

A Publication of the **Living Forest Cooperative**

## Logging the old-fashioned way

### Living Forest Cooperative offers Field Day

By **Claudia Curran**

*With permission from the Daily Press. This article appeared in the Daily Press 1/27/2003.*

**POINT DETOUR** — Dolly & Cher, two registered Belgian draft horses, hauled hefty logs north of Red Cliff Saturday in a fresh powder of snow and in below-zero temperatures.

About 40 participants at the horse logging field day, sponsored by the Living Forest Cooperative, tromped about a mile into the woods on a snowy trail to watch Jacob Obletz drive the two steamy-breathed mares on hemlock-speckled land north of Red Cliff, near Point Detour. Charly Ray, co-op general manager, and Ray's wife, Julie Buckles, own the land.

Over the course of the frigid day spectators shifted from the squeaky-cold trails, to a small fire, to watching the muscled horses pulling logs, to a tent for steaming hot chocolate and cider, snacks and warmth.

The Cooperative organized the event so the public could experience horse logging, and so participants could receive information about sustainable forestry practices.

Obletz has worked with horses for much of his life, and, since starting out with saddle horses, has shifted his focus to draft. At first, he was wary of using horses for logging because of the possibility they may not listen to directions, though he later found that using a well-trained team spells success.

He looked for a calm and experienced duo to start out with and found Dolly and Cher.

"These girls were in good shape," Obletz

said to the field day participants as he gave them a bit of his horse-driving history. "If I had a team any less trained, I wouldn't be able to do this," he said.

Obletz grew up in Milwaukee — not the woods — but even so, he feels comfortable working in the forest with his logging team. On Saturday, Obletz and the two mares moved maple and white birch on the 80-acre parcel owned by Ray and Buckles. Ray worked with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to develop a forest management plan for the property. Removal of white birch growing over the top of maple, removal of deformed trees, some thinning and other timber stand improvements are outlined in the document, Ray explained.

He is working with Obletz to manage the timber as planned under the umbrella of the Living Forest Cooperative, a three-year-old business comprised of numerous members from the region and from as far away as Barron County.

Wood hauled by Obletz is destined for pulp, firewood, veneer logs and saw logs, Ray explained, and some will be marketed for sale through the Cooperative and purchased by individuals and businesses.

The Cooperative works to encourage good land stewardship and provide sustainable forest management assistance and education to its members and other land owners.



**Dolly and Cher**

Over the course of the frigid day spectators shifted from the squeaky-cold trails, to a small fire, to watching the muscled horses pulling logs, to a tent for steaming hot chocolate and cider, snacks and warmth.

see "Logging" page 5

# The Manager's Report

By Charly Ray  
LFC General Manager

This spring the Cooperative shifted gears from our emphasis on manufacturing wood products to a focus on forestry services for our members. The capital necessary for manufacturing and retailing along with the recent lessons learned from the Sustainable Woods Cooperative led to this decision. We still have inventory and will continue to seek markets for value added sales of our member-owned wood.

The Cooperative will not be purchasing wood from members, but rather acting as a broker, on a commission basis, for members interested in seeking more than the going rate for logs by selling flooring or lumber. The focus on forestry services will require less capital, better serve our member needs, and position us in the market with future harvest plans.

Signs of our progress include:

- SmartWood **Chain-of-Custody Certification** approval. This allows the Co-op to take in FSC certified wood from members, turn it into flooring or other products, and market it with the internationally recognized FSC logo.
- SmartWood approval of the **Umbrella Certification Program** with the Community Forestry Resource Center. This allows Co-op members access to affordable (\$50/yr) FSC certification of their lands.
- **Forestry services** are being provided to members including: developing **stewardship plans**, negotiating the **Managed Forest Law** program for landowners, **marking timber**, and setting up and marketing **timber sales**.
- Our first **FSC lumber** has been produced from Co-op lands and over 200 acres of Co-op member lands are SmartWood/FSC certified
- The Co-op was recently awarded a **\$9,994 USDA grant** for sustainable forestry research and outreach.
- Our **Website** has been rebuilt to better communicate with members and customers.
- We are **building capacity** to grow and prosper by taking control of our accounting system using QuickBooks, developing our GIS capacities, and getting forestry training.

