

## A Swan Song for Canada Yew?

By Jim Meeker

Canada yew, or ground hemlock as it is sometimes called, is an understory evergreen shrub native to northeastern United States and Canada, and a good example of a species that was much more common on the landscape prior to the cutover. It is a spreading, long-lived, but slow growing shrub that is quite shade tolerant. Canada yew is related to the Pacific yew, which is known for its medicinal properties.

It is apparent that yew has experienced local extinctions in many areas across our northern landscape. It shares with white cedar the characteristic of being very sought after by white-tailed deer (and is often appropriately called deer candy).

Wisconsin ecologists in the 1930s and 1940s with names like Curtis and Leopold talked about the demise of this once ubiquitous evergreen shrub, and its literal translation from the Ojibwa language (ne'bagandag'), translates roughly as that which sprawls about everywhere. The cutover fires were the first hit on this once common shrub. For example, several researchers have showed that yew is very uncommon inside the boundaries of the 1871 Peshtigo fire, which covered a large area in northeastern Wisconsin.

There is a 10-acre stand of hardwoods on my south 40 near Gurney that is dominated by 70- to 80-year-old red and sugar maples. The area is poorly drained and "hummocky" to the point that it's hard to walk there in the spring without getting wet. With some detective work Northland College students and I have determined that it previously had a considerable white cedar component. Charred cedar stumps tell the story of fire in this wet area after the initial logging.

It is amazing how widespread the cutover fires were. When old stumps are still recognizable, it is seldom when we don't see signs of fire. A closer inspection of our red maple "swamp" revealed a few small sprigs of Canada yew near the perimeter of the stand, in slightly better drained locations, none of which protrude out of the snow. There have been better times for this once

common shrub.

One of the few areas where Canada yew still retains its former dominance is on the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore. Here one can see the interaction among deer (or their absence), logging, and fire, and how these factors influence the present day distribution of yew.

Some of the small, far islands such as Twin and Devils do not have a significant fire, deer browse, or logging history. Yew growth on these sites is an amazing, awe-inspiring experience (until one tries to walk through it; then the impression changes somewhat).

Our studies with the Park Service indicate that yew covers 60 to 70 percent of the ground surface in many cases, and grows to heights exceeding eight feet tall. The abundance of Canada yew on Outer Island, though less dramatic than described above, is telling. Outer Island is much larger than the previously mentioned islands, and it experienced a major post-logging fire in the 1930s that left the southern half of the island in a "smoldering ruin" (according to a visiting dignitary whose comments may have delayed the conversion of this area to a National Park by 40 years). Here Canada yew survives in scattered colonies, never greater than waist high.

Much of the northern half of Outer was logged but did not burn (logging continued up to the 1950s), and here,



Canada yew

# Manager's Report

By Charly Ray, General Manager

"You're a non-profit, right?" is a query I hear frequently as the head honcho at LFC.

"No, just not-profitable—yet," is my reply—still. And most of our members seem to understand it is reasonable as we get this cutting edge green business sorted out.

Truth is we are doing the good work of going against the grain and it doesn't always pay really well. But it is starting to have rewards and make an impact. This past summer, efforts by LFC led to relief for some members from DNR penalties for drought-killed plantings that had been cost shared (see article on page 3). In July, a special meeting was held with local and Madison DNR staff to address progressive forestry within the constraints of DNR programs and policies. And new DNR guidelines on aspen management for conversion to pine or hardwoods (rather than clearcutting for more aspen) are due out soon—in part created in response to pressure from LFC and our members.

This fall I was lucky enough to attend a workshop on Ecological Forestry at the Menominee Indian Reservation (known worldwide for sustainable forestry) organized by the Conservation Forestry Network with national leaders in the concept of ecological forestry. I shared the work we are doing on LFC member lands and discussed our approach to forestry. It was clear to me that we are DOING the work of ecological forestry—NOW.

I was struck by a difference between the much abused terms "sustainable" forestry and "ecological" forestry. Sustainable forestry often describes a productive forest with a nod to other forest "values and functions." Ecological forestry is of course interested in production from the forest, but recognizes and seeks to maximize the ecological function of the forest as well. This might mean providing flood control for a stream or dens for pine marten or rotting logs for newts.

