



Partners News

January 2017

Protecting your wooded land for the future is essential to clean water, clean air, wildlife habitat, sustainable wood supply...all things that are necessary to society and health, and that are gone forever if the land is developed.



Contact Us

Partners in Forestry
Landowner Cooperative

6063 Baker Lake Road
Conover, WI 54519

partnersinforesy@gmail.com

715-479-8528

PIF's Website:

www.partnersinforesy.com

PIF Board

- Joe Hovel
- Jim Joyce
- Joe Koehler
- Charlie Mitchell
- Margo Popovich
- John Schwarzmann
- Rod Sharka
- Richard Steffes



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Land O' Lakes Library Program Scheduled: The Upper Wisconsin River Legacy Forest

The Land O' lakes Library will host a program about the Upper Wisconsin River Legacy Forest on **Wednesday, January 18, 2017 at 1:00 PM** in their Community Room.

The Upper Wisconsin River Legacy Forest is a 1042 acre conservation gem positioned next to the town of Land O' Lakes. The forest is privately owned but permanently protected from development, and is open to the public for traditional, non-motorized forest recreational uses such as hiking, skiing, hunting and fishing. This project is a unique partnership between the private landowner and the State of Wisconsin, made possible through the Federal Forest Legacy Program.

This tract of land includes forest habitat housing some very unique flora and fauna, including protected wildlife and rare plants. The riparian corridor, river, wetlands, and forest ecosystems, in harmony with the greater forest landscape, play a critical role in maintaining a healthy environment for all forms of life in the region.

Partners in Forestry Coop (PIF) is proud to be the primary land manager for the Legacy Forest, and welcomes you to learn more. Please join wildlife biologist Ron Eckstein, PIF board member and amateur botanist Rod Sharka, and land manager Joe Hovel at the Land O' Lakes Library on January 18, 2017 at 1:00 PM.

We will showcase habitats for the special plants and animals that make this forest home, and discuss the long term management strategies to maintain these habitats. Management of the forest includes timber harvesting, tree planting with other forms of reforestation, timber stand improvement and protection of non-timber species. We also will discuss how this conservation project came to fruition, how it benefits this community, and how community members can use the land.

PIF ANNUAL MEETING REPORT

By Rod Sharka

For all of you who didn't attend the PIF Annual Meeting on November 5, 2016, I'm here to tell you that you missed a good one.

The morning field trip organized and led by DNR forester Paul Stearns was an informative and eye-opening lesson in red oak regeneration on the nearby Northern Highland - American Legion State Forest. Three sites were visited just south of Boulder Junction and near the state forest headquarters. The sites illustrated the three stages or phases of regeneration harvests and included a preparation cut or commercial thinning, a shelterwood harvest or seeding cut, and a final harvest or overstory removal.



Oak regeneration field trip participants

Each phase or stage focuses on different aspects of the regeneration process with the first harvest or

thinning favoring the retention of the best quality oaks in order to promote crown expansion for maximum acorn production, the second cut or seeding cut is designed to reduce the canopy coverage (down to approximately 40%) to initiate oak seedling establishment and advancement, and the final harvest or the overstory removal is intended to

release the existing oak seedlings from the shade of the remaining overstory trees. However before a final harvest can occur a minimum number of oak seedlings must be present in the understory. Oak seedlings require abundant sunshine and can be outcompeted by more shade-tolerant species if too much crown cover remains after seedling establishment. In each of these harvests shade-tolerant species are often discriminated against in favor of the oaks to eliminate undesirable seed sources. The last stop on tour provided an example of two of the three stages including a seeding cut, and the subsequent overstory removal that was followed by an experimental prescribed fire to the release oak seedlings from undesirable competition such as red maple and ironwood.



Paul Stearns, Jr led the morning field trip.



Post-burn oak regeneration

The red oak regeneration occurring on the 3rd site was impressive to say the least. Paul explained that although there was already a good number of oak regeneration following the shelterwood harvest, the other hardwood species present were more vigorous and were outcompeting the oak. Since red oak is a fire adapted species, most of its early growth occurs below the ground with the development of extensive root systems that allows it to resprout quickly and grow rapidly following a fire. This provides a significant advantage to the oaks and allows them to outcompete or outgrow

their more shade-tolerant competitors. In addition, after re-sprouting, red oak stems appeared straighter with increased root to shoot ratio, as well as having significantly larger stem caliper as compared to their competitors. A big thank you to Paul Stearns for organizing and leading this field trip. It is obvious that he put a lot of effort into making it convenient and exceedingly informative for the participants. It is also evident that he takes a lot of pride in what he does. The Northern Highland is lucky to have him on staff.