The demise of the Sustainable Woods Co-operative (see related article) leaves us as the only forestry co-op in the region with SmartWood/FSC certification for value added processing and sales. It also leaves us without a partner and role model.

“The Living Forest Cooperative is leading the way in sustainable forestry and adding value for private forest landowners. Our capacity to serve our members continues to grow with the good work of our summer interns, the crew here at the office, and collaborations with other businesses and organizations.”

## co-op news

### FORESTER JOINS LFC FOR SUMMER

Lisa Renier Thomas has been working as a Forestry Assistant with Living Forest since May. She originally hails from Denmark, Wisconsin, a small town near Green Bay. She has an undergraduate degree in Japanese from UW-Madison, and is currently completing a BS/MS degree in Forest Ecology, also at the UW. Lisa and her husband share a home with three dogs in La Valle, Wisconsin, a tiny town located on the Baraboo River and the “400” state bike trail in southwest Wisconsin.

Lisa worked in quality improvement and member services after completing her undergraduate degree, first at the UW Medical School and later at Richland County Health and Human Services. Most recently she worked as a Forestry Educator with the Wisconsin DNR. Sustainable forestry and ecology are her passions, and she is very excited to play a role in the development of LFC. When she is not running around in the woods she enjoys knitting, reading, canoeing, and traveling.

Lisa will be with Living Forest through August. Her primary responsibilities have been to cruise member lands and help members set up forestry management plans. She is also developing LFC's GIS capabilities, creating a forest stewardship manual for future LFC foresters, and just finished a revamp of the LFC web site - check it out at [www.livingforestcoop.com](http://www.livingforestcoop.com).



see “Manager's Report” **page 3**

## “Manger’s Report” from page 2

Cash flow continues to challenge us as we make the transition to services. Sales of product have been slower than last summer, though we are also not counting on sales or promoting them very much. Still, there is a decided slow down in the local market. This is counter balanced by inquiries coming in from as far away as Taiwan for FSC lumber – but these tend to be for larger quantities than we can deliver any time soon.

Personnel changes will be a big challenge starting in August. As this newsletter went to press, my wife Julie and I had our first child, Caroline Sadie Ray. Lisa Renier Thomas, our forestry intern, will be returning to UW Madison in late August. And Emma Spears, our office manager, will be going to UW Superior for a MS in marine biochemistry starting in September.

Our Annual Meeting will be held this September 20 in conjunction with the statewide Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association meeting at the Sawmill Saloon in Seely, WI. This is the time to help steer the direction of the Living Forest Co-op into the future. We’d like to hear from any members who’d be interested in joining the Board of Directors. If you have any questions about serving on the Board, please don’t hesitate to call. We are a member run business and it is critical that members participate and support the direction we are working in, so please attend. Together we will see our way through the challenges at hand toward realizing our vision of sustainable forestry in a sustainable economy. ✨

## Co-op Survey Update

By Kris Tiles

*UW-Madison student*

Living Forest Cooperative members recently received a survey from the University of Wisconsin. The survey was written and created by a professor and myself at UW-Madison. The purpose of the survey is to explore the relationship between forestry cooperatives and private woodland owners.

In return for participating, the Cooperative will receive a summary of the survey results and some descriptive information on the members who gave us permission to share details of their forested land and their primary interests in their forests. This survey was funded by a McIntire-Stennis grant for graduate students. LFC is making no financial investment in this survey.

At this point, 77% of the members have responded to the survey. This is an impressive turnout, though we are really hoping everyone will participate. From the respondents so far, we know that about 4,500 acres of forestland are under the guidance of LFC. 21% of respondents have harvested timber on their property in the past 10 years. 40% said their land associated with LFC was their primary residence.

