



Partners News

January 2012

JOE'S COMMENTS

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It is as if we have had a short sabbatical with the newsletter, so I am glad we are back on track. Margo has done such a splendid job the past couple years, we did not know how much we depended on her until she was unavailable. After spending several months caring for her elderly parents and dealing with the passing of her father we wish her the best, welcome her back, and appreciate her duties more than ever.

As you know I had promised the follow ups to the wood decay story. The interview with Brian Trimble from Biewer Lumber is herein. The interview with Phil Pelletari, the UW entomologist still has not happened, so if and when I can get his attention we shall report. Thanks to Rod Sharka for the help treating, and the story on our Pilgrim River property buckthorn. It was a warm day of camaraderie carrying out a difficult task.

As always John has provided a feature on Forest Health. Thanks also to Jim Burns and Susan Metcalfe for the timber tax information. Many of you had a great primer to this at the 2010 annual meeting from Geary Searfoss.

A neighbor to the Pilgrim River property with a 60 year career as a mining engineer really caught my attention recently. Jack Parker helped develop over 500 mines around the world. I had been doing my best to ignore the mining madness controversy gripping the Midwest, even though we have reported on such in these pages for several years now. When a mining engineer questions the development of new mines in our membership area it caught my attention. I hope you enjoy Jack's candid demeanor as much as I have.

On the Ottawa National Forest the new supervisor recently approved the Delich Land exchange. As you recall PIF prevailed in an appeal last year, sending this project back to address important issues surrounding old growth. I see little or no improvement in this new round, I tend to be skeptical of semantics, so likely we will look at another appeal.

If your land is in MFL, be aware there are big changes in the works, changes I suspect PIF will need to weigh in on. If you would like to network with me on this, be aware of hearing dates etc., please let me know.

As we begin the NEW YEAR, please be aware that all original memberships renew the first of the year. Mid year members can pay on the anniversary of their membership. We need your dues to cover expenses, which is all it does, as no one in this group receives any monetary compensation. More than your dues, we need your help. We are constantly looking for new talents to be utilized, for the benefit of all....in the true coop spirit.

Please be involved.....this IS YOUR COOP.



Under the decision made by Ottawa National Forest Supervisor Anthony Scardina, the public treasure known as Wildcat Falls will be traded away in exchange for heavily cut over land, and assumedly the old growth features near the falls will suffer the same fate.

INCOME TAXES ON THE SALE OF TIMBER FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

By Jim Burns

In addition to all the tangible and intangible benefits you receive from your property, **timberlands are income producing investments**. Through proper forest management, your investment can produce higher returns.

Part of this process should also include correctly reporting the income you receive from the sale of your trees (timber) as **capital gain** in order to increase your **after tax return** on the investment.

I keep a record of questions about the federal timber tax laws that readers and clients have asked me. In this article I will try to summarize some of them.

Question: “I’m not familiar with capital gain tax rates; are they higher or lower than regular income tax rates?”

Answer: Long-term capital gain tax rates are much lower than the rates for ordinary income. In 2003, capital gain rates were reduced by 10% to a minimum of 0% up to a maximum of 15% whereas ordinary rates, for most people, start at 25% and increase to a maximum of 35% based on your income. The other item to consider is that capital gain income **is not** subject to the self-employment tax (Social Security) of 15.3% like ordinary income. Even if you don’t have a depletion deduction your federal tax savings will be at least 25.3% to 35.3% by reporting timber income as capital gain.

Question: “My tax preparer told me that if I only have an occasional timber sale, I don’t need to file a Form T for my timber taxes?”

Answer: Yes, but you still must pay capital gains tax on ALL of your timber sale revenue. If you wish to take a depletion deduction to reduce or eliminate your capital gains revenue, the IRS requires you to report the adjustment of your timber basis on a Form T.

Question: “My tax preparer told me that I can only take a depletion deduction of 8% from my timber income. Is this how it works?”

Answer: No, your tax preparer is talking about depletion for mineral or oil deposits. Timber depletion is cost based and is not a tax preference item which will trigger the Alternative Minimum Tax. Depletion for timber is based upon the cost of your property when you acquired it. It is possible to have a depletion deduction greater than the amount received for the timber cut, resulting in a loss for tax purposes.

Question: “My tax preparer told me that I could not report the income from the sale of my timber as long-term capital gain. Is this true?”

Answer: No, this is not true. Sections 631(a) and 631(b) of the Internal Revenue Code apply to all taxpayers. Loggers who cut timber from their own lands or timber on which they have a contract right to cut can elect capital gain tax status under Section 631(a). Landowners who sell their standing timber to others should report their income under Section 631(b).

Question: “Do I have to pay into Social Security for my timber income?”

Answer: When you report your timber income as long-term capital gain under Section 631(a) or 631(b) you **do not** pay Social Security tax. If you report the timber sale as ordinary income you **will** have to pay the 15.3% self-employment tax.

Question: “I have an active farming operation and report farm income. I do sell timber from my woodlot now and then. I have been told that long-term capital gain tax treatment does not apply to farmers. Is that true?”

Answer: No. This is one of those common myths that have been repeated so many times in the tax community that people begin to think it’s true. Sections 631(a) and (b) apply to all taxpayers regardless of occupation or size of land ownership.