At several sites we visited on the Menominee Reservation, this was driven home to me. The tribe has a strong land ethic and manages its forest sustainably—but I argued often times not ecologically. On several sites, the tribe chose to maximize the economic productivity of the forest at the expense of ecological values that some of our members might favor. It was good "sustainable" forestry, but not what I would call "ecological" forestry.

I think it will pay if we can stick with it. The recent downturn in the market sheds light on how this might work (see articles on pages 4 and 5). For decades forest managers have emphasized even-aged management for aspen in the Northwoods, and record high prices for aspen in 2006 seemed to validate this. Now aspen prices have crashed back to earth and mixed low quality hardwoods often bring a higher price per cord. Most of our current aspen lands could be managed for a mixed-species forest (especially for white pine, red oak, and red maple) with different age classes. This could provide greater ecological function while giving landowners more products to sell over time—not to mention a better looking forest today and tomorrow.

At the Coop we are diversifying our work and staff in order to better serve our members and achieve profitability. This past year saw our first major foray into contracting on state and federal lands with tree lifting at the State Nursery in Hayward and spaying deer repellent on seedlings in the Chequamegon National Forest. We are now growing our largest income area of forestry services at about 20 percent over last fiscal year. With Tom Wyse joining us as staff forester we now have our "dream team" in place. We are looking forward to a good year ahead, so give us a call if you are interested in getting to work on your woods.

## *Double Your Money! \$7,500 Investment Challenge*

LFC members have invested \$2,500 in capital since last summer when a generous LFC member offered to match up to \$10,000 in capital stock or donations. So another \$7,500 remains to be matched. This is a great chance to really help the Coop and see your money go twice as far.

We have built this business on a shoestring budget and with lots of help from lots of members. Our employees have often gone above and beyond to help out the business. Most recently staff agreed to forgo holiday pay to save the Coop a few thousand dollars a year.

The year ahead will require us to invest in training for Tom Wyse as he gets up to speed as our new forester. Tom is picking things up quickly, but there is a lot that goes into being a knowledgeable land steward so we need to be ready to cover the time it will take. For example, the DNR does not offer Certified Plan Writer training until next fall so we will have to pick up the cost of Tom Salzmann, our contract forester, to write these plans until we are able to do them in-house next fall.

## Staff Matters

### Thomas Wyse

Greetings Coop members. I am excited to be working for LFC and living back in the Midwest where my family is from. I grew up in northeast Iowa, and I have a B.S. in forestry from Michigan Tech and a M.S. in forest ecology from Ohio State.



I am most recently from Monroe, Washington, which is about an hour northeast of Seattle, where I worked as a forester for the Department of Natural Resources. My responsibilities included timber sales, mapping, large scale (10,000-acre) harvest planning in mixed Douglas fir, western red cedar and western hemlock forests.

It is nice to be back in the hardwoods and pines. Ashland is a great town, and I look forward to meeting coop members and becoming a part of the community. LFC is a terrific organization, and I am enthusiastic about becoming a part of and contributing to it.

## firewood field day

Let's talk firewood! LFC will host a field day all about firewood—making it, using it, and all you ever wanted to know about the firewood business. Join us at 10:00 a.m. Saturday, April 19 at Ken Compton's firewood yard outside of Ashland. A representative from Multitec will demonstrate a portable firewood processing machine and Ken will fire up his big processor. Steve Pierce from Stove and Upholstery Works will discuss woodstoves and woodstove safety. Living Forest Coop will provide light refreshments and coffee.

Ken Compton's wood yard is nine miles west of Ashland off US Hwy. 2. Turn south on Tomich Rd. and go ¼ mile to the firewood yard, #65565 Tomich Rd. Ken's phone number is 746-2377. Contact LFC at 682-0007 with any questions.

## Tree Planting Season Coming!

Though the snow is piled high, it is already time to think of next summer's tree planting season. After two years of tough droughts that wiped out many plantings, especially in open fields, LFC will be using more seedling "plugs" to try increasing survival in plantings. Most of our plantings have been "bare root" and purchased through the DNR by landowners who had us pick up the trees and plant them. Bare root seedlings are less expensive, but with no soil for a buffer, the roots are very susceptible to drying out. Plug seedlings are also alive and may be planted at most any time, though spring is best. You can even winter over plugs if necessary; just keep them watered until it freezes.

### Order Soon

The DNR nursery is a top choice for landowners for affordable seedlings, but check their inventory on the web (follow the link to DNR Forestry from the LFC home page) or call because they are already sold out of some species. LFC is organizing a bulk purchase of plug seedlings from private nurseries. Call us if you are interested in joining.