This summer I am living near Washburn and working with LFC thanks to a grant from the Ford Foundation. This time will be used to complete the survey, finish my research and help LFC with administrative and educational services. The remaining research will involve interviews with about 10 members, so you may be hearing from me again. If you have any further questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at or (715) 373-5650. ✨

## in stock

### FSC Plywood SALE

4x8 3/4" CDX from FSC Certified Mill  
\$14.00, \$10.00 for members

### Aspen Paneling

in 5", 6.25" and 7" widths  
\$1.75/sq

**Lumber:** White Oak (FSC rot resistant), White Birch, Ash  
\$1.00/bf

**Aspen Flooring** clear white wood, harder than pine and won't yellow  
\$2.10/sq

### White Ash Flooring

\$4.50/sq

### Hard Maple Flooring SALE

\$2.50/sq for members

**Black Locust** rot resistant posts, lumber & decking special order

### LIVING FOREST COOPERATIVE BOARD

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### GENERAL MANAGER

Charly Ray (715) 682-0007

*Living Forest News is a publication of the Living Forest Cooperative.*

**Design:** Jill O'Neill · Graphically Put



# Maple Syrup Field Day

WHEN THE TIME OF YEAR COMES round with the sap rising and the snow melting, there is an insistent urge to take one's part in the process—to tap the trees, to gather the sap, to boil out the sweet syrup of the maple

*The Maple Sugar Book*  
Helen & Scott Nearing

**By Mike Ryan**  
LFC Member

April 12, 2003, Highbridge

On a chilly overcast Saturday, 15 members and friends of the Living Forest Co-op met at Hermit Creek Farm near Highbridge to enjoy a demonstration of a small scale commercial maple syrup operation by hosts Steven, Landis and Kaleigh Spickerman. As one of the few certified organic maple syrup producers in the state, Hermit Creek Farm must follow specific guidelines. They sell their syrup through several outlets including the bulk syrup found at the Chequamegon Food Co-op in Ashland.

The tour began with a walk through the grove of sugar maples, or sugar bush, essential to any operation. Steven explained how sugar maple trees (also known as hard maple because of their dense wood and as rock maples because they thrive on rocky shelves) will provide different levels and quality of sap, at different times, depending on the facing slope. Due to temperature and other weather factors south facing trees flow earlier but provide a smaller quantity than trees on north facing slopes.

Using a hand drill passed down from his grandfather Steven demonstrated how to tap a tree pointing out that with proper technique trees will not only show no ill effects from the process. Steve will only tap trees greater than 12" in diameter and will not exceed two taps on trees that are over 20" in diameter.

This year proved to be very good conditions for sap production; a very

cold winter with deep ground freeze and a spring thaw with good a freeze and thaw cycle during the day. Last year, the Spickermans produced 18 gallons of syrup and this year they made over 80 gallons.

The Spickermans use a gravity flow tubing system to move the sap from the tapping buckets to the 400-gallon stainless steel milk tank used to store the sap prior to production. More than 300 taps flow into buckets that must be regularly emptied into large plastic cans that feed into the blue (to allow UV penetration to suppress bacteria) tubing.

From the holding tank the sap then flows to the "Leader King" evaporator where the sap is boiled carefully down to syrup over a wood fired hearth. The sap bubbles and boils through a series of baffles as the specific gravity changes with the loss of water. As the sap really gets boiling a quick dip with a balsam bow immediately makes the foam disappear.

Living Forest Co-op general manager, Charly Ray, had passed this trick on to Steven. As Charly explained, "I have been sugaring with the Indians at Red Cliff for the past few years and they have taught me a few things." He added that there are many ways to make syrup ranging from a kettle over a fire to the more controlled procedures used at Hermit Creek Farm.

When the syrup reaches the correct temperature (about seven degrees above boiling) and with the proper water content as measured by a hygrometer, the syrup is moved to another stove for finishing and filtering. Steven pointed out that weather

conditions will influence the whole process and noted that the previous day, which had been much less humid, the sap had boiled to syrup much faster than on this day, and with much less steam.

The day's activities concluded with a tasting of the raw sap and the final syrup product as well as some other maple delicacies including maple candy and maple fudge. As the sun finally came out there were many contented smiles. As the Nearings said many years ago, "Sugar makers sugar because they like to." 🍁

## IN THE SUGAR BUSH



Steve Spickerman demonstrates the proper tapping of a maple sugar tree with a bit and brace



Coop member Sam Atkins inspects "the boil" of maple sap as it transforms into syrup in the evaporator.