Question: “Does reporting my timber income as long-term capital gain affect my status under the Managed Forest Tax Law (MFL), Commercial Forest Act (CFA), Qualified Forest Program (QFP), or the Forest Crop Law?”

Answer: No. These are property tax laws and have nothing to do with federal or state income tax laws.

If you have sold timber or plan to sell in the future, call us and learn more about saving money on your taxes.

Jim Burns is a professional forester who owns and operates Burns Timber Tax Services and works in conjunction with Susan Metcalfe at Metcalfe Forestry LLC. For more information, call Susan at (989) 348-3596 with your questions.

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**MAJOR
DISEASES
OF
RED
PINE**

Contributed by:
John Schwarzmann
Forest Supervisor
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**ARMILLARIA
SHOESTRING ROOT ROT**

DISEASE

Armillaria shoestring root rot caused by the fungus, *Armillaria obscura*, a part of the complex of *Armillaria* species.

IMPORTANCE

This fungus is common throughout the Lake States in red pine plantations. Damage is especially severe on trees under stress and trees growing in cutover hard-wood stands. *Armillaria* causes a decay, seldom extending more than a few feet above ground. It kills trees by girdling at the root collar.

BIOLOGY

Armillaria usually lives as a saprophyte and obtains its food from dead stumps and roots and the heartwood of living trees. But it may also live in roots as a parasite on living tissue. The disease causes abrupt or gradual reduction in growth, yellowing and then browning of foliage of the entire tree, and finally, death (Figure 1). Resin exudate may be present on roots or near the root collar. Veined, white mycelial fans form between the bark and wood at the ground line where the cambium has been killed (Figure 2). Black fungal strands (Figure 3) (rhizomorphs) also form on tree roots, on or under the bark, or in severely decayed wood. These strands may radiate into the soil where they may cause infection if they come in contact with the roots of other red pine. Honey-colored mushrooms form on the lower trunk of dead or dying trees usually in the fall (Figure 4). The fungus may spread either by windborne spores produced by the mushrooms or, more commonly, by rhizomorphs. The fungus may also spread from infected tissue to living trees through root contact.

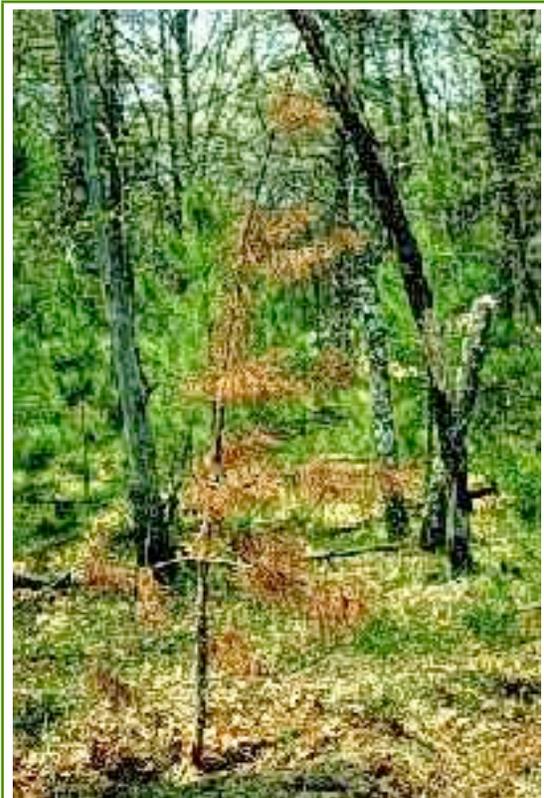


Figure 1



Figure 2

MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

Preventive measures that maintain conditions favorable for rapid and vigorous tree growth will usually minimize the impact of this disease.

- Choose a site well suited for red pine to maintain healthy, vigorous trees. This reduces stress and trees will be more resistant to Armillaria infection.
- Avoid planting on cutover sites, especially those with many hardwood stumps that serve as an Armillaria reservoir.
- If practical, remove dead trees, and infected stumps and large roots before planting red pine. These items can serve as a source of Armillaria for at least 10 years after the tree dies. This is also true of herbicide-killed trees.



Figure 3



Figure 4

PILGRIM RIVER

BUCKTHORN

CONTROL

DAY

(by Rod Sharka)

It was a chilly, gloomy, windy day on Saturday, October 15th when I accompanied the Hovel family up to their Pilgrim River property just south of Houghton, Michigan. The primary objective was to remove as much of the invasive glossy buckthorn that was taking over the old, heritage apple orchard on the property. Thanks to all of the local volunteers that showed up to help, nearly all of the “old growth,” berry producing buckthorn plants were removed. Thanks to all who came out to help. In the words of local, northern Wisconsin naturalist John Bates, “Before you can adequately heal the wounds of a place, or be asked to save a place, you have to first profoundly love it.” It was quite obvious that the many local volunteers who came out to help us truly do love this land that the Hovel family so generously makes available for public use for hiking, mountain biking, bird watching, hunting, and fishing.