### Cost Sharing Available

Landowners should take advantage of the WFLGP grant program to get 50 percent cost sharing on tree planting. This program through the DNR is well funded and the next funding date is May 1. Note that you may purchase trees but not do any work prior to being funded, and by accepting cost sharing you are committing to maintain your planting for 10 years. Contact LFC for more information or help applying.

## Drought Fallout: LFC Stands Up for Members

Intervention by LFC recently helped three Coop member landowners who faced repaying cost-share grants because of failed tree plantings due to multiple years of extreme drought. The landowners had received cost-share grants under the Wisconsin Landowner Grant Program (WFLGP), administered by the state Department of Natural Resources, to help defray the costs of tree planting on their private lands. The plantings failed due to drought conditions so extreme as to be recognized with a gubernatorial State of Emergency and federal disaster designation for two years in a row. Under WFLGP terms, replanting after a drought or "factors beyond the landowner's control" **is required**; if not done, the state may seek reimbursement of the grant money.

One local DNR ranger informed LFC that if the second planting fails, the landowner becomes responsible for **both the original cost-share and the subsequent cost-share**, and so on for up to a 10-year period that the grant requires the plantings to be maintained.

Given those restraints, LFC advised members not to accept cost sharing for this year's plantings that failed due to drought—essentially, advising members to limit their losses and pull out of the WFLGP.

LFC General Manager Charly Ray wrote to the DNR on behalf of three coop members whose initial plantings had failed and who were reluctant to replant for fear that continued summer droughts would cause failure again. The letter requested reconsideration of the grant repayment burden in these cases.

As a result of this letter, the WDNR Forestry Division approved the request for reconsideration and allowed the three landowners to "walk away from their grants without having to repay the State." In addition, the DNR clarified that it is **not** their policy to hold landowners liable for the multiple cost-shared efforts to establish a planting.

The LFC letter also requested that the State clarify the language describing the obligations faced by landowners who accept WFLGP grants, in particular clarifying the meaning of "maintenance" expected for the 10 years following the grant award.

One interpretation of maintenance, for instance, is that deer-browse protection tubes must be visited and kept upright for two years.

## \$570,000 for Woodland Owners

Looking for assistance in protecting and enhancing your forested lands, prairies, and waters? The Wisconsin Forest Landowner Grant Program (WFLGP) has \$570,000 in grant money available to help you do just that. The program allows qualified landowners to be reimbursed up to 50 percent of allowable costs.

### Eligibility:

Private landowners in Wisconsin are eligible for WFLGP funding if they own at least 10 contiguous acres of non-industrial private forest but not more than 500 acres within Wisconsin. Applicants must have a forest stewardship plan in place on their land or be applying to have one prepared through the WFLGP. Plans prepared for the Managed Forest Law program qualify. WFLGP funding granted to landowners can only be cost-shared for noncommercial practices.

The next funding date is May 1. Call the Living Forest Cooperative at 866-995-9663 for an application or more information.

# Downturn in the Timber Industry

Regardless of whether it is part of a cyclical or long-term trend, timber industry officials are in no doubt about the slump on stumps.

"It's terrible; it's the worst I've ever seen since I went into business in 1972," said Bob Brevak of Frank Brevak and Sons Trucking in Ashland, which also sells timber.

High gas prices and a sagging market nationwide for home construction have crept into northern Wisconsin, with companies like Louisiana-Pacific (LP) curtailing production of wood products needed for homes that aren't being built.

Optimism surrounds the prospect of increased biomass production for fuel and energy, but the overriding obstacle is fuel costs that often balance out or eliminate the revenue from limbs and other slash typically ground into chips.

Brevak's company is one of many that supply wood, primarily aspen, to LP's Hayward facility. The company, headquartered in Nashville, Tenn., announced in August that it would be cutting back on production of its oriented strand board (OSB), or chipboard, at the facility.

LP announced last October that it was permanently closing its Quebec facility, but LP spokeswoman Mary Cohn said it's unlikely to impact the Hayward mill.

For the past two years or so, however, suppliers like Brevak say even when companies like LP, StoraEnso and Plum Creek are buying their wood, the price has "rocketed down."