## “Logging” from page 1

Approximately 7,000 acres of land are owned by members who share a goal of restoring the ecological stability of forest properties while allowing for wood harvest and production.

Wood sold through the Cooperative has a potential for higher return, Ray said, due to the possibility of it being certified as sustainably managed, a label similar to one given to “organic” food.

One such wood-product label is the SmartWood forestry product certification, boasted by some flooring and furniture companies, and even the Martin Guitar Company and the Gibson Musical Instruments Company.

Certification and use of the label gives forest managers who adopt sustainable forestry practices opportunities for commercial incentives, according to SmartWood.

The organization, headquartered in Vermont and started by The Rainforest Alliance, certifies products originating from “well-managed” forests. Wood for these products might come from a sustainably managed natural forest, plantation, large commercial operation or small-scale community project.

The Living Forest Cooperative supports such certifications and works to collectively market wood with landowners who would like to receive a maximum return on managed forest products.

The local Cooperative is still in the process of development, Ray explained to the field day group.

“We’re learning as we go,” he said. 🍁

For more information about SmartWood, visit <http://www.smartWood.org>

## HORSE LOGGING BASICS



Jacob Obletz and his trusty sidekick Blue introduced the workshop attendees to the basics of caring for draft horses and using horses to haul logs out of the forest.

## MFL Changes in the Works

The state’s tax law for enrolled forest land, Managed Forest Law, is facing proposed changes. The changes will make the program a bit more expensive for land owners but will enable the program to remain intact. The following is a partial list of the proposed changes. If you have questions on how these changes will impact you, please contact the DNR, your state representative, or the Co-op.

1. Raise the application fee from \$100 to \$300. (Currently it costs \$100 to apply without a plan and \$20 to apply with an approved plan.)
2. Require certified plan writers to prepare all MFL plans. (At present anyone can prepare a plan, but it must be approved by a DNR forester.)
3. Move application deadline to July 1 (18 months before effective date).
4. Include a penalty/ fine, of \$250, for failure to complete mandatory practices.
5. Exempt landowners from paying a yield tax for harvests in the first 5 years. (The current law requires a 5% yield tax on any merchantable timber cut from land.)
6. Create a withdrawal fee, of \$300, in addition to the withdrawal tax.
7. Increase the limit of land that maybe be classified as “closed” from 80 acres per municipality to 160 acres.
8. Increase the taxes paid on open and closed land. Value will be based on 5% and 20% of the statewide average property tax evaluation for wetlands and forestlands.
9. Increase the MFL transfer fee from \$20 to \$100. 🍁

# Catching up with SWC

By Kris Tiles

*UW-Madison student*

THIS SPRING, our friends at Sustainable Woods Cooperative in Spring Green, WI made the tough decision to close their doors. The Cooperative was founded in 1998, and has been the model to which many other organizations have looked to for advice. This continues to be the case as Warren Gaskill, President of the Board, continues to share their lessons learned with other co-ops, supporting organizations and other interested parties. This past April a collaboration of forestry co-ops from WI and MN met to discuss their current plans and to hear what Warren had to say.

In the beginning SWC's goals were quite simple: improve degraded forests by adding value to wood removed, use FSC certification to market wood products, improve economic conditions in rural communities. This looked good enough for 154 members to join with a combined 20,000 acres under management.

Warren explained three situations that made things difficult from the start. One, certified wood comes from certified forests by certified loggers and into certified mills. The process of certification takes time and money. Two, one needs to market in order to sell a product. Again this takes time to find niches and money for advertising. Three, SWC failed to make a strong capital drive in the beginning, and cash started to run out early.

A seemingly saving grace came along in the form of a USDA grant to help in the value-added efforts. The primary focus of the grant money was market development. They researched the areas open for a niche market of FSC certified wood and created slogans presenting the idea of "good wood". The ads were eventually on public radio, newspapers and even a nationally distributed magazine. The success of this campaign was tremendous; they started receiving orders from across the country. One problem, they still didn't have the inventory to fill these orders. They had promised too much, too early.

There were other constraints that also arose through this time. The co-op had 154 members to whom they had to deliver education and management services, and very few people on staff to fill these needs on top of the sales/ marketing tasks. An early delivery of a large quantity of non-certified wood caused a back-up in inventory and a debt they were unprepared for. And their general manager was called away to serve in Iraq with short notice.