No, we weren’t able to completely eradicate every last buckthorn plant. There are untold numbers of seedlings left that will have to be dealt with in the future. However, with continued effort, diligence, and education, this weed warrior is confident that this will be accomplished in time. If you were unable to participate this time, you missed a great day out in paradise. However, fear not. There undoubtedly will be more opportunities in the future. If you are not familiar with this invasive shrub, more information is provided below. I would urge all landowners to become familiar with the invasive buckthorn shrubs, as well as several other terrestrial invasive plants that are a

threat to our woodlands, and to do all that you can to eradicate them before they get out of control.

Common and Glossy Buckthorn

Why a threat? Buckthorn:

- Displaces native understory vegetation;
- Forms an impenetrable understory layer;
- Destroys wildlife habitat;
- Causes long-term decline of forests by shading out other woody and herbaceous plants.

The invasive exotic buckthorns (there are two species) are multi-stemmed, deciduous shrubs or small trees capable of growing 10 – 25 feet tall with an upright, oval form. They thrive in sunny, upland sites including forest edges, roadsides, pastures, and abandoned fields, but they are also very shade tolerant.

Glossy buckthorn (*Rhamnus frangula*), which is the species found on and around the Pilgrim River property, has leaves that alternate on the stems, and are simple and oval shaped with toothless margins. The leaves are dark green and glossy, with 8-9 pairs of leaf veins that radiate out from along the central midvein. Common buckthorn (*Rhamnus catharticus*), the species typically found in the Eagle River, WI area as well as in many areas of Oneida County, has leaves that are alternate or subopposite on the stems, and are simple, rounded to egg-shaped with finely toothed margins. They are very dark, dull green with 3-5 pairs of leaf veins that are sickle-shaped (curve along the margins of the leaf).

Buckthorns leaf out very early in spring and retain their leaves late into autumn. The leaves do not change color before being shed in the late fall. Buckthorn’s vigorous growth and early spring leaf out inhibits the growth of native plants in a given area by crowding or shading them out. In addition, various scientific studies have shown that songbirds that nest in buckthorn (as well as exotic honeysuckle) suffer much greater predation pressure than those that nest in comparable native shrubs like hawthorns, Viburnums, and hazelnut.

Both common and glossy buckthorn produce an abundance of berries that ripen to black in the fall. Both species produce fruit annually, and

the fruit can serve as a food source for birds and mammals. However, buckthorn fruit is not considered to be a beneficial wildlife food as it causes a severe laxative effect in animals, thereby allowing for poor nutrient value and distribution of seeds in their excrement. Additionally, the fruit of both species is considered poisonous to humans.

History:

Common and glossy buckthorns were introduced into North America as ornamentals in the 1800's. The cultivar of glossy buckthorn, '*Columnaris*,' is still available for sale due to its ornamental characteristics, but is invasive and should be avoided.

Distribution and Habitat:

Although native to Europe and northwestern Asia, the buckthorns have readily naturalized in the northeastern and north central third of the U.S.A. and Canada. They readily invade woodlands, savannas, prairies, abandoned fields, and roadsides,

forming dense thickets. Glossy buckthorn will also invade bogs, marshes, riverbanks, and other wetlands as well as the dry sites mentioned above. This is especially a concern on the Pilgrim River property; so local outdoor enthusiasts who frequent the property are encouraged to be vigilant for other populations or stray buckthorn plants especially along the river and stream banks.

Control Methods:

Buckthorn seedlings can be removed by hand pulling, if the stems are under 0.5 in. in diameter. Removal is easier when the soil is moist. Larger plants are harder to remove by hand as they can break off leaving the roots behind or cause too much soil disturbance. For plants larger than 0.5 in. in diameter, it is best to cut or girdle them at the base. Remember that both common and glossy buckthorn can readily resprout from cut stumps, thus necessitating herbicide treatment. On the October 15th control day, we used a 25% (by volume) solution of glyphosate (e.g., concentrated RoundUp®), which was applied immediately to the



Photo provided by Rod Sharka



Thanks to Jonathan and Lily Baker, two budding weed warriors who did an outstanding job on the buckthorn eradication day.

Photo provided by Jim Baker

cut stumps using dropper bottles or a foam brush. Be sure to wear protective vinyl, latex, or rubber gloves when working with herbicides. Note that this cut and stump treatment method is most effective when plants are entering dormancy or dormant, such as in the fall or winter, as long as the air temperature is above freezing.* Also note also that it is illegal to use certain herbicide formulations such as RoundUp® in wetland areas. When working in wetland areas such as along river or stream banks, an herbicide formulation approved for use near waterways (e.g., RoundUp Pro®, Touchdown®, or Rodeo®, or AquaNeet®) must be used.

Education:

One of the best ways to insure adequate control of buckthorn is education. Tell your neighbors about buckthorn. A neighbor's buckthorn can produce large amounts of seed that can be disseminated into your backyard, and the surrounding neighborhood. Encourage your neighbors to remove their buckthorn and monitor their yards for seedlings in the future.

More detailed information about control methods for the exotic buckthorn, as well as for the numerous other invasive plants threatening our northwoods, can be obtained by contacting your UW-Extension County Office. I also can highly recommend the book *Invasive Plants of the Upper Midwest* by Elizabeth J. Czarapata (University of Wisconsin Press, 2005).