"The prices, when they were open, were so poor, it's been down to where they were in the '90s," Brevak said. Even though he has a contract with LP, "What good is it if they're not open? You get a contract, but it doesn't mean anything. They can lower the price, they can quit taking in, whatever..." he added.

Carl Peters, who owns about 1,000 acres between Mason and Herbster, said companies like SAPPI in Cloquet, Minn., paid \$113 per cord two years ago. "Right now, the hardwood I've been selling—and that's to StoraEnso—I've been getting \$72 (per cord) for

it," he said. "Most of the wood that I've seen in the last two years has dropped about one-third in price."

After dropping more than \$30 per cord over the past few years, a difference of even a couple of dollars is significant. Brevak, for example, said he received about \$78 per cord from LP, and around \$75 from his current customers. That's a difference of about \$5,500 for Peters, who said he delivers about 1,500 cords of wood per year. It wouldn't cut so deep if gasoline prices also matched those of the 1990s. Between hauling sugar beets in Minnesota and scrap railroad ties in Texas and Indiana, Brevak said he spends about \$4,000 each day on diesel fuel.

A prime example of the state of the industry, he said, is the fact that he can make more money hauling those scrap railroad ties than with logs fresh from the forest.

"We just don't see where it's going to get that much better," Brevak said. "Some mills are actually short of wood, but they won't budge on the price."

Peters also said a lack of reconstruction following hurricanes in the south is still dragging down the industry, and LP in particular.

But this could represent the low point in a cycle, said Tom Pikkila, forestry ranger for the state Department of Natural Resources.

"The forestry industry and forestry markets are generally cyclical, and traditionally there's been ups and downs," he said. "In the last two, three years, we've been in a downward cycle and things came down quite a bit from where they were a few years ago. That's just kind of the way that market is."

## Not Bio-Massive Yet

There's hope on the horizon that energy from biomass material—in this case, limbs and other slash from logging



An aspen stand: hardly worth cutting?

operations—would provide a market for what is normally left behind in the forest.

Two main drawbacks, officials said, are the cost of fuel and the scarcity of places that process biomass into fuel, like Xcel Energy's Bay Front plant in Ashland, a mill in Park Falls, and Future Wood in Hayward.

Brevak said that right now, gathering up the timber remains is more of a courtesy. "The price is so low that you can't actually pay anybody for it. You just clean it up, like if somebody's cleaning up a lot," he said. "There really isn't enough to truck it up there."

And there's hardly enough money to pay for trucking it there, either. Peters said that, at about \$3.35 per gallon, diesel fuel is \$2 per gallon more expensive than two years ago.

Transportation costs are part of negotiations between Plum Creek and Xcel Energy, as well, as the two companies look to take greater advantage of Plum Creek's supply of biomass, said Lynn Wilson, Plum Creek's general manager for the Lakes States region. But she added that Plum Creek would like to fill Xcel's Ashland plant with wood chips if Xcel would fill the gas tank.

If fuel costs can be resolved, Wilson said the company estimates it has about six tons of wood chips to pull out of every acre, "and that's leaving some behind, because you don't always get everything."

—This article was adapted from a story written by Chad Dally, appearing in the Nov. 8, 2007, issue of the Ashland Daily Press.

# Local Markets Developing for Low-Grade Wood

Recent developments in northwest Wisconsin should create significant local markets for low-grade wood to be used as fuel.

Xcel Energy's plans to keep its Bayfront power plant in Ashland compliant with stricter pollution control standards should result in buying more locally grown wood products, according to a company spokesman.

Changes in the federal clean air regulations will require a significant reduction by January 2009 in nitrous oxide (NOX) and other pollutants emitted by power plants. Xcel's plans to spend \$7.7 million this year on equipment will cut Bayfront's NOX emission from 0.5 pounds per million BTUs to 0.1 pound, said Tina Bell, an Xcel environmental engineer.

Waste tires, wood, natural gas and coal are burned in two of Bayfront's five boilers, and because wood produces less NOX emissions than coal, Xcel plans to buy more waste wood after the new pollution control equipment is installed, said David Donovan, Xcel's manager of regulatory policy.

"We plan to burn as much biomass as we can, as much as the control technology allows us to do that," Donovan said. "We won't pay more to burn wood than to burn coal."

The decision to use more waste wood at Bayfront was made after Xcel commissioned a study that showed there was sufficient waste wood within 60 miles of Ashland to operate the 92-year-old plant on wood at a higher level. Locally grown wood is as cost-effective as coal and emits far less sulfur dioxide, which is also targeted by federal regulations for reductions next year.