After the field trip, participants returned to the Big Bear Hideaway in Boulder Junction where all enjoyed an outstanding, hardy, home cooked luncheon prepared by Mary Hovel, with help from PIF secretary and newsletter editor Margo Popovich and Sara Kemp. Thank you ladies, for your hard work.



Mike Carlson presenting Rod Nilsestuen Award to Joe Hovel

Following the luncheon, a slide presentation was given to highlight all of the prime forest land parcels in Northern Wisconsin and the U.P. that Joe Hovel has been responsible for conserving and protecting from fragmentation and development in the name of Partners in Forestry over the last 15+ years. This was followed by presentation of the Rod Nilsestuen Award for Working Land Preservation, which was presented by Mike Carlson, Executive Director of Gathering Waters Conservancy; Wisconsin's Alliance for Land Trusts. (See photo) Congratulations Joe. This award is obviously very well deserved. Recognition for the selfless land conservation work you have been doing in the name of

Partners in Forestry is an enormous honor and has been long overdue.



Roy D'Antonio

Following a dessert break, we proceeded to our guest speakers who focused on property right issues. First up was Roy D'Antonio, Owner/Manager of Guardian & Associated Title Company located in Ironwood, MI. Roy presented a very thorough but easy to understand overview of the in's and out's of Title Insurance; what it is, what it does, and how it works. Given the number of interesting questions from the audience, this was a very relevant and appreciated topic. Thanks to Roy D'Antonio for his well organized and straight-forward presentation, and his thoughtful and informative answers to all of the very pertinent questions asked by those in the audience. He obviously takes much pride in his work.



James Botsford

Next up, our keynote speaker, James Botsford, a retired attorney currently living in Wausau, WI, gave a riveting account of his experience in fighting an eminent domain court case filed against him in North Dakota by Endbridge Oil because of his refusal to allow them to build their oil pipeline through his farmland. As James explained, the North Dakota legislature had recently passed legislation favoring even foreign companies like Endbridge to sue private landowners to seize their land under eminent domain for their corporate benefit rather than for public good. James relayed that he was the only landowner along the entire pipeline route who refused to cave into Endbridge's "enticements" and/or threats. In his final conversation with Endbridge prior to their filing

suit against him, he told the corporate executive who called him that he would never accept their offers and that they would just have to re-route their pipeline around his land, upon which the executive said "You don't understand, Mr. Botsford. We are Endbridge. We don't go around anyone." After losing his lawsuit as well as an appeal, James persevered in taking his case to the S.D. Supreme Court. Turns out, as James put it, it was only because of the fortuitous alignment of a number of factors that Endbridge caved at the last minute and withdrew their intended plans.

Although all were justifiably inspired by James' fortitude and determination to fight this multi-national, mega-corporation, as well as his ultimate win in this truly "David vs. Goliath case", he did leave us with

some disconcerting information that I do not believe very many participants were aware of. Namely, that our current state legislature has covertly passed legislation in Wisconsin that provides the same wide-reaching eminent domain laws that North Dakota has. Yes folks, this could happen here also. PIF would like to thank James for coming all the way from Wausau to share his experience with us.

Following the presentations, valuable discussion continued with a distinguished panel of experts including James Botsford, Roy D'Antonio, Dick Steffes (retired following 40 years DNR Real Estate experience in conservation), PIF V.P. John Schwarzmann (Forest Supervisor of BCPL with a long career in forest management and conservation), and Joe Hovel.

Before departing, PIF awarded numerous door prizes. Congratulations to Marion True for winning the rustic, hand-made bench crafted by Mark Hovel. And the beautiful quilt made by Wendy Koehler went home with Dick Steffes, hopefully for their new three season room.



Marion True



Dick Steffes

All in all, this annual meeting was a very worth-while and rewarding day. It is unfortunate that so many PIF members were unable to attend. Thanks again to all who contributed to making this day such a huge success, and to all who participated.

Have you checked out PIF's website? www.partnersinforesstry.com

The website is for members to expose your business, service or tree farm, share thoughts, ideas, articles, photos, and links.

This is your COOP, we need your input as much or more than your dues.

Showcasing the DNR: A lasting legacy for forests, landowners and public recreation
 Michigan Department of Natural Resources sent this bulletin at 12/08/2016 12:44 PM EST



Showcasing the DNR

Forest Legacy Program looks to the future

We all want to leave some sort of lasting legacy – some kind of mark on the world – something that’s there for the next generation to take, use and carry on with.