In March the annual meeting was called to ask the members permission to liquidate SWC's assets, which they agreed to. Since then, SWC has been making efforts to spread the word about lesson learned. Warren's final words of wisdom included the following:

- Value-added efforts are workable, but start slowly using the demand that is already present rather than creating demand
- Unproductive debt will drag you down
- Make sure the Board of Directors represents someone who depends on the forest as a source of income
- Focus on land management services
- Work with other similar organizations to help each other learn

Being the first to try something is never easy and involves making mistakes. LFC and the web of other forestry co-ops are learning from what SWC has experienced.

For more info on Sustainable Woods Cooperative and lessons learned, visit their web site at <http://www.sustainablewoods.com>. 🍀

## co-op news

### A LEADER IN THE WOODS PASSES ON

Many in the forest community were shocked and saddened by the accidental death of Karl Ludzack this past February. Karl was featured in the last newsletter of the Cooperative and was actively working with the Cooperative to market some of his harvest.

In keeping with Karl's leadership with the Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association (WVOA), his wife, Darlene Ludzack will be hosting a demonstration of different logging practices on their family land on Friday, September 19 in conjunction with the WVOA annual meeting.

Following is part of Karl's obituary from the Ashland Daily Press: Karl P. Ludzack, age 74, of Cable, passed away on Tuesday, February 18, 2003. Karl Phillip Ludzack was born June 8, 1928 in Cable, the son of Gustav and Magdalena (Potzner) Ludzack. He graduated from Cable High School and then went to work on his parents' farm and for Carl Rasmussen as a logger. He was united in marriage to Darlene DeBoer on October 15, 1954. Together Karl and Darlene purchased their own farm and raised beef cattle while Karl continued to work as a logger. Karl started working full time as a logger in the mid 1960s. He served on the County Board from 1974 until 1978 and he also served as the Town of Cable Chairman. He was Chapter Chairman for the Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association in the Cable region.



Karl Ludzack

# Stewardship News

## SARE Grant Awarded to LFC Members

A \$9,994 grant from the USDA "Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education" program will go towards:

- research on alternatives to managing aspen through clearcutting,
- setting up a demonstration plot and collecting field data from harvests on Liz Quast's land, and
- promoting sustainable forestry through out newsletters and field days for the next two years.

## First FSC Certified Lumber from LFC Lands

With the recent approval from the Community Forestry Resource Center, the lumber harvested by horses from Charly Ray's land this winter is officially the first FSC certified lumber produced by the Co-op. Brian Seago (also a Co-op member) has dried the 9,000 board feet of lumber at his kiln. The wood will be marketed through the Co-op with a 20% commission for the Co-op.

## WVOA Annual Meeting in Our Backyard

The Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association is a non-profit landowner education organization that has much in common with the Co-op. This is a major event and as many LFC members are also WVOA members, we are holding our annual meeting nearby in Seely to encourage attendance at both. The WVOA event is for WVOA members only. To learn more about WVOA visit their website at [www.wisconsinwoodlands.org](http://www.wisconsinwoodlands.org)

## Time to Work in Your Woods?

The Co-op is actively working with about two dozen members to develop forest stewardship plans, implement timber harvests, or assist with understanding and enrolling in the state managed forest law program. If you are wondering if it is time to do some work on your land or what we can help with, give us a call 715-682-0007

## September Field Day – Working Forest Conservation Easements

On September 6 at 9 am, LFC charter member Liz Quast will host a field day at her home in Benoit to discuss her conservation easement. The Bayfield Regional Conservancy is taking the lead setting up this event and will share their expertise on conservation easements as a mechanism to protect land, provide tax benefits to landowners, and protect future forestry through "working forest" easements. Come dressed for a walk in the woods. Liz's forest is along County F, 1.5 miles south of US 2, about 11 miles west of Ashland. 🌲