Just how much more wood Xcel would be buying after the new pollution control equipment is installed by Fall 2008 isn't yet known, but Bayfront's boilers fueled by biomass account for 40 megawatts of the plant's 72 megawatt output.

Two new wood pellet fuel facilities under development in

the region should further increase the demand for low-grade wood.

A Mountain Iron, Minn., company announced in January that a \$7.5 million wood pellet fuel producing company to be known as "Superior Wood Products LLC" is to be built in Bayfield County near Ino, about 14 miles west of Ashland.

The new facility will produce some 100,000 tons of premium wood pellets annually at the site of the former Forest Fuels operation. Forest Fuels, which also manufactured wood pellet fuel, has been out of business for a number of years.

According to Tink Birchem, president and CEO of both Valley Forest Wood Products and Mountain Timber Wood Products, several factors led to the decision to place the pelletizing operation at the site, including the fact that it had formerly been used to manufacture fuel pellets.

"The building is set up very nicely for me to bring in equipment and set it up," she said. "The fuel stock timber in the area is great."

Birchem said the plant is designed to produce 100,000 tons of pellets each to ensure that the supply of wood in the area would be adequate to supply the plant. She said the facility would provide a ready market for wood that was of little economic value elsewhere, including beetle-damaged pine, tamarack and ash.

"Taking into consideration that a plant this size will use over 200,000 tons of wood residue and logs provided by local loggers, the great economic impact this mill will have on our local economy becomes easy to realize," Birchem said.

Birchem said the market for pellet-burning stoves is rapidly expanding because of their low cost of operation, clean burning properties that produce little ash, and environmental

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## Sustainability and Low Grade Wood

By Charly Ray

As oil resources get more expensive we can expect a greater demand for wood as a fuel—and the above article shows this time may be at hand. This can cut two ways, both for and against ecological forest management.

On the one hand, it is great to have markets to sell volumes of low grade wood. At the Kickapoo Woods Coop in southwest Wisconsin, they have no markets for pulp wood to move volumes of low-grade wood. Their landowners struggle to improve their forests because the markets will not buy the low-grade wood that comes from thinning—you can only sell so much local firewood.

Many LFC timber sales are in lower quality forests and only produce pulpwood in the first harvest. On some lands, we will not see more than pulpwood produced in our lifetime. Often times the work of ecological forestry calls for a thinning or removal of areas with small diameter, low quality wood. Without markets, this work would not get done, or would have to come out of the landowner's pocket.

Any time we turn a natural resource into a commodity, especially energy, we create an economic incentive to abuse the resource. Discussions are underway at the state level and among resource managers on what standards will be applied to biomass harvesting to ensure it is managed well. With next to no regulations restricting how private lands are managed, a strong biomass market will tempt some to liquidate their forests for short term gain.

It may be that biomass markets come to replace the role of a declining paper pulpwood market over time and become part of an ecologically minded forest management. LFC staff and board members continue to monitor and participate in the policy discussions at local and state levels.



Wood pellets: energy source from low grade wood and wood waste.

# Get Certified!

Chances are if you're reading this newsletter, you're concerned about the future of forests in general and/or your forestland in particular. But short of earning a degree in forestry, how are you to gauge the health of a forest, or make wise decisions about its management?

The answer is independent certification, a process of applying recognized standards for forest management that ensure forests or woodlands are being well managed to meet long-term goals.

One organization that has designed, such certification is the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), an international, independent, non-profit, membership organization. FSC has created a system of independent forest inspection and certification to assure landowners, consumers, and others that forests certified under this system are well-managed and products from them are harvested in an ecologically, economically, and socially responsible manner. Forest certification is completely voluntary and promotes continual improvement in the practice of sustainable forestry.

Groups like the Community Forestry Resource Center (CFRC) actually carry out FSC certification for interested landowners.

If you own very little forestland, you may think certification may be too cumbersome or expensive to pursue. To address this concern, CFRC has developed an "umbrella" certification program for groups of small forest owners—Living Forest Coop members, for example. In fact, CFRC works closely with LFC to provide low-cost certification to Coop members.

In addition to guiding and documenting good management practices, certification also provides landowners a tool for marketing wood products. In fact, local markets are now beginning to favor FSC-certified wood. Ultimately the hope is to provide a premium to landowners for certified wood.