A wealth of information can also be found on the Wisconsin DNR web site: www.dnr.wi.gov/invasives, and the Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission's web site: www.glifwc.org/invasives. GLIFWC's website is especially interesting in that it provides distribution maps of all of the invasives, both terrestrial and aquatic, for the ceded territories. These maps allow one to zoom in to road level detail and show the locations of all invasive plants identified and recorded so far. Information is also provided for reporting new site findings.

*Note: You are responsible for using pesticides according to the manufacturer's current label directions. Follow directions exactly to protect the environment and people from pesticide exposure. Failure to do so violates the law.

Previously we featured an interview with Mycologist Dana Richter, from the wood lab at Michigan Tech. I have done business for some time with Biewer Lumber, so I thought it made sense to obtain the industry perspective on treated wood. Getting the most from our utilization of wood products is important, that includes proper care. I hope interviews such as this are helpful to the education process.

PIF WOOD PRESERVATION INTERVIEW WITH BRIAN TRIMBLE AT BIEWER LUMBER

by Joe Hovel

PIF: Please tell us about Biewer Lumber. Your Prentice Mill is a very valuable market for red pine and spruce management from our member's lands and we much appreciate the role you play in supporting the regional economy.

BT: *Biewer Lumber™ is a third generation, family owned group of companies that is committed to the environment and sound forest practices. We take pride in our family of employees and we make it our goal to operate the safest and most effective facilities. Biewer's lines of business include four sawmills, three pressure-treated lumber and a number of distribution facilities throughout the Midwest. Biewer Lumber™ specializes in Red Pine because of its restricted wane with small, tight knots and it is graded for optimum appearance. The strength properties of Red Pine lend themselves well for use in construction applications, such as girders, beams, joists, studs and trusses. Red Pine is 30% less dense than yellow pine, which makes it naturally easier to use for framing and other applications.*

PIF: There has been quite an evolution in wood preservation in recent decades. From the older oil base treatments using creosote and pentachlorophenol, the ever common (in the 70's-90's) CCA containing arsenic compounds, and now the newer language of micronized copper azole. Please tell us a bit about the efficacy of certain applications of the different common preservatives as well as the safety concerns with these treatments, which I suspect contribute to the continuing evolution.

BT: *The typical wood preservative systems used in the U.S. are waterborne, copper-based systems. These systems are approved for a variety of uses, which include above ground, ground contact, fresh water immersion, and salt water splash. The copper-based wood preservatives used today are registered with the U.S. EPA and are safe to use around people, pets and plants when used as recommended.*

PIF: What, basically, is 'pressure treating'?

BT: *Preserved wood is lumber or plywood that has been treated with wood preservatives to help protect it from termites and fungal decay. Pressure treating is accomplished in large cylinders, under pressure, driving the preservation compounds into the wood cells.*

PIF: Please explain what is meant by the term 'retention' in pressure treated wood. I note foundation lumber is .60 of CCA, while some deck boards are only .06 of micronized copper. Is .60 an extreme degree of treating? It seems I recall salt water pilings require 2.2 retention. Would this suffice for deep construction site pilings? What life span of the wood product is the goal strived for when determining the degree of treating for different uses? Please explain what is meant by the term 'retention' in pressure treated wood.

BT: *The term "retention" for treated wood products refers to the amount of preservative retained in the wood following pressure treatment. The copper-based wood preservatives used today have different preservative retention levels based on the individual chemistry of those systems. It is more important for the consumer to purchase wood suitable for their end use application, i.e., above ground or ground contact uses.*

PIF: I note foundation lumber is .60 of CCA, while some deck boards are only .06 of micronized copper. Is .60 an extreme degree of treating?

BT: *Regarding your question on the 0.60 pcf retention, this retention level for CCA is for “ground contact structural uses” such as permanent wood foundations and agricultural timbers for buildings. The copper-based systems used today all have approved retentions for “ground contact critical structural uses.”*

PIF: It seems I recall salt water pilings require 2.2 retention. Would this suffice for deep construction site pilings?

BT: *In regard to your question on salt water pilings, CCA is the only wood preservative system that is suitable for salt water immersion applications. None of the other copper-based systems are suitable for this use.*

PIF: What life span of the wood product is the goal strived for when determining the degree of treating for different uses?

BT: *Treated wood products are designed to provide the homeowner with extended service life for wood products. Today, over half of the treated wood decks in the U.S. are 20 years old or older.*

PIF: If, say a treated 8x8 timber were to be re sawed into 2 4x8 pieces, does the core area of fresh cut display much more vulnerability to decay? By the same reasoning, should end cutting on treated wood require a field treatment with say a copper coat?

BT: *None of the wood preservative manufacturing companies recommend ripping or re-sawing treated wood products. Brush on end coat wood preservatives are recommended for western species, such as Douglas-fir or Hem-fir.*

PIF: We must also talk about species which can be properly treated. Common knowledge is that southern pine treats extremely well, and that our red pine treats very well, but I am certain there is more to the equation than this. With our emphasis on local resources, I would especially like to know which of our native local species treat satisfactorily for certain applications.

BT: *For the copper-based systems used today, treatable species include Southern Yellow Pine, Red Pine, Ponderosa Pine, Lodgepole Pine, Douglas-fir and Hem-fir.*

PIF: From my career as a woodworker and consultant I understand the complexity of wood decay and mold and mildew concerns in lumber. Are the common wood preservatives protective against decay as well as mold and mildew?