## Thank you...

To **members** who responded to the spring capital assessment to raise \$4,300

To **Bud and Karen Theil** for donating Karen's old computer

To **John Shea** for donating a fax machine

To **Craig Mealman** for donating an office desk

# member services

<b>Forestry Services</b>	<b>\$35/hr</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• stewardship plans</li> <li>• FSC Certification compliance</li> <li>• ecological assessments</li> <li>• timber harvest administration</li> <li>• tree marking</li> </ul>	
<b>FSC Certification</b>	<b>\$50/yr</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• up to 500 acres, through CFRC</li> </ul>	
<b>Marking Paint</b>	<b>\$5/qt</b>
<b>End Coat (log sealer)</b>	<b>\$10/gal</b>
<b>Mileage</b>	<b>\$0.36/mi + .5 travel time</b>
<b>General Labor Tree Planting</b>	<b>\$15/hr</b>
<b>Flat Bed Truck Rental</b>	<b>\$30/day</b>
<i>For members on ins. policy</i>	
<b>Delivery</b>	<b>\$35/hr</b>
<i>(driver and truck)</i>	
<b>Lumber Processing</b>	<b>\$35/hr</b>
<i>(Contractor charges billed directly)</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sawing, kiln drying, milling through contractors</li> <li>• re-sale processing through LFC saves landowner sales tax</li> <li>• inventory management in warehouse</li> <li>• FSC Chain-of-Custody management</li> </ul>	
<b>Warehouse Storage</b>	<b>\$0.38/sq/mo</b>
<b>Forklift</b>	<b>\$20 min/ \$50/hr</b>
<i>(In warehouse/contractor)</i>	
<b>Commissioned Marketing</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• logs <b>10%</b></li> <li>• lumber or value added products <b>20%</b></li> </ul>	
<b>Non-Member Surcharge</b>	<b>20%</b>

Living Forest Cooperative · May 2003





LIVING FOREST COOPERATIVE

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**SEPT 6:** Working Forest Conservation Easements Field Day At Liz Quast's property in Benoit, WI  
**SEPT 20:** LFC Annual Meeting At the Sawmill Saloon in Seely, WI · 4 - 8 p.m.

**CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

- Aug 23 & Sept 6:** Native Seed Collecting Field Trips  
Meet at Northland College in Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute parking lot at 9 am. Call 682-1223 to register or for more information.
- Sept 1:** Wisconsin Forest Landowner Grant Program application deadline  
Grants for plans, planting, and other woods work. Applications funded on a first come, first served basis. Contact your local DNR forester or LFC for an application.
- Sept 6:** LFC EVENT! Working Forest Conservation Easements  
At Liz Quast's property, Benoit, WI
- Sept 10:** Natural Resource Considerations in Community Planning  
At the Bad River Casino in Odanah by the UW-Ext.  
Session will run all day. Contact Sarah Treholt at 715-685-2672.
- Sept 15-16:** River Restoration Rehabilitation  
At the Great Lakes Visitor Center from 8-5 both days.  
A UW-Extension event. Contact Sarah Treholt at 715-685-2672.
- Sept 15:** Tree Felling and Chain Saw Use Workshop in Ashland, WI  
Cost is \$20, Registration deadline Sept. 5  
contact DNR for more information: 373-6165.
- Sept 20:** LFC ANNUAL MEETING  
At Sawmill Saloon in Seely, WI · 4 - 8 p.m.
- Sept 18-21:** WWOA Annual Meeting  
At Telemark lodge, Cable, WI. Will include several tours and workshops.  
Visit the WWOA website for details <http://www.wisconsinwoodlands.org>
- First Week in Oct:** Seedling order forms mailed out by State Nurseries.  
Orders are filled on a first come, first served basis. Contact Hayward State Nursery at 715-634-2717, or visit them online at:  
<http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/forestry/nursery/>
- Oct 18:** WWOA-Northwest Chapter Meeting  
Contact Tom DeWitt at 715-6353733.

**wanted**

**BOARD MEMBERS!**

We need new faces on the LFC Board.

Accounting, forestry, business, and law experience are all helpful.

Become a part of our dynamic growing business.

Contact the LFC office for more information.  
715-682-0007



Living Forest Coop volunteers and staff squeeze into the office: (L to R) Kris Tiles, Lisa Thomas, Charly Ray, and Emma Spears.

[www.livingforestcoop.com](http://www.livingforestcoop.com)