That idea lies at the core of the [Forest Legacy Program](#), which ensures that private forest land remains forested and open to the public – forever.

Under the program, private forest landholders can transfer ownership or development rights through conservation easements to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to protect healthy forests.

Doing this leaves a rich legacy of working forest managed sustainably, wildlife habitat protected, landowners still able to harvest timber, and the public permitted to access the land for recreation into perpetuity.

As part of the 1990 federal Farm Bill, the U.S. Forest Service was authorized to begin the Forest Legacy Program to help private forest landowners across the country develop and maintain sustainable forests.

As a result, Michiganders and visitors to the Great Lakes State today have access to more than 150,000 acres of unique, well-managed, private forest lands.

Kerry Wieber, forest land administrator with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources’ Forest Resources Division, has managed the Forest Legacy Program in Michigan since 2006.

Wieber says it is one of the most rewarding parts of her job.

“It’s a great opportunity for us to protect some of our most environmentally important forests and ensure that they are managed sustainably,” she said. “It allows private forest landowners to manage their forests for timber and also ensure public access.”

The program provides federal funding to state agencies on a three-to-one matching basis.

States may request funding for up to three projects annually, totaling \$10 million, but no more than \$7 million for any one project.

Competition for the program’s grants is nationwide, so projects from Michigan are vying for funding with other states and U.S. properties.

“There’s no guarantee that any state will receive funding if projects from other states are deemed more worthy,” Wieber said.

A number of Michigan projects have been awarded Forest Legacy grant funding, and Michigan has used conservation easements and land acquisitions to protect unique forests.

Michigan has protected over 150,000 acres of forest lands through conservation easements and has acquired 4,170 acres that were added to the existing state forest system.

One example is the Gitcha-ninj Nebish (aka Thumb Lake) Forest, located just east of Boyne Falls in Charlevoix County.

Here, the DNR partnered with the Little Traverse Conservancy to seek funding for a conservation easement on 750 acres on the west side of Thumb Lake, which is owned by a church camp.

Ty Ratliff, director of donor relations with Little Traverse Conservancy, said his crew helped write the grant application and took on getting the land appraised as well as working with the landowner to make sure the process was understood.

“It’s a very complex and difficult process to go through,” Ratliff said. “This is a large working forest, already in the commercial forest program, 95 percent wooded, including nearly a mile of lake shoreline – so we protected this forest, as well as the shoreline.”

Gitcha-ninj Nebish is the Ottawa word for “Big Finger Water,” and considering the cultural and environmental importance of the area, the conservation easement was a “win-win,” Ratliff said.

“The landowner didn’t want to sell it,” he said. “They still own it and maintain control, they still get to timber it, and the conservancy got to see it protected. It allows for public access, so you and I and our grandkids are allowed to go on it to hunt and hike and it’s protected for perpetuity.”

The 750-acre site is adjacent to state-managed lands on three sides and the shoreline of Thumb Lake making up the fourth.

“In this case, the landowner sold the development rights below the appraised value, so the landowner essentially donated the match,” Ratliff said. “Once people understand what a working forest is – from a land perspective and a wildlife perspective, and how important it is to the local economy – this program is compelling. This is what Michigan is about: woods and water and recreation.”

Crisp Point, located in the northeastern part of the Upper Peninsula, is an example of where the DNR acquired land as part of the Forest Legacy Program.

Here, the DNR acquired 3,810 acres in Luce and Chippewa counties, including an inland lake and more than 2.5 miles of Lake Superior shoreline.

The grant provided nearly \$6 million, 75 percent of the purchase price. A private individual donated the remaining 25 percent.

“It’s a highly visible site because the Crisp Point Lighthouse, which is county-owned, is adjacent to the property and draws a lot of visitors,” Wieber said, “So it draws a lot of visitors to the state land. It’s open to any use any other state forest land is open to. There’s snowmobile trails and numerous two-tracks used by ORVs.”

The way the program works is the DNR requests project nominations from the public, which are usually submitted by landowners or conservancies.

The Forest Legacy Subcommittee of the Michigan Forest Stewardship Advisory Committee reviews the nominations and makes a recommendation to the committee, which decides which projects to seek funding for and the amount requested.

Following state forester approval, proposals are submitted to the U.S. Forest Service. Grant applications are reviewed by a national panel, where they are prioritized and included in the president's budget.

"No project is a slam-dunk," Wieber said. "With these nationwide proposals, you're competing with between 70 and 80 projects per year. The typical funding line for the last few years has been in the \$50 million to \$60 million range – so depending on the amount requested for each project, it funds 15 to 20 projects. It's a highly competitive program."