BT: *The copper-based systems used today are designed and have been tested to give the wood protection against fungal decay and termite attack. Mold growth does occur on many surfaces including untreated wood, treated wood, composite decking, and vinyl siding, to name a few.*

PIF: I have stressed for years that treated wood in the weather still needs UV and water repellent protection as well as the coating acting as a barrier from potential leaching. Can you shed any light on this?

BT: *It is recommended that any wood product, treated or untreated, when exposed outdoors be protected with a water repellent coating, stain or paint. Our recommendations follow: Application of a quality clear water repellent or semitransparent stain, which contains water repellent, will help minimize the cycles of moisture take-up and loss the wood goes through outdoors. First, determine if your treated wood product has been pressure treated with a factory applied water repellent by looking at the end tag. If not factory water*

repellent treated, thoroughly clean your project with a deck cleaning product. Clear water repellent can be immediately applied to your deck or other project. If you choose to use a semi-transparent stain which contains a water repellent, you need to first check that your project is surface dry. Either wait until the surface is dry or immediately apply clear water repellent and wait approximately 8 weeks and then apply your chosen color of semi-transparent stain. (Joe's notes; If any one has any questions about wood care, I have gone through the training and am certified as a 'Wolman Wood Care Professional.'

PIF: Is there any adverse structural factors with wood after it is treated?

BT: *The treated wood products produced today are used in many structural applications. It is recommended that when using treated wood that the construction be compliant with the building code regulations. (This was also answered in a previous issue by Dana Richter)*

PIF: Tell us about Thermal Guard, your new heat treating process!

BT: *Select Cut® ThermalGuard by PureWood® begins as natural, renewable lumber. Using state-of-the-art thermal modification technology, each ThermalGuard board is dried to reduce moisture content. This process has been proven to preserve the material for up to twenty-five years without the need for chemical additives. Our unique engineered profile accommodates a hidden fastener system that is simple to use and easy to install. ThermalGuard is further enhanced with a factory-applied, premium sealant specifically designed for ThermalGuard. This rich looking, real wood product offers remarkable resiliency to rot, decay, and other elements. ThermalGuard by Purewood® is an impressive alternative to cedar and more cost effective than most composite decking products. It is the ideal choice for your next decking project. (I have some Thermal Guard in stock at our sawmill, but have yet to use it)*



MEASURING WOOD VOLUMES IN BUYING, SELLING TIMBER, PULP WOOD AND FUEL WOOD

by Joe Hovel

Many of us face confusion when discussion about timber, log, pulpwood and firewood volumes comes up, so hopefully this can be a primer.

Saw logs are generally measured by the board foot (BF), (as is lumber), and in this region the most common scale tool is called the Scibner Decimal C.

There are also tools using the Doyle Scale or the International 1/4" Scale, but although they are all comparable to a degree, Scriber rules the day in the Midwest. A log buyer simply puts the stick, an elaborate yardstick in appearance, at the small end of the log and tallies the approximate volume in BF. Timber is commonly sold as units of MBF, meaning One Thousand Board Feet. The amazing thing in log measuring is how additional size adds more volume. For example, in Doyle Scale, a 12" Diameter small end 12 ft. long is 48 BF. Get to 18" diameter you have 147 BF and a 24" diameter is 300 BF (all 12' long). Certainly an argument for



Scribner Decimal C stick measuring a white pine saw log. The 16 ft. log was 330 BF under scribner, and close to 24" diameter.

large tree management for high value saw timber. 'Value added' can also apply on the stump.

One BF is a piece of lumber with a multiple of 12 per foot. A 1"x12" x1' is simply one board foot. A 1x12x10 is 10 BF, as a 3x4x12' is 12 BF. In 12' lengths simply multiplying the width by the thickness will give you the board footage. Plywood, OSB etc. is generally sold by the MBF, BUT the unit of measure is not 1", it is generally the thickness of the panel. In a sense a MBF of panel wood is simply a 1000 square feet.

Small logs and bolt wood are generally sold by the full cord, 4'x4'x8' is a common cord, but technically it is 128 cubic feet. A common transfer from cords to

BF is 2.2 -2.8 cords per MBF, but I have sawed a MBF out of less than 2 cords at times with good timber, especially if sawing larger size timbers. There is approximately 18 10" logs in a cord, but a whopping 150 plus if 3", and only 4-5 if 20".

Pulp wood is generally sold from stump to logger by the cord, but logger to paper mill a weight measurement has become more common in recent years. This leaves the 'conversion factor' cords to tonnage, which we hope to cover in the next issue, as this in itself can lead to controversy. Lot's of factors of course are at play in this conversion, species, moisture content, etc., make this a topic of it's own right.

Firewood is most often sold by the cord or at times the famously unofficial face cord. The cord, once again, is 128 cubic ft. but the face cord is a stack of wood 4'x8' by the length of the wood. In theory 3 face cords of 16" wood would be a full cord.

Another method of measurement is called a Cunit, representing 100 cubic feet, but this is uncommon in our area.

Feel free to contact me with any questions concerning these measuring techniques. Your USFS 'Timber Management Field Book' is a valuable guide.

