it was obvious that our members responded. Feedback from "friends" was very positive, and many of our "foes" moderated their positions so that the line item stayed intact.

Now is the time to contact your legislators and educate them about EAB, Thousand Cankers disease, Oak wilt, BOB, and the other threats to our woodlands and trees. Our forests and trees provide nearly 18,000 good jobs and contribute nearly 4 billion dollars to the Iowa economy. We can't rest on our laurels. If we educate the legislators, provide them with good information, and let them know that we, as voters, want them to increase funding to protect our trees, they will.

*****SAVE THE DATE*****

IWOA Spring Field Day Saturday, May 12, 2012

The morning session will be at the Allerton, Iowa Civic Center, and the afternoon on the Dave Bartemes farm three miles south. Dave says he plans to have the best lunch EVER for a field day. Planned events and topics include:

- A demonstration prairie burn.
- An overview of the Bartemes farm by the couple who originally planted the trees. They haven't seen it for about seven years, so they should have some interesting comments.
- Plus more! Look in the next *Timber Talk* for more details.

Iowa's Identity Crisis: a Prairie State Living in a Forest Climate

By Joe Herring, Iowa DNR District Forester

Most Iowans who have an interest in conservation are aware of the fact that our state does not have as much forest land as we once had --- the estimated 6.7 million acres of woodlands that were here prior to 1846 were "cut" to just 1.5 million acres (pardon the pun) by the time Earl Butz was instructing farmers to plant corn "fencerow to fencerow" in the mid-1970's. But did you know that the amount of forest land and trees across Iowa is on the rebound, and is now back up to 3 million acres and climbing? Based on the most recent inventory by the U.S. Forest Service, the amount of forest cover is expanding at a rate of about 2.5% per year on average.

While we may feel good about contributing to this trend via conservation tree plantings over the past 40 years, especially with the help of programs like the CRP, the overriding reason for this growth is the alignment of two phenomena: 1) the exodus of many livestock growers from the market & consolidation into feedlots, leaving pasture ground idle, and 2) the fact that Iowa's current climate favors trees over grasses.

This latter statement may come as somewhat of a surprise to everyone who considers Iowa to be more of a prairie state, historically covered with an endless sea of tallgrass that we can now only fathom by visiting places like Neal Smith Wildlife Refuge and Broken Kettle grasslands. And indeed, our land certainly was once dominated by the tallgrass prairie; however, it was also once dominated by an expansive, shallow, warmwater tropical sea, back when Iowa was located near the equator (roughly 300 million years ago). The point is, things change, and Iowa's plant communities have been constantly evolving in response to climate, Mother Nature's ways, and humans' influence. Understanding the trajectory of these changes can help us manage our landscape in today's climate with more wisdom, or at least a better understanding of *why* we're doing what we're doing.

Researchers who have analyzed soil cores across Iowa and the Midwest have learned much about the types of plants that used to live here, based on the pollen that can be found at different depths in the layers of the soil. For instance, 10,000 years ago, Iowa was dominated by

boreal forests of Spruce, Fir, & Larch and boggy sedge wetlands, as the Wisconsinan glacier was retreating to the north (it was much cooler around here then). Some authors liken that landscape to what modern-day Canada looks like.

As we continued to climb out of the ice age, the climate gradually grew warmer and drier. Deciduous trees replaced the conifers, which were Canada-bound. At roughly 7,000 years before present, the pollen records indicate dominant vegetation of oak, hickory, maple, elm, and ironwood.

The climate continued getting hotter and drier, which favored a transition to grass vegetation instead of trees --- grass being more tolerant of drought than trees (consider the prairies of the great plains to the west of us versus the heavy forests to the east as a function of annual rainfall, with Iowa right in the middle). By 4,000 years before present, tallgrass prairie had displaced the hardwood trees as the dominant vegetation across our landscape.