Deb Huff, executive director of the Michigan Forest Association, sits on the Forest Legacy Subcommittee. The association is a nonprofit organization of about 500 members, which represents private forest owners.

Huff said it's really important that private landowners have the opportunity to choose to participate in this program.

"There are a lot of variations on how this could be handled," Huff said. "I think Legacy is critical to conserving those areas that are most unique and at the same time in danger of being lost. Most people who love forests are supportive of this program."

Wieber said Michigan's Forest Legacy Program currently has funding for the acquisition of a conservation easement on about 1,200 acres in Houghton County on the Pilgrim River, just south of Houghton, and has submitted a grant request for an additional acquisition – Elk Forest at Black River. It's currently privately owned, is directly adjacent to the Pigeon River Country State Forest, and includes a mile of river frontage.

If it's funded, it will be the eighth Forest Legacy Program project in Michigan.

For more information, visit www.michigan.gov/privateforestland. Applications for the Forest Legacy Program are typically solicited in March and submitted by a June deadline.

Catch upcoming stories by [subscribing to free, weekly "Showcasing the DNR" articles](#). [Check out previous Showcasing articles](#).

Wieber: Kerry Wieber, forest land administrator with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources' Forest Resources Division, has managed the Forest Legacy Program in Michigan since 2006.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is committed to the conservation, protection, management, use and enjoyment of the state's natural and cultural resources for current and future generations. For more information, go to www.michigan.gov/dnr.

FUTURE ARTICLES

If you have questions that you would like to see addressed in the newsletter, suggestions for, or have articles for, future newsletters, please contact us at partnersinforesstry@gmail.com or by mail:

Partners In Forestry
6063 Baker Lake Rd
Conover, WI 54519

AID FOR WHAT AILS YOU

by Paul Hetzler,
Cornell Cooperative
Extension

One of the brightest—almost electrified—fall leaf colors hails from a humble source. Farmers may consider the ubiquitous sumac a weed, and many people even think it’s dangerous. Its reputation as a nuisance stems (if you will) from its habit of creeping into fields and pastures by means of its root system, but our native staghorn sumac (*Rhus typhina*) is in no way a hazard. And its vibrant red-orange leaves that seem to wave to us from highway and byway this time of year are almost unparalleled in their brilliance.

Just as Dorothy learned there were good witches and bad witches in Oz, I had to learn about good and bad sumac. When I was a kid, Dad showed me poison ivy and warned, sight unseen, against poison sumac (for some reason poison oak didn’t make the cut). Much the way “Marco” always went with “Polo,” “poison” was followed by either “ivy” or “sumac” in my mind. I was a young adult before I discovered the difference. Staghorn sumac is not only safe to touch, its fruit tastes great.

Mind you, poison sumac is real. It’s just that few people ever see it. If you do, as I have, you’ll be ankle-deep, or deeper, in water. Poison sumac grows in swamps, and other than the fact it has compound leaves and is a shrub, it is really not all that similar to the sumac we see every day.

Poison sumac has loose bunches of berries that turn from green to off-white as they mature, and the clusters droop down. It has smooth twigs, and glossy leaves that turn yellow in the fall. “Good” sumac, on the other hand, bears red berries in tight cone-shaped bunches, proudly held up like Lady Liberty’s

torch. Staghorn sumac also has fuzzy twigs, and matte-finish leaves which turn red in autumn.

The substance that makes apples tangy is malic acid, and sumac berries are loaded with this tasty water-soluble flavoring. To make “sumac-aid” all you need is a clean plastic bucket full of sumac berry bunches—don’t bother picking berries individually. Fill the bucket with cold water, agitate the berries for a few minutes and strain through a clean cloth. This leaves you with a very sour pink beverage akin to dilute lemon juice. Sweeten your sumac-aid to taste, and serve with ice.

Because malic acid is water soluble, sumac berries lose some (but by no means all) of their flavor due to rains, which leach it out. But even in the spring you’d be surprised how tangy the berries can be. They are also a food source for American robins and other migratory songbirds in those years when their travel agents mess up and the birds arrive before the snow is gone. I have no idea if they care about the flavor, though.

There are other species of good sumac in addition to staghorn, and they all produce the same red berry clusters that aim heavenward. Some people actually plant sumac in the landscape both for the fall color and to attract birds. I know of at least two staghorn sumac cultivars; these and additional species such as oak-leaf sumac are available through specialty nurseries.

The next time sumac’s bright autumn flag catches your eye, consider stopping to collect some berries to make a refreshing beverage. And the sooner the better.