INTERESTING FACT(S)

FIREWOOD VALUES

1 pound of wood =6,000-7,200 BTU
 1 pound of coal= 12,000 BTU
 1 pound of fuel oil= 18,000 BTU
 1 cord of dry wood= 1 ton of coal=200 gallons of fuel oil

Weight per standard cord good firewood species:
 Hickory 5800 pounds
 Yellow birch 5100 pounds
 Sugar maple 5300 pounds
 Red oak 5700 pounds

Fairly good, but not as good as above for firewood:

White birch 4500 pounds
 Soft maple 4300 pounds

Inferior firewood (but remember, all wood burns):

Aspen 3800 pounds
 White pine 3200 pounds
 Spruce 3000 pounds

JACK PARKER INTERVIEW

BY JOE HOVEL

Note from Joe:

At times we meet some interesting folks. Recently I have encountered a true maverick in an outspoken Jack Parker from Baltic, Michigan. Cousin Jack (CJ), as he is affectionately called by friends, is a neighbor to the Pilgrim River Project and he is part of the Watershed Study Committee. As you will read, CJ tells it like he sees it, yet with his resume and age (81) he has earned that right. With lots of folks asking me about the new mining craze and how it will affect our forests and water, I needed his take on things and I am happy to share. I asked an awful lot of questions, you be the judge of his answers.

PIF: Your title is mining engineer. Tell us a little about yourself, your work experience and education.

CJ: The foreshortened version follows: It all began in England in 1930, and that is not a typo. Left home in 1939 as a WWII evacuee. Left high school in 1946 and went to work as office boy at a coal mine. I went underground after one year – in the survey department. All coal mines were taken over by the National Coal Board and a few of us went to night school, then to one-day/week day school, to learn more about surveying, mining and geology. I worked at a group of four collieries, with my “papers,” until 1953.

A hiking/skiing vacation in Norway, atop a glacier, blinding white, sky a deep State-Police blue, convinced my buddy and me that there were better places to be than 2000 feet below surface, 4 to 5 feet of headroom, wearing only hard hat, long pants with kneepads, and steel-toed boots. Everything other than eyeballs and teeth covered with sweat and coal dust. So we quit. Dennis went to New Zealand, I to Canada, planning to pick apples at age 23, setting out to conquer the world, packsack on back.

First real job was as surveyor/engineer with a mining construction outfit, for nine months in the Arctic, sinking shaft and building plant for a small underground copper/nickel mine (history will repeat). I loved it, Eskimos, igloos, dog teams, frozen ears, wolves, ducks, fish unlimited, rocks and water, small crew. What more could a young fella want? And the food !!!!! They know enough to feed you so well that your other appetites are suppressed.

I moved on to other projects – nickel, uranium, rare earths. Decided that I had better go back to school and applied to ALL mining schools in North America, and only one would accept me – because in high school I had opted for arts and language, not science. Michigan Technological University (MTU or Mich Tech) Registrar Tom Sermon said that I could give it a try but would have to take additional make-up classes during the first year, 1953. So I did that, and paid him back by marrying his daughter, Levinia. Good deal. (MTU was formerly named the Michigan School of Mining and Technology)

I did OK in class because I liked the stuff. Did some research and teaching and worked during vacations in Canadian mines – gold, nickel and iron – and after 7 years moved on with degrees in mining, geology and geological engineering, same wife and three little girls. That’s where my education really started.

I worked for one year with a mining consultant out of Minneapolis, learning the ropes. Then the White Pine Copper Mine opened up only 75 miles from Houghton, home of MTU and in-laws – so we applied and landed a job there. First year was as an underground development foreman, and I learned the more worldly ropes. At Mich Tech I had already learned that $E = MC^2$ and you don’t push a rope.

After one year they opened a mining research department and I was moved in, doing hands-on research in such mundane practices as drilling and blasting and roof control – then came a God-sent opportunity to work on “Rock Mechanics” a new field of problem-solving involving rock properties and behavior – but practically- oriented toward safety and profitability. The real thing. Text books and academics took a back seat. I ate it up – could not get enough.

And since we saved money, and made money, the company encouraged us. I had a good crew and Copper Range Company was good to us. All was well.

Until, that is, after ten years, when I was called over to Administration on a Monday morning, was offered a chair behind closed doors and was told that the price of copper had gone down so much that I could empty my desk and go home early. So naturally I did that. Mrs. P was just going out for coffee with the girls and asked why I was home so early: "Lost your job?" "Yep." "OK. See you later." Kiss. Gone for coffee.

Politics: Don't question the Boss. End of era. But "ten years" is significant. It qualifies me for a pension, which will keep me in night crawlers if I don't live too long.

I had barely taken out my fishing tackle when the phone rang and Wally Been, Head of Mining Department at Tech, asked if I could teach two days a week, maybe Friday and Saturday if my calendar were full. Rock Mechanics and Rock Fragmentation. Could overnight at in-laws. Sounds like a conspiracy. I'll have to think it over, Wally, um, YES, of course I would! It worked out wonderfully. A couple of dozen sophs to seniors, some with mining experience, all eager to learn and very enthusiastic - which is contagious. Looking back I suppose that most boys would enjoy cooking up their own explosives in the kitchen then demonstrating their effectiveness. Then improving them ...