However, this is where it gets interesting: somewhere around that time, the climate reverted back towards a cooling trend, with increasing amounts of moisture & humidity. Deciduous trees began re-invading the landscape. But as the trees advanced their front line westward in the turf war against

the prairie, they were met with a fierce resistance: fires, set annually and almost entirely deliberately, by Native Americans.

The amount of evidence supporting human-lit fires in the pre-settlement landscape is overwhelming, once you start looking into the matter. As it turns out, the concept of a naturally-ignited prairie fire caused by lightning strikes in the Midwest is almost completely mythical. Extensive research & writing by the author Charles C. Mann shows that when Columbus arrived on the East coast in 1492, he found not a pristine, untouched wilderness, but instead a landscape that was under constant management and alteration by humans, for human benefits. Native Americans regularly burned the landscape for a variety of reasons, including: to encourage fresh browse material for grazing wildlife and hence better hunting, land clearing & agriculture, visibility and safety, pest management (ticks and chiggers, no doubt), fireproofing, signaling, and more.

"The point is, things change, and Iowa's plant communities have been constantly evolving in response to climate, Mother Nature's ways, and humans' influence. Understanding the trajectory of these changes can help us manage our landscape in today's climate with more wisdom, or at least a better understanding of why we're doing what we're doing."

Mann also shows that the indigenous populations were much greater in numbers than previously thought, meaning the effects of their management on the native habitat was much more pervasive than we had presumed.

The expansive grass fires that swept across Iowa on a routine basis killed young tree seedlings of course, and held back most of the forest encroachment for the 4,000 year-long period before settlement. Maple, basswood, walnut, butternut, hackberry, cherry, various shrubs, and other thin-barked woodland species could only survive in the cool and more rugged valleys where fire could not effectively scorch them. Bur oaks, with their thick bark and deep tap roots, had more success moving out into the uplands. Hot fires could kill the top of the tree, but not the roots. Other species of oak and the hickories did not have such thick bark, but they did share the bur oak's strong ability to resprout following a fire. Patiently, they would lie in wait for the briefest of interruptions in the fire cycle to bolt from the thick, tough "grub" stage into quick-growing saplings.

In the 1850's and 1860's, roughly 20 years into formal settlement and statehood, the trees' persistence paid off. By this time, two factors had converged which would have massive implications on the landscape: the early pioneers had thoroughly transformed the prairie by plowing it into square fields for agriculture, and 2) the Native Americans had largely been displaced. The result was a rather abrupt end to the annual prairie fires, and according to Aldo Leopold, "Seedling oaks forthwith romped over the grasslands in legions, and what had been the prairie region became a region of woodlot farms." According to van der Linden and Farrar, the amount of forest ground may have actually increased statewide following settlement, despite the heavy timber clearing that was occurring for home building, agriculture, and fuel needs. The next time you take a drive (anywhere in the Midwest) and see a pleasant grove of 2'-3' diameter bur oaks sprawling out in a shady pasture, you can be fairly certain they are approximately 150 years old and got their start in the first few years after the prairie fires stopped running.

Which brings us to where we are today in Iowa: we know that our climate continues to favor the natural conversion of the prairies & pastures into tree cover. In the Loess Hills of western Iowa, volunteers and land managers converge every year for the G.R.A.S.S. event -- the Great Race Against Shrubs and Shade, to set back the constant invasion of cedar, dogwood, and other trees which threaten to overtake the remnant prairies. Anyone who owns CRP ground knows that without

regular burning, the cherries, willow, cottonwood, elm, and others invade quickly. Abandoned pastures all across Iowa fill back in rapidly with the thorny species that the cattle didn't like to eat, such as locust & rose bushes, along with buckthorn, honeysuckle, and other invasive alien species. Wherever the human disturbance factor has been removed, we are gaining trees & "forests." But the question becomes, are we getting the *type* of forests and trees that suit us? Or better yet, the type of forests that will suit our grandchildren?

The point is, the constant invasion by trees into our open areas and the continued succession of our forests (sans the cow, plow, fire, and axe) is a "natural" phenomenon, but the hands-off approach to natural resources does not always lead to the most desirable outcome. As it turns out, the landscape that we inherited in the 1800's and which we hold in such high regard was in fact the product of active, intentional management by humans.