As CFRC enters its next five-year certification period, there is no better time to consider certifying your forest! If you're interested, the first step is to get in touch with LFC by calling 715-682-0007. If you would like to read up on CFRC's program, most of its certification materials are available online at [www.forestrycenter.org](http://www.forestrycenter.org).



## FSC Reviews Forest Management at the Coop

The group that provides CFRC with our Umbrella Certificate, SmartWood, is responsible for carrying out audits of the program. As CFRC reaches its five-year anniversary of providing FSC certification services for individually-owned, private woodlots, it was time to hit the books and the woods for a review and recertification of the Umbrella Certification System and the properties that CFRC certifies.

CFRC's director, Don Arnosti, and program assistant, Katie Rojas-Jahn, bundled up and headed for Ashland, Wisconsin, in late January 2008, where we met with our SmartWood field auditor, and LFC's Charly Ray and Thomas Wyse. The audit was very successful, and we were lucky enough to visit some of the FSC-certified properties.

Throughout the site visits, the auditor was very complimentary of and interested in learning more about the forest management practices used by LFC and its members.



LFC General Manager Charly Ray, at right, accompanies CFRC auditors who made site visits to the Ashland area to review and recertify several LFC member properties.

## Low-Grade Wood

(continued from page 5)

friendliness. "Wood pellet fuel is a limitless, environmentally friendly fuel source that is clean burning and a cost-stable home heating alternative," she said.

In Sawyer County, a proposed wood pellet manufacturing plant on Highway 63 south of Hayward recently got a boost from the Sawyer County Zoning Committee, which voted to approve the 40-acre industrial rezone necessary for building the facility.

According to Great Lakes Renewable Energy General Manager Herb Seeger, the proposed plant will operate on a five-day, 24-hour basis with 21 full-time employees initially.

"We are in the process of attaining our air permit regulated through the DNR," said Seeger. "It's at the state level right now being modeled. We would like to begin construction in March. All the equipment has been ordered. We hope to be in production, realistically, by July," he said.

To keep up with demand, Seeger said there will be about 4,000 semi trailers per year coming in and out of the plant. This includes the delivery of raw timber to the plant and the shipping of finished product.

"(The Sawyer County Development Corporation) is excited about this new industry coming to town; it fits the business model we're trying to bring into the community," said SCDC board president David Thie. "It's a fairly green business and provides full-time jobs that aren't related to the ups and downs of the tourism industry."

—This article was condensed from recent articles that appeared in the Ashland Daily Press and Sawyer County Record.

## Yew (continued from page 1)

even with extensive select cut logging, yew apparently increased in its original cover. All this mind you is in the absence of deer, setting it apart from much of the mainland experience. So the Apostle Islands example shows, indeed, that yew is fire-sensitive, yet in the absence of deer is able to recover from severe select cut logging. (The logging was essentially high grading, or merely taking the best logs without much of a view to the future.)

Although mainland yew never recovered from the cutover fires, and is nowhere as thick as the Apostle examples, up until about a decade ago, remnant dense yew patches were fairly easy to find. One could see that yew distribution was governed both by the behavior of the cutover fires and low winter deer numbers. As I suggested above, yew survived outside the areas that experienced the severe fires.

In the Chequamegon Bay, up to 15 to 25 years ago, we could find extensive Canada yew in the rugged higher elevation parts of the Penokee and Gogebic hills, areas where the advances of the cutover fires were broken up by the topography. There were also some instances where yew survived in river bottoms, again protected from fire. We happened to have had a healthy example of remnant yew on our north 40. These remnant yew patches, in addition to benefiting from some natural fire protection, either: 1) received high snow levels and hence few deer in the winter, 2) were relatively inaccessible to deer (e.g., steep-sided ravines), or 3) had a relatively aggressive local hunting populace that didn't always adhere to the official calendar.

That was then. Within the last decade, however, back-to-back low snow years, accompanied by warmer temperatures encouraged deer numbers to increase even in areas that had experienced low winter populations (and out-of-season hunters faced fines greater than those who drive drunk). As a result, areas that normally had not experienced heavy winter deer browse (on Canada yew, and other conifers like white cedar), saw a considerable browse effect.

