

A Decade of Forest Landowner Conferences

By Clyde Robbe, Montana Forest Stewardship Foundation Board Member

The 10th annual Montana Forest Landowner Conference was held in Butte, Montana at the Clarion Copper King Inn on April 12th. Sponsored jointly this year with the Montana Society of American Foresters (SAF) State Meeting, the attendance represented a good mix of private forest landowners in addition to forest and logging professionals, educators and students. With approximately 125 people in attendance, the 2019 themed event “Montana Forests: Past, Present & Future” provided a myriad of interesting and timely topics in each of the sessions such that attendees had plenty of opportunity to add to their own global or local knowledge base and refresh areas of personal interest. The leadership team, represented by Ed Levert of the Forest Stewardship Foundation, Gary Ellingson with Northwest Management, Inc. and Bruce Schlaebitz with the Montana Society of American Foresters, should certainly be applauded for putting together an outstanding joint conference agenda in an informative and relaxed atmosphere!



Opening session speaker Jim Peterson, Founder of the Evergreen Foundation, and wife Julia.

The conference agenda once again offered the very effective format of morning and afternoon breakout session choices, which followed a very interesting opening presentation by Jim Peterson, Founder of the Evergreen Foundation, titled “Montana Forest Management Past, Present and Future”. Mr. Peterson is a very informed watchdog of forest management

practices and offered keen insight as to where we have been and where we appear to be headed, forest management-wise.

Through-out the day, speakers notably passionate about their vocations and area of expertise provided thought provoking reviews of everything from collaboration and forest partnerships, forest products infrastructure, forest management assistance programs, forest science and on to weed management. Any rec-cap of the 2019 conference would not be complete without noting the outstanding speakers we had participate again this year, representing folks from Montana's educational, State, Federal and professional resources. Session speakers represented The MT DNRC; University of MT Bureau of Business & Economic Research; MT State University Department of Earth Science; USFS National Geonomics Center for Wildlife and Fish; Natural Resource Conservation System; MT Forest Collaboration Network; Pyramid Mountain Lumber; Lewis & Clark National Forest; Missoula County Weed District; MT State Extension Service. We are reminded that the annual landowner conference is only able to continue and flourish thanks to the outstanding support provided by speakers and groups such as these.



Ashley Juran, with MT DNRC, speaking on Montana's Forest Action Plan.



Dr. Peter Kolb (right), MSU Extension Forestry, and weed management session attendees.

To enliven the mid-day lunch break, Mr. Chris Fisk, a long-time Butte High School history teacher, provided an entertaining presentation on "Butte History". For those not familiar with Mr. Fisk, he quickly assured his audience of his life-long compassion for "all things Butte" and gave authentic accounts of Butte's lively past and strategic mining contributions through out America's history. He brings the same command of Butte history and entertainment to his summer trolley car tours provided through the Butte Area Chamber of Commerce, so be sure to stop back through Butte sometime in the future to take in one of those uptown tours if you haven't already.



Mr. Chris Fisk, Butte High School History Teacher, provided the luncheon presentation on Butte history.



Tom and Alvira Jones, coordinators of the FSF silent auction, scan down the row of auction items hoping to squeeze in another item or two.

What has definitely become an enjoyable and anticipated aspect of the landowner conference is the casual time between sessions and during the lunch break for the opportunity to rekindle old friendships or make new acquaintances, and share stories of successes and sometimes failures associated with each other's own stewardship and management objectives. We always appreciate seeing the vendor displays provided in the break area as well and become familiar with the opportunities they provide to forest landowners either through forestry technical services offered or the equipment innovations they represent. Also, once again this year, Tom and Alvira Jones so graciously donated their time to coordinate ahead of time and set-up a wonderful array of silent auction items for conference attendees to browse during breaks and the lunch periods. The silent auction also serves as an important fund-raiser to help offset the expense of hosting the annual landowner conference. This year, The Montana Society of American Foresters also had a nice selection of silent auction items to bid on as well so anyone wanting to take home a "souvenir" of the conference certainly had the opportunity to do so!

In summary of this year's event, we need to once again acknowledge the generous support and interest of the many sponsors that the conference coordinators sincerely appreciate and have come to rely on to ensure a quality experience for attendees. The sponsors this year included Northwest Management, Inc.; MT DNRC; Sun Mountain Lumber Co.; MT Women in Timber; MT Wood Products Association; MT Forest Owners Association; MT SAF; F.H. Stoltze Land & Lumber Co.; Idaho Forest Group; Stimson Lumber Co.; Weyerhaeuser Co.; Lincoln Conservation District; Pyramid Mountain Lumber Inc.; RY Lumber Co.; Marks-Miller Post & Pole; USFS; MT Timber Legacy Fdn; Marks Lumber Co.; David Sheets Jr. Trucking, Inc.; Ottman Forestry Consultants, LLC; Monture Creek Land Management; Small Wood Lot Tools, LLC.

With the return of the Montana Forest Landowner Conference to Helena, Montana in the spring of 2020, it is not too early to begin anticipating next year's event and to strongly consider joining us for what has come to be known as a must-attend event for those wishing to extend their forest landownership knowledge and management objectives. Hope to see you next year!