When summer came an exploration company called and asked if I would care to do some work in the Wrangell Mountains in Alaska (close to the original Kennecott mine) exploring for copper. Would I? And get paid for it? Living in a home-made plywood box labeled "Peavine Hilton." Good cook. Too much adventure some days. Never did get over the dismay I felt looking down at my feet and seeing a couple of thousand feet of air beneath them.

Then in autumn (in my business we don't like to say "Fall" or "Earth-shaking") came more school and more jobs. And, yes, more learning. A client told me not to use the term "consultant" because it is condescending. "Never forget that. You must work with your client, as his helper." He was right, of course, and the phone kept ringing. I am still NOT a consultant.

I would sometimes say, "Dear Wife: Couple more days on this report and I'll be caught up." To which she would respond, "Yeah. right." And the phone would ring again. For years that has gone on. Still rings occasionally - with no advertising. We figure that I stumbled into my niche and that somebody is looking out for us. Thanks Lord.

I am semi-retired now and thinking about retiring soon but - believe it or not - there are not enough mining engineers alive today, but optimistically plenty of bright young jocks coming up. But some are surprised to find out how dark it is underground! "Oh no, I don't need a lamp. I got good night vision ..." "OK then, if you say so. Let's go." An unforgettable lesson is about to be learned when I turn off my light. Likely he'll say something really religious.

So the world turns, as usual, and 500 mines later, here and abroad, every one is still a learning experience. After a few years the problem may be resolved at first glance, and the client can't believe it. So, instead of applying for a grant and setting up a 2-year research project comes this approach, "Hmmm. Have you tried reorienting your mine openings, by, let's say, about 30 degrees? No? Well, why don't we try it? Yeah. Today. Right away. After lunch?"

Jack goes home after the first blast. A week later the phone rings again and it's that same mine foreman, Sounds excited. "Hey Jack!" he yells (must be underground) "Ya know that experiment we tried last week? It really worked! Jeez, it looks like a different mine!" So Jack can go to sleep tonight with big smile on face. Another Mission Accomplished.

Like everything else, it's easy when you know how. Everybody can teach you something useful. For me it's been continuing education, at times with pay.

It is not unlikely that the man drilling blastholes for 30 years will understand his rocks better than the visiting professor, or the manager. So listen when the miner grabs your elbow and says, "You wanna see something interesting?" Listen well, and thank him, and give him credit ...

OK folks. That takes care of education and lifestyle and early experiences, I think most of it is true, there may be a bit of embellishment here and there...but most of it is true.

Now you know where I am coming from: antiquated, unemployed, indebted to no man (one woman), not academic, not government – striving mightily to do what is right, with very little support of any kind.

PIF: My God, Jack, what a resume. I have found it interesting that your career revolved around creating mines, and yet you have expressed serious reservations about the new mining madness grasping this three state area. Your position has garnered my attention. I have always felt it unconscionable to be blindly opposed to mining, as that would cause the poor in the third world to pay a further price for the desires and waste of the developed world. Like the veteran who becomes a peace activist, you are obviously speaking from an educated position. Just what is going on here?

CJ: My thoughts on the current “mining madness,” I believe that we have fallen into a snare, that we are manipulated into bickering...while their bulldozer pushes dirt. They are experts at mass deception, toying with amateur protesters. We are finely divided. We squish out between their toes.

First let me say, as strongly as possible, that I have been and always will be “for” mining as such. We need it and we cannot do without it. If anybody disagrees let him/her manage without mined materials for a week then walk to Baltic to tell me his/her experiences. Don’t walk on the road, and, of course, don’t accept a ride. Be mindful of what you eat, drink and wear, and where you sleep and keep warm... Your doubts should soon be dispelled and your comments henceforth suitably qualified.

But I have, of course, experienced the other side of the arguments too, topics against mining.

A frequent objection says, “Not in my backyard!” People feel hurt, and that is understandable. After all, it is your backyard. Although a cooler head might ask how it came to be your backyard. “Because I paid \$1,000 an acre for it!”

Then you were screwed. Bela Hubbard, who worked alongside Douglas Houghton mapping parts of the UP, about a century ago, wrote to his father, “I purchased yesterday 2,600 acres of pine lands which cost \$1.25 per acre.” We might well call that a steal because it was simply taken from the natives – who claimed that the land, like the sky and the water, belonged to all men. But he bought the land anyway, cut and sold the big pines, then the real estate. It was ever thus. Hardly a hero, but a “good” businessman.

As stolen property you don’t own it. It’s not your back yard. We overlook that point, especially if we bought or inherited some land, but you might bear it in mind. Or, if it is too painful - then hold your tongue...Abstain.

But everybody does it. Did you know that as soon as we liberated Kuwait and Iraq recently we quietly moved the border north a few miles, to bring more of the oilfield into the hands of President Bush and his Daddy? Did nobody tell you? Hm. But I digress. Let’s come back to America, land of the free...

To America, where Big Business, which actually runs the country, is accumulating acres by the million, for the resources. They openly subvert the laws, and change them as quickly as they can, by gutting agencies which were established to protect them. Then they take the cream from the crop and abandon the rest, and the damaged land and water with it.

It is this irresponsible mining which I object to, strenuously. Often a lone voice, crying in Baltic...