But I suppose like treasures and trash, one man's weed is another man's wildflower. While a prairie lover in western Iowa loathes the 'invasive' Eastern Red Cedar, the trophy whitetail hunter of SE Iowa loves it because of the thermal & visual protection it provides for bedding areas. Hackberry, Elm, Maple, and Basswood may have their assets to birds, bees, and mushrooms, but across much of the state they are gradually setting themselves up to replace our state tree, the Oak. I have even heard rumors of some forestry contractors being asked to designate Honey Locust as a "crop" tree for the new breed of deer hunters since they find nutrition in the sweet seed pods.

I suppose as we always say in forestry, it just depends on your objectives...but then again, I'm reminded of what my predecessor Bob Hibbs once said: "Junk timber makes excellent deer and wildlife habitat...I just don't like growing junk timber!"

References and suggested reading:

- Leopold, Aldo. 1949. "The Good Oak" and "Bur Oak" essays from *A Sand County Almanac*.
- Farrar and van der Linden. 1993. Chapter 1, "History of Iowa's Forests" *Forest and Shade Trees of Iowa*.
- Mann, Charles C. 2007. "Jamestown: The Real Story." *National Geographic* Vol. 211:5.

ISU Forestry Extension was Awarded Two IDALS Grants

By Jesse Randall, Asst. Prof. & Ext. Forester, Iowa State University

Two Specialty Crop Grants were awarded by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) in September to Iowa State University Forestry Extension to study Christmas tree fertilization and American Ginseng cultivation in Iowa forests. Both projects will involve on-farm research projects across the state of Iowa and are funded for the next 3 years. Both projects are highlighted below and annual updates will be published in future issues of IWOA's Timber Talk.

Christmas Trees: As the market for Christmas trees has transitioned from pines to firs, Iowa growers are faced with a production gap of several years as the current fir tree production takes 3-5 years longer to raise a market size tree. As such, growers in Iowa have attempted to fertilize fir trees but with no formal standard developed for Iowa, the results have been highly variable and in some cases detrimental to over winter tree health and survival. This project aims to determine the optimal fertilization schedule across a range of soils throughout the state of Iowa to maximize growth, reduce the production cycle time to more closely mirror pines, and limit problems associated with over fertilization (cone production, over winter bud damage). This project will focus on two fir species (canaan, and fraser) across three different soil types in Iowa. Trees will be planted in the field in spring 2012.

American Ginseng: The cultivation of American ginseng can produce an extremely high value specialty crop, but is greatly limited by the pressures of soil-borne fungal pathogens. Damping-off of germinating seeds and seedlings within the first growing season is a major limitation to establishment of a viable ginseng crop. During subsequent growing seasons, as much as one-third of the crop can be lost from additional pathogen pressures. Economic, environmental, and health issues associated with the current dependence on frequent fungicide applications call for alternative techniques to be developed. This project will evaluate a biofumigation technique, which has the potential to improve the profitability of ginseng production and reduce the effects of conventional fungicides. A comparative study of a biofumigation and conventional soil fungicide treatment began this fall with plot establishment. Germination success and ginseng seedling survival will be monitored for the first two

growing seasons. Upon evaluating the efficacy of the alternative biofumigation technique in the critical first two years of production, results of the research will be made available to the public.

If you have questions concerning either of the projects outlined above please feel free to contact Jesse Randall, ISU Extension Forester at (515) 294-1168.

Thank you to IWOA Member and past board member

Ron Fullenkamp.

At this fall's Shimek Field Day, Ron signed up 10 new members to IWOA, and got a past member to re-sign up with us. We appreciate Ron's continuing efforts to bring new folks in to the IWOA family.

SAFETY CORNER

By Larry Wiley, IWOA member

"Safety First". How many times have we heard that phrase? It is preached in businesses, industries and in most occupations. But, there are times we head for the woods without giving much regard to "Safety First". Many times we have a task to complete or a quick chore to get done and we may be under time constraints to finish. We grab some equipment and off we go. We have to "get-r-done".