TREETOP CHILDREN

by Paul Hetzler, Cornell Cooperative Extension

From my (age-wise, at least) adult perspective, the nursery rhymes that came out of Western Europe, especially England, give me the creeps. As kids we sang “Ladybird, ladybird, fly away home, your house is on fire, your children shall burn!” without a thought to the fate of the poor insects. But suffering was not limited to ladybugs.

For example, we were told that when the old woman who lived in a shoe had so many children she didn’t know what to do, she gave them some broth without any bread, then whipped them all soundly and put them to bed. The next verse should have been about Child Protective Services, but instead is even worse. If that was the norm in Old England, it is no wonder the Pilgrims were in such a hurry to leave.

Although the origins of many nursery rhymes are hotly debated among people with way too much time on their hands, we may have a home-grown lullaby that is at first glance just as abusive as the imports. Consider the one about leaving a baby in a cradle to rock in a treetop, only to have the limb break and the cradle fall. (The bizarre thing is that parents thought this would help their kids fall asleep.)

An old friend, Abenaki author and storyteller Joe Bruchac, once told me that a traditional Abenaki lullaby is likely the basis for the “Rock-a-bye-baby” rhyme. That version, though, has the baby rocking in the tree, with no ensuing tragedy. It was common for many First Nations peoples to strap infants into a cradle board, then affix the cradle board to a tree branch or trunk while the adults worked nearby. This gave the child an adult-eye perspective of the world, and kept the child within view.

Undoubtedly the Abenaki, Iroquois and others who used this practice had the tree examined by an arborist to make sure the limb was in good shape. No one can predict breakage with certainty, but a trained eye can spot most potential failures. Once the leaves are off, it is easier to evaluate a tree’s structure, so late fall and winter are ideal times to check out the hazard potential of the trees on your property.

A critical factor that predisposes a tree to wind damage is weakness in major unions or forks (known as crotches before the advent of PC). The way a branch is attached to the trunk can be a good indication of strength, or lack thereof. But limbs are not the only place trees can break. Failure of a large

trunk-to-trunk union can be catastrophic, both for the tree as well as for people or structures beneath it. Luckily, most weak unions can be remedied once they are identified.

It’s fortunate that unions provide clues as to their strength. The first is the angle of attachment. Unions close to ninety degrees tend to be strongest, while narrower ones are weaker. A tree with a narrow fork between two (“codominant”) trunks that lean out away from each other is more at risk of splitting than such a tree where its codominant trunks are upright.

The next clue is the presence of seams—cracks running down the trunk from the union. A crack on both sides of the trunk implies a far weaker situation than does a single seam. Decay is an important clue, but the problem is that it is not always evident. Obviously, conks (shelf fungi) and woodpecker activity indicate serious rot, and it should go without saying that having a little “garden” of brambles and saplings growing in the fork also means extensive decay.

One of the clearest signs of weakness is a pair of ears on a fork. I should probably explain. Trees are self-optimizing; that is, they respond to stress by adding tissue in ways appropriate to the problem. The weaker a union, the more a tree compensates by adding wood, in this case outward from the trunk in a sort of “ear” or “clam shell” shape.

Finding one of these clues is enough to warrant professional advice, and if you see more than one sign, make it soon. So long as a tree is in generally good condition, even the weakest union can usually be stabilized with a cable brace two-thirds to three-quarters the way to the top from the union. Because a mature shade tree is irreplaceable in one lifetime, and because it’s a slight inconvenience to have a large portion of one “drop in” on you suddenly, cabling is worth it.

Every component in a cable system is load-rated, and sized differently for each situation. With all due respect to the capable “DIY” crowd out there, the wrong cable is worse than no cable. Cabling should only be done by someone familiar with the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) published standards for cable bracing. This is an important point; not all tree care professionals are up to snuff on ANSI standards.

The take-home message is that in most cases, breakage-prone limbs and trunks can be identified ahead of time, and pruned or cabled to help prevent failure. And that infants should probably not be left unattended in trees. Or exposed to nursery rhymes.

Curt Hare of Snowshoe Hare Forestry is upbeat about forest regeneration following a decline in deer numbers in some areas.



An aspen clearcut on the NHAL State Forest near High Lake. What caught my eye is the oak regeneration coming up here. Lots of young oak growing with the aspen. As this stand grows the aspen will act as a barrier for the oak from deer browse.



I saw a fair amount of this while working on BCPL land in Iron County. Along with the young hemlock, I saw white cedar and mixed hardwood species regenerating. The photo of the Canada Yew was taken on this property too. A note to deer hunters, don't waste your time hunting here. This area was devoid of any deer sign.