How important are these "anomalous low snow years" for the growth of Canada yew? Because it seldom, if ever, gets out of the deer susceptibility range, Canada yew had been kept trimmed back even in the old weather regime (inferred by the lack of expansion or recovery of yew even in low deer areas). It simply does not have a chance today.

So, a few of us have created museum pieces, 'yew zoos' I call them, or deer exclosures, as a means of protecting a few

square feet of the former healthy yew remnants. In 1997-98 we erected twenty 8-ft. by 8-ft. cages and assessed the cover and height of yew both inside and in adjacent similar sized unprotected areas outside of cages. At that time yew cover ranged from 30 to 50 percent in all areas, and yew height was about 25 inches tall. This summer the sites were re-sampled and there are empirical results backing up what we visually surmised.

Over the past decade we witnessed the demise of all yew that was not enclosed, while the protected yew cover increased to a range of 50 to 70 percent, and slightly in height. In general, the story is the same throughout our region with unprotected yew. Where up to a decade ago, field people could point you to thick Canada yew in select areas in the Penokees and river bottoms, all that remains are a few stripped branches and small patches of green 6 to 10 inches above the ground.

So what are the repercussions of the loss of yew?

In general, nature abhors a vacuum, and something is likely moving in. However, yew may be the canary in the coal mine, and already researchers are seeing signs of other losses, including other woody plants and potentially numerous species of wildflowers. All this suggests that it may be prudent to tread lightly on at least some patches of land and that larger exclosures may be necessary in some areas to protect against local extinction.

—Jim Meeker is Associate Professor of Natural Resources and Biology at Northland College and is active in regional conservation issues. He serves on the LFC board.



The effects of deer browse: the upper photo was taken in the Chequamegon National Forest; the lower photo on Outer Island.

## tax tips for forest landowners

Are you a forest landowner puzzling over your 2007 tax forms regarding your timber planting and harvesting activities? You may be surprised to learn that up to \$10,000 of your tree-planting costs are fully tax-deductible. To learn how to handle the tax implications of your timber management activities, cost-share payments, income, and losses, check out the USDA publication "Tax Tips for Forest Landowners for the 2007 Tax Year," available online at [www.na.fs.fed.us/pub/taxtips/taxtips.pdf](http://www.na.fs.fed.us/pub/taxtips/taxtips.pdf).



LIVING FOREST COOPERATIVE

422 Third Street West, Suite 103  
Ashland, WI 54806

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

## calendar

**DEER MANAGEMENT HEARINGS**—Let the DNR know how deer impact your forest!

- **March 13**, Hearings for Ashland and Bayfield counties; 7:00 p.m., Room 306 at WITC, Ashland
- **March 17**, Hearing for Iron County; 8:00 p.m., Mercer Town Hall, Mercer

**NORTHWEST WISCONSIN WOODLAND OWNERS ASSOCIATION FIELD DAYS**

- **March 29**, Drummond Historical Museum; contact Ellie Williams, 715-765-4789. [mngrnd@cheqnet.net](mailto:mngrnd@cheqnet.net)
- **June 14**, Crex Meadows State Wildlife Area, Grantsburg; contact Ben Skinner, 715-349-5358.
- **August 16**, Prairie restoration and food plots, Springbrook, contact Terry Buchman, 715-766-3253, or [TerryL.Buchman@Wisconsin.gov](mailto:TerryL.Buchman@Wisconsin.gov).

### APRIL 19

Firewood Field Day in Ino, 65565 Tomich Road, nine miles west of Ashland.

### MAY 1

Next WFLGP funding date—sign up early (see article on page 3).

## market

### WOOD

#### Firewood

Dry Red Oak, \$90/face cord

#### Horse-Logged Wood

- Hard Maple or Red Oak Flooring, \$4.50/sq.
- White Birch and Red Maple Paneling, \$3.62/sq.

### TOOLS for TREES

LFC will rent or loan forestry tools to members. For example, we recently acquired a pruning saw which can reach up to 12' for pruning red pine or other plantings.

- Brush Saw or Pruning Saw, \$25/day
- Forestry Field Gear (GPS, cruising prism, hip chain for measuring, increment borer) available on loan.
- Tree Marking Paint and other Supplies, cost + 10%

## LFC BOARD

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## LFC STAFF

Charly Ray General Manager

Thomas Wyse Forester

Andy Ledin Forestry Technician

Toll free: 866-995-9663 (WOOD)

Local: 715-682-0007

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