We hear stories of the guy that just needed to make one or two cuts so he doesn't take the time to put on his safety equipment. He grabs the saw-- and --75 stitches later says, "I should have taken the few seconds to put on my chaps".

It's an easy thing to do. We thought we were done with the job and removed our protective apparel, only to discover there is one more limb to cut. We think, "Its only one or two small cuts. It will take longer to put on the equipment than the cuts will take". That's when disaster strikes.

Remember, It an attitude we adopt that puts" Safety First". Live with It! Be Safe and enjoy the woods!

The Forest Reserve

**By Paul J. Tauke, State Forester/Bureau Chief
IDNR Forestry Bureau**

Iowa's Forest and Fruit Tree Reservations Law, more popularly known as the Iowa Forest Reserve Law (FR), has been in existence since 1906. The goal of the law was to provide landowners with an incentive to protect their forestlands from the primary threats of the time; clearing and overgrazing. In exchange for protecting the resource landowners have paid little to no tax on their enrolled forested acres.

Over the years, most modifications to the FR Law have focused on adjustments to the assessed value of the land enrolled in the program and not on substantively changing the content and spirit of the legislation.

From 1907 until 1935, Forest Reservations had an appraised value of \$1/acre. In 1935, the appraised value was raised to \$4/acre. In 1974 the appraised value was increased to \$14.82/acre. In 1986, the tax exemption for forest reservations was made \$0/acre and the economic gain clause was more clearly defined to relate only to products of the tree (logs, firewood, seed, etc.). This change prohibits lease hunting, CRP payments, CSP payments or other forms of paid recreational opportunities on enrolled land. One other change was that land not enrolled for at least eight years is subject to a "recapture tax" if removed from the program.

Current Forest Reserve bills under consideration are House File 680, which would sunset the FR program in 2021, and House File 681, which would reduce eligible landowner participation to fifteen percent of their eligible forest acres by 2020.

Analysis of the current Forest Reserve data shows that approximately ninety four percent of FR landowners live in Iowa and they own about ninety-one percent of all FR acres. The value of the FR tax credit to landowners is just short of \$8.5 million. In 2009, the combined total of all county budgets was \$2.1 to 2.2 billion dollars. The FR property tax credit represents 4/10 of one percent of county budgets statewide.

The FR law of 1906 addressed clearing and overgrazing of forests. These were the primary threats to Iowa's woods at that time. Current and future woodland threats include invasive insects, invasive woodland plants, declining forest health, development, fragmentation, declining individual tree quality, and conversion from species with high economic and wildlife habitat value to species with little economic or

wildlife habitat value. Today's higher commodity prices and cash rent also place additional pressure on conversion of marginal land to row crop production.

Good forest management planning and implementation increases the benefits derived from forestland and provides added value to the forest landowner. It can also address and minimize the impact of many of the threats to Iowa's woodland resource. Regardless of whether that added value is economic, aesthetic or recreational; the more valued the resource, the less likely it will be converted or developed. However, only about eight percent of Iowa's 3.1 million forested acres are currently being actively managed and only about 22 percent of the land in the Forest Reserve currently has a management plan.

Forest Reserve legislation that is aimed at improving Iowa's forest resource will provide economic, recreational, environmental and wildlife habitat benefits that will far outweigh the costs of having forestland enrolled in the program. It will provide these benefits not only to the current and future forest owners but to current and future generations of Iowans.

The IWOA Board

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Cathy Wilkie, Membership Secretary
Joanne Mensinger, Treasurer

IWOA Board Meeting Minutes

July 16, 2011

OxYoke Inn, Amana, IA

President David Bartemes called the meeting to order at 10AM. Members present were VP Al Wagner, Secy Dave Hannon, Memb Secy Cathy Wilkie, Chuck Semler, Linda Rouse, Bob Jefferson, and guests Shirley Schreiber and Dick Struther.