My 2 cents about a conservation issue

by John Fetzer, Conservation Delegate for the Conservation Congress of Oneida County

Cell phone towers - an eye sore.

Approximately 30 years ago, my neighbor that butts up to my farm, informed me he was contacted by a cell phone company looking to put up a tower.

I rewarded his conversation, by telling him who would ever want that on your land.

About 3 months later, he informed me that the company contacted him again, and he was thinking about allowing them to do it.

Lesson learned: Next year an oil rig looking tower was built, and I hated my neighbor as well as the tower.

His cousin was chairman of the township, and he receives \$4000-6000 annually for the lease of his land.

Here is the catch - Cell phone companies can come into a township and county and TELL THEM they are going to put up a tower for their needs.

Say what !!

The FCC has stipulated that companies in need can place the towers where they need them , and counties just need to be informed.

Living in the north woods of Wisconsin, appreciating the beauty of the lakes (most concentrated inland lake region in the world) and diverse forests, pollution to this environment can be contaminates, noise, visual as well as air. So I am talking about visual pollution.

America is nothing like European countries, where the majority of their public right of ways are used on the same infrastructure as their road systems.

So America has conflicts with pipelines, electric power grids as well as cell phone towers.

At the time I was living in a lake home, and across the road was my farm. The above mentioned cell phone tower was blatantly seen from the lake I lived on as well as a much larger lake across the road. So lets start from how this all starts for a cell phone company. The public start complaining about access in dead zone areas.

The cell phone companies look at locations to cover most range, and proceed to talk to the county in which they want to place a new tower. In Oneida County they would apply for a CUP permit (Conditional Use Permit). They don't need to own the land, just obtain possession of the land for their use. Then they present this to the township, township usually votes on this, 3 supervisors typically.

No revenue goes to the township, but taxes are processed to county level.

According to township rules as well as county , the land owner and cell phone company must tell neighbors that this will be a possible project.

My neighbor never informed the two lakes other than myself. As you can assume to this day the tower is an eye sore for both lakes.

Five years ago, the same cell phone tower company decided to put up another tower in the same township but farther in the woods on county land. (Newspaper notification)

The war between myself and the cell company has begun.

The CUP was not issued as of yet, but a meeting at the township level was to occur. Pulled into the parking lot and I met my adversary. Little did he know I had in tow about 30 members of the lake and adjoining neighborhood. When his time was to bring this forward to the township board, it was a 2 minute speech, and he was intentionally headed out the door. I immediately asked the board if I could ask him some questions.

One hour later when he left, he succumb to the realization it wasn't going to be a walk in the park to get the tower up.

I spent several months researching this, and got a petition out, including getting info from the FAA because of the Rhinelander Airport. Joe Brauer, Rhinelander Airport manager, had the best solution for the county: Farm the towers. What this means, have Oneida County tell cell phone companies where to place them, and have multiple towers go up in same location, so lakes, forests are not affected, as well as neighborhoods.

Going to the CUP Oneida County Planning and Zoning committee meeting, the cell phone company thought once again it was going to be a walk in the park.

Problem was they drew a map of the location and affected citizens and never showed the lake I lived on, but the larger lake, stated no impact. (You can see how this is going) Members of my lake association were present.

So I advised the committee that they need to go out to the site, and they suggested a crane be put out at the height of the tower.

Our lake association as well as neighborhoods started putting up signs. (2 more township meetings) as well as 2 more CUP meetings and the long story short, the tower was erected.

Fortunately, my health was not affected, lawyer fees were as was, but my point to this story is that you need to get the county in which you live in to start establishing a plan for these towers.

I was shocked that they were belligerent to the fact they could farm them, which would have less impact on our environment.

Yes, people are people, but when you are representing the good faith of the people, townships, counties should be responsible enough to protect the environment in which we live in.

Antennas can be placed on water towers and other structures that are currently in towns, villages and cities. But the rural areas, these towers need to be smartly placed.

CONFESSIONS OF A FIRST TIME HARDWOOD FLOOR INSTALLER

by Richard Steffes

You, the reader of this story, are my friend. My experiences described here might help you if you launch a similar project. Secondly, I'd never admit to these mistakes to anyone but a friend.

Having achieved Medicare eligibility some time ago, I decided to do a 700-plus-square-foot hardwood floor install, basically to see if I could. That, and because the carpeting was a disaster after years of Dachshunds, Dalmatians and Labradors. That, and because I am fascinated by quarter sawn white oak, the spectacular wood you see in old places and things.

