

Tree Farm Program Benefits

I recently attended a Colorado Tree Farm meeting. It reminded me of the special and unique benefits that can be available to landowners with forested property who participate in Colorado's Tree Farm program.

My Tree Farm is in Larimer County Colorado and for many years now Tree Farmers here have met three or four times each year to:

1. Talk with forestry experts who can provide us with useful and unique advice to make forest management easier or more productive.
2. Share our experiences and ideas with our neighbors and other private forest landowners who care about the health of our forests.
3. Take tours of exceptionally well managed forested properties and businesses that can show us how do a better job.
4. Generally motivate ourselves and our neighbors to continue the difficult, sometimes dangerous, and seemingly never-ending job of protecting the health and improving the sustainability of our forests for future generations.

Quite a few years ago now a group of Tree Farmers and a locally revered Colorado State Forest Service District Forester named Ray Mehaffey decided to meet on a regular basis. Their collaboration resulted in developing the idea of a Forest Agricultural Program that they championed through the Colorado General Assembly. Forest Ag benefits many forest landowners today. When Ray retired his protegee Mike Hughes stepped up to continue the support.

It was Mike who envisioned and organized the particular meeting that prompted this message. Mike worked with the Colorado State Forest Service GIS specialist, Pete Barry to develop and share a method to report forest management work using spatial data and photos with your smartphone. Mike also coordinated our meeting with that of the local Society of American Foresters chapter so we might all become better acquainted. SAF members can and have provided a wealth of information to Tree Farmers.

Effective forest management requires specific information on current local forest threats. Often the most practical advice comes from local experts and neighbors experiencing the same challenges that you are. Local Tree Farm groups help share the most useful information among those folks most likely to utilize and benefit from it.

Tree Farmers in Colorado agree to work with a professional forester to create and follow a comprehensive forest management plan. There is very little market for locally grown forest products in Colorado so Tree Farmers don't make much money. But they do gain a great deal of satisfaction in knowing that their efforts:

- Help maintain the watersheds that provide clean water to everyone,
- Mitigate the damage that is being caused by ever larger and more frequent wildfires

- Improve the carbon sequestration our woods provide to mitigate the effects of global warming
- Enhance and maintain wildlife habitat for Colorado's wonderful variety of animals
- And much more

If these issues interest you the Larimer County Tree Farmers invite you to attend our next meeting and talk to some of the people providing an actual boots-on-the-ground effort to improve our environment. Meetings are free and open to everyone interested in the health of our trees.

If you live too far away to attend a meeting in Larimer County, contact us and will be happy to share what we learn and give you tips on starting your own local Tree Farm group.

You can contact me and even subscribe to our free newsletter at:



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Outreach and Education Chair

[Colorado Tree Farmers](#)

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