Minutes of the April 16, 2011 meeting were approved as presented by motion from Bob and second by Chuck.

The Treasurer's report was approved as presented by motion from Linda and second by Al.

Pres Bartemes reported the lobbying coalition was successful in getting \$50k line items in each of the next two budget years for healthy trees. This was only possible in this tight budget time because of the expertise of our lobbyist, Paul. There was discussion about working in the future with or against Farm Bureau since it is unclear if they are friend or foe. Dave has asked Paul (lobbyist) to provide guidance.

Chuck reported the June 15th Field Day went well, and there was a good turnout. He wondered whether we should charge more in the future, since we just broke even on this one. Others commented the food and presentations were very good.

Al said there is nothing new regarding the September 10th annual meeting coming up. The Governor, who has been invited to speak, has not yet responded.

Discussing the last issue of Timber Talk, Cathy used E-mail for the 65 of our members who requested it that way. The rest of our 355 members received theirs by regular mail. In the next issue, Cathy will ask the Tree Farmers to let her know if they would like to use E-mail, which does save a lot of money. It was suggested future issues emphasize education items.

There was further discussion about allowing members to advertise items for sale that would be woodland related. This will be explored further. The subject came up as a result of a Hertz Co. member wanting to use our ListServe to advertise a woodland auction coming up. It was pointed out that ListServe has some real problems, and we do not have control of it. However, in the meantime, that member has our permission to do so on a motion from Linda and second by Al.

In discussing the possibility of Shirley becoming a replacement for board members Don Smith or Larry Briney, both of whom resigned, the by-laws definition of eligibility was determined to be lacking. This is to be resolved by our next meeting. Also, to review possible candidates, Cathie is tasked with providing each board member a list of our members, as well as copies of the by-laws.

There was talk about possible location for the 2012 annual meeting. It will be pursued at the next meeting. Finally, it was decided to look into the feasibility of IWOA putting on our version of Master Woodland Management courses. Al will pursue. A motion to adjourn was approved at 11:30.

Prepared by Dave Hannon, Secy

IWOA Board Meeting Minutes

Sept. 9, 2011

Decker House, Maquoketa, IA

(Note: subject to Board approval at January 2012 meeting.)

President Dave Bartemes called the meeting to order at 6:50 pm . The agenda was approved.

Dave welcomed the new board members, Kevin Kelly, Paul Millice and Al Rathje.

The minutes of the 16 July board meeting were read and approved.

The Treasurer's report was presented and approved. Longtime treasurer will continue one more year, we will need a replacement.

President asked if we could open that position to any member. Not a paid position doesn't have to be a board member. Voted on and approved. President Bartemes suggested that we provide a memento for service. Suggested a lifetime membership/honorary membership .moved and approved. We also discussed to leaving it on a case by case basis.

President Bartemes to provide one cutting board for outgoing Dave Hannon for his service as well as one cutting board for a door prize for the Annual meeting.

Dave reported the Coalition for Iowa's Woodlands & Trees was successful in securing a line item of 50K for each of the next two years in the DNR's budget for the health of woodlands which is a direct result of our lobbyist efforts. There was a motion to provide \$1000 again to the Coalition which gives us strength of 15,000 Iowa members. Motion approved.

Timber talk- Cathy has sent out 4 issues annually my only sent out 3 in future. Need articles for future issues. It was discussed the we will need one more board member to replace _____ who has sold his land. It was decided that we would appoint one to fill this unexpired position.

Dave appointed a three member committee to "Define or Suggest" what constitutes a woodland owner Kevin Kelly, Paul Millice A& Al Rathje were appointed to this committee.

New Business: Dave met with Rick Robinson and Matt Stienfeld of the Iowa Farm Bureau (FB). Discussed Forest Reserve Program with FB. (Currently the FB is opposed to the FRP and is actively lobbying against) The FB sends 100 county delegates to the state to propose an agenda for the FB to lobby for or against. Apparently there are a couple of county accesses who get there county delegates to oppose the FRP and they take that to the state FB meeting and get that in as a issue. We all need to learn who our county's FB delegate is and contact them. Dave is to ask Tom Taulke to make a bullet point fact sheet to help us to talk before the FB.