We purchased the unfinished flooring from a Madison retailer. He had sourced it from WD Flooring, the mill in Leona. Since the milling process for quarter sawn boards creates a lot of waste, I went with a mix of rift and quarter sawn wood.

When delivered, the 3/4" by 3-1/4" oak tongue and groove boards were very low in moisture content. Time went by and I grew concerned the wood might pick up moisture. So I set up a dehumidifier next to the stacked wood, with a plastic sheet over both.

Joe Hovel had told me a low moisture content was very important for the flooring during installation. Joe and his son, Mark, gave me much of the guidance you'll see in this article. Joe also was my source for the finishing materials which, I will discuss later.

It helps to have a variety of hand tools but a compressor, chop or miter saw, finish nailer and flooring tool are used throughout. I also used a table saw, jig saw, angle grinder and an

oscillating multi-tool. Get about six pairs of safety glasses and some kneepads and you'd be ready to roll.

Preparation

The first phase is prepping the work area to achieve clean sub floors devoid of staples and other obstacles. I removed carpeting pad, tackless strips and most staples. It's therapeutic to smash a few flat into the subfloor. I carefully pulled the baseboard off for later reuse. I numbered the pieces and wrote the corresponding number on the wall. I used an angle grinder to cut the nails off on the inside of the trim boards. My daughter from Washington, DC and my Rhinelander son-in-law helped in this phase, curing me of a bad case of procrastination. I used a flooring paper over the subfloor and used tape to help mark floor joist locations.

Prepping the carpeted areas was relatively easy compared to the kitchen. It had two layers of plywood and two layers of vinyl flooring over the subfloor. I set my (now dull) circular saw blade to the depth of these layers and cut the kitchen floor up into squares of about 9 square feet. Then I used a 6' long crowbar to pry the layers from the subfloor. This work, along with staple pulling, yielded a clean, flat subfloor at the same grade as the rest of the area to be resurfaced.

One of the things encountered in a project like this is dealing with all the furniture and personal items in a very lived in house. My wife and I recognized up front the project would be disruptive. The project involved two bedrooms, the kitchen, family room, a hallway and five closets. As I finished individual rooms, we laid protective paper over the new but unfinished flooring. We could then move furniture to that room to prepare for the next one. Restoring a functioning kitchen was one of my strongest motivators in completing the job.

The entire project has the flooring aligned the same direction. Fortunately, this is perpendicular to the floor joists, which adds strength and rigidity. The boards run the long way in the hall. My staples, as installed, were about 6" apart and 3" from board edges. I hit the floor joists below the subfloor at least part of the time. A brain teaser for the project was how to have a smooth transition, room to room, for the floor boards, as the project connects throughout.

Installation

The first installation step is to define a gap or space along the drywall with your first board. That space is maintained throughout the project's perimeter. Its purpose is to allow floor expansion in high moisture situations. Later, the baseboard and 3/4" quarter round span this space, covering it. The trim rests lightly on the floor boards so slight movement can occur. My perimeter gap is about 5/8".

One thing I found helpful was to place temporary backing against the wall. I used 1/2" plywood strips and shims to get out, at intervals, to the initial straight "start" line marked on the floor. I used a nail gun with 2" finish nails to face nail the first round row of boards. You quickly want to minimize face nailing that beautifully surfaced wood. I tuned air pressure and nail depth to try to set the nails just below the surface of the board. I angle nailed through the tongue for the second row. Don't be too concerned if the tongue splits occasionally as the groove of the next row of boards will squeeze it together and totally hide the split from view.

By the third row, I finally had enough space from the starting wall to use my (borrowed) Bostitch floor staples. This is quite a tool. The installer positions it over the tongue of the floor board and whacks the actuator with the rubber end of a hammer. The other hard face of the hammer is for tapping boards in place.

Compressor air pressure was about 85 lbs., a little less than I used for the finish nailer. The end result is that the tool drives a heavy duty 2" staple through the tongue of the board, through the subfloor and somewhere into the basement. Thus the staple is hidden from view by the next board.

During the time I was doing those first few rows my learning curve flattened, then headed south. I was happily tapping boards in place with my 4 lb. hammer buffered by a cut off piece to protect it. I'd diligently close those cracks, staple, and move along the row. But then I'd look back and the cracks mysteriously opened again. You guessed it -- I did several rows with an empty floor staple tool. The stapler hammers in a dent regardless of actual existence of staples.

After I figured out the tool actually needed staples, I got into a nice rhythm. I became confident, cocky and casual, moving quickly down the rows. Two types of errors followed. If I struck the actuator poorly, the tool would drive the staple only half in. I could not pull these little devils out or drive them in without damaging the board. I figured out the easiest fix was to cut the staple off with a metal blade on the multi-tool. The other type of error is a forehead slapper. I also face nailed the board, not being careful of tool placement. The only solution here is to tear the board out and start over.