Al- web page Jo Ann – web person tabled of next meeting. Discussed possible income from advertising and or links to our web site.

Spring Field Day will be at Dave's farm in Wayne county. Need to ask for volunteers for Annual meeting.

Johnson & Linn Count Master Woodland Managers Course next summer, 30 per class, if need be there will be two classes.

Prepared by Paul Millice Secy.

IWOA ANNUAL MEETING SEPTEMBER 10, 2011 HURTSVILLE INTERPRETATIVE CENTER MAQUOKETA, IOWA

President Dave Bartemes called the meeting to order at 9am and introduced the newly elected board members.

Larry Wiley talked about the IWOA traveling display of which the goal is to promote good forest management. Larry had had set this display up at a number of events around the state in the past year Also mentioned that we need to communicate with legislators

Board activities for the past year- Iowa Coalition for Woodland & Trees, hired a lobbyist, were successful in getting a \$50K line item into the DNR's budget for the next two years. Stressed that it is extremely important the when we get an e-mail that we MUST act up it. Black walnut is a 2 Billion dollar industry in Iowa, we must have research to prevent 1000 cankers disease. Dave had an essay printed in the Des Moines Register on the Forrest Reserve Program.

Treasurer Jo Ann Oct 1st to Sep 30th is our physical year we had a net gain of over \$2,000.

Read and approved minutes of 15 Oct 2010 Annual meeting

Thanks to Tom Rosenberg for the name tags

At 9:40 the business meeting was adjourned

Al Wagner introduced Woodland Management plans with Daryl Parker, director of Jackson County Conservation and Kevin Oetken, Woodland Forestry Consultants. David Gossman talked high value box elder and Tom Wahl of the Red Fern farm talked alternative timber crops.

After lunch the field portion included a tour of David Gossman's farm and talked of low value timber harvesting and marketing. Tract two was a tour/presentation by Kevin Oetken on Clear cut Site.

Prepared by Paul Millice, Secy.

**Know someone who you think
would be interested in the Iowa
Woodland Owners Association and
the networking opportunities that
come with membership?
Direct them to our website at
www.iowawoodlandowners.org and
have them click on the
Membership Link.
Better yet, buy them a one-year gift
membership!**

Dear Iowa Tree Farm Members,

If your mailing label on this newsletter reads "ITF" after your name, you receive our newsletter via Iowa Woodland Owner's Association joint newsletter mailing effort with the Iowa Tree Farm Members.

If you are an ITF member, and would rather receive your copy of Timber Talk via e-mail rather than receive a paper copy in the mail, please e-mail Cathy Wilkie, IWOA Membership Secretary at cat_wilkie@yahoo.com, and put "ITF MEMBER REQUESTING ELECTRONIC COPY" in the subject line of your e-mail. Include your current mailing address in the body of the e-mail so I make sure I get the right person signed up for the electronic mailing.

We appreciate the Iowa Tree Farm folks taking the time to read Timber Talk, and we would also like to ask you to consider becoming more involved in IWOA by becoming a full-fledged IWOA member.

If you'd like to join, please fill out the form on the right, and send in with your dues payment.

Become a Member of IWOA

We invite you (or someone you might know) to become a member of the Iowa Woodland Owners Association

- Member \$20—woodland owner, voting
- Associate Member \$20—non-woodland owner, non-voting
- Contributing Member \$50—woodland owner, voting
- Contributing Associate Member \$50—non-woodland owner, non-voting

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

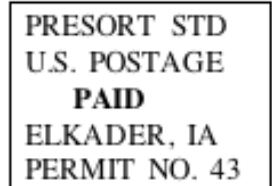
E-mail _____

Number of forest acres you own _____

County acres located _____

Mail this completed form and check to:

**Cathy Wilkie
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