That first room was a learning experience. Toward its completion, I was finishing up a row near the door, I had a difficult crack, likely due to a warped board I should have set aside. My hillbilly alter ego took over. I retrieved the car jack from the SUV and braced it against the door jamb. Four tons of pressure quickly closed the crack up. But when I reinstalled the bedroom door, it no longer closed. No problem; I just got out the jack again and pointed it in the opposite direction. The door now closed, more or less.

Speaking of doors, while the room's baseboards were removed, the vertical trim and adjoining door jambs stay put. I undercut these with the multi-tool and a wood cutting blade. I used a cut off block of flooring under the tool so the cut was the right depth to allow flooring under the trim and jambs. The trim is quite narrow, so a little fussy work with a jigsaw is needed on the floor boards at this spot. The normal 1/2" to 3/4" perimeter gap would be too wide here.

While a board on each end of the room has some face nailing, I avoided nailing altogether on some partial or extra narrow boards. When a thin strip is needed to reach the perimeter edge, measure, then rip the board lengthwise. Use the tongue and groove features whenever possible. Then simply glue the strip to the adjoining board and hold it in place with shims until the glue sets up.

Regarding fitting the flooring together, I used several approaches: I used small pieces of cut flooring as its grooves fit one, and protected the floor board tongue I was attacking with my 4 lb. hammer. I used a metal strip with two right angle lips that faced opposite, one up and one down. This was helpful to hook behind an end board near a wall, then I'd tap the other lip and pull the board toward its abutter, removing the end gap. Shims and handmade wedges are great and really effective in tight spots.

I also just set some boards aside if they were warped or had a defect which would cause a gap. Some of these boards could be used later where cuts and trimming for end pieces resolved their defects.

When I progressed from my hallway into a family room, I had to start 12-1/2 feet away, along the outside wall and hope the floor boards later would be parallel and matched up with the hallway. This is because the stapler only works in one direction. So I measured to the outside

wall from a line I projected from a hallway floor board. I found that forty-six boards, each 3.25" wide would get close to that wall. I set up my straight line (chalk line), installed temporary backing and proceeded. After forty-six rows, I matched up pretty well with the hallway boards. I used this approach in another room where the situation called for starting away from the completed portion. Recently, since competing this project, I learned one can purchase "spline stock", milled with two tongues rather than the normal tongue and groove. Using such a board to reverse installation direction would have saved some worries and head scratching.

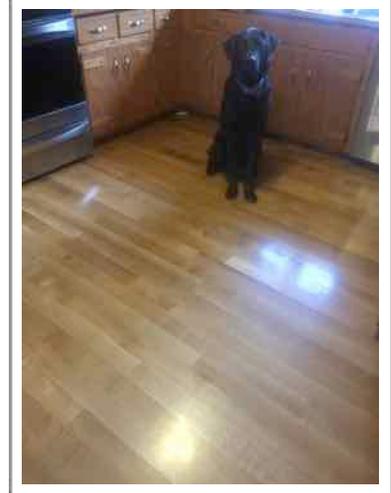
Finish

After the flooring was in, I rented an upright floor sander. It had four 6" sanding pads. I used 60, 80 and finally, 100 grit. I also used a palm sander with finer paper. The wood was nicely milled so the sanding really was to clean the wood up and to do some fairly minor leveling.

The sealer coat was called "Universal Sealer." It brushed on to create a slightly amber color. The sealer coat brought out the wood grain beautifully. After drying and light sanding with 220 grit, I put on two coats of "Nano Shield" about four hours apart. I lightly sanded that 24 hours later. I ended up with four coats of Nano Shield over the sealer. The Nano Shield is water based, clear and easy to use. It appears to be very durable. My 105 lb. Labrador can't hardly scratch it as he races up and down the hallway. He did get the best of me though. After the four coats in the hallway, I noticed a few black Labrador hairs here and there, as if captured for all time in amber. Later, I used a flexible caulk on the few small gaps I had missed, with excellent results.

I had great fun doing this project. With good advice, a few tools and sufficient time, it was very manageable. The floor is great and I'm proud of that beautiful Wisconsin white oak.

Oh, one last confession -- I didn't nail one pocket door in the open position when replacing the baseboards. I nailed them both.



INTERESTING PHOTO



Photo taken by Richard Steffes in August 2016 at Kings Canyon - Sequoia National Forest, with his wife Laurel and granddaughter Izzy.