PIF: The Eagle Mine in the Yellow Dog area is now under construction. What is this mine to produce? What is the time frame of this mine? How large a surface area will be disrupted? How much public forest land is at stake? How deep are your reservations about this Eagle project and why? Besides clearing the forest and the obvious mine excavations and road building, do you foresee long term environmental consequences to Yellow Dog or Salmon Trout watersheds from this project? The questions are endless.

CJ: 1. THE KENNECOTT EAGLE PROPERTY. (KEMC)

Kennecott worked with the State to write laws governing the permitting process. Sounds good, eh?

Kennecott located and explored a small but very rich orebody, worth more than four billion dollars. That is \$4,000,000,000. Four thousand million. You cannot comprehend four billion.

How many people are living on earth today? Only 6.989 billion as of January 20 2012, before bedtime in London.

KEMC submitted a plan and an application for permits to mine. Experts were hired to evaluate them and found them to be unacceptable. That is in writing. The DEQ accepted the plans without question, thus shirking their duties openly, and went on to issue all permits on demand. Both KEMC and MDEQ ignored the new laws (Part 632).



Just northwest of the Eagle Mine, the Huron Mountains gives a beautiful view of the Abbaye Peninsula in the foreground with the Keweenaw Peninsula in the background. Some folks are concerned about damage to the Salmon Trout and Yellow Dog watersheds from this mine.

Photo provided by Mark Hovel

Adding insult to illegal injury and doctored data, they colluded in a plan to extract only the high grade ores (the massive and the semi-massive sulfides) over a period of, say, 5 to 10 years (not disclosed), so leaving behind a billion dollars-worth of “disseminated sulfides” which could extend the life of the mine – the jobs issue – another 16 years or so. That is clearly irresponsible, and MDNR should not have permitted it. But they did.

That is a small part of the story. Kennecott is modifying the plans as they go along, without public input. That, today, is the modus operandi. Illegal but accepted. They do not even talk about the data doctoring or the resulting dangerous mine design. They get away with it, smirking all the way to the bank.

The State Police say it's none of their business and hang up the phone.

Michigan courts side with Kennecott at every turn, even when blatantly wrong.

Michigan's Attorney General, after pledging to prosecute criminal activities at all levels, chooses not to do so. We need a new AG.

The US Attorney General, our last resort, did not respond for months, and THEN I am told that a case must go through agencies such as the FBI. Then they might or might not recommend it.

So a couple of weeks ago I sent it to FBI Marquette, the appropriate office.

Today (January 19, 2012) a phone call told me that they can do nothing, unless I can show that a criminal act was performed for personal gain. That's odd. I thought that all of these agencies were set up to investigate and prosecute crimes. I THOUGHT THAT WE WERE OBLIGED TO REPORT CRIMES. I DIDN'T KNOW THAT I HAD TO DO THE DETECTIVE WORK TOO. We need a new FBI.

So the Federal Bureau of Investigation will not investigate and the US Attorney General, at the top of the heap, will NOT administer justice. Then there is no justice.

I must have been dreaming when I saw busloads of detectives piling out of Greyhound buses on the Yellow Dog Plains at first light, in long raincoats with turned-up collars and slouch hats, chewing gum and firing Tommy guns at will.... Tourists will later seek out pockmarks in the pines with glee.

That's where we stand folks. Does any one care? But an appeal has been taken to Michigan Appellate Court by our original attorneys. That just might overturn the other court rulings.

2. SECOND EXAMPLE. THE FLAMBEAU MINE IN WISCONSIN. About 10 years ago KEMC mined high grade copper and gold from the open pit for four years, then backfilled the pit and left 2% copper ore in the ground. Again, this IS irresponsible mining, to which I object, while the regulatory agencies do not.

So that is my second gripe – the regulatory agencies do not even attempt to accomplish their missions. Even the EPA is being gutted as we sit, and in the three Great Lakes states governors are rushing us into legislation which would render our protections useless.

PIF: HOW DID WE GET INTO THIS MESS?

CJ: I've been watching it for years because in many ways it's a rerun of what I saw in Europe. Big Business has grabbed the reins. They have money and power and they tell you who to vote for in the elections, then make laws to favor Bigger Business. Democracy is in name only.

If you beg to differ please tell me, for a start, how much you really know about each candidate for President? Or mayor? Or road commission?

Zilch! You only know what has been told to you. And who pulls the strings? To find out write a few letters about something controversial to editors and to politicians. Go ahead! Try it! My bet is that you will not even try, or will give up after the first half-dozen rejections.

How many of you wanted to bomb and shell Baghdad and kill hundreds of thousands of people recently, to gain control of their oil reserves? Did you want to relax and watch Bubba's billion-dollar fireworks lighting up the sky?

Did you want to witness the willful destruction of a civilization ten times as old as our own? Did you want to watch an American army truck toppling an Iraqi statue? Little kids waving little Stars and Stripes we handed out?

As we spend billions to fight “insurgents” – have you checked to find out what insurgents do for a living? Please do that.

We are duped all of our lives, to serve Big Business.

Now let's bring in the mining issue. A big, rich operator wants to get bigger and richer, and he specializes in recovery of mineral resources. His scouts make a search. Current targets are in undeveloped East Africa. Political activities are surfacing in Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Somalia, Sudan and Kenya to overthrow, reform or enlist governments we can control – for their resources.

Same thing in this country, the goal is to gain control over state and local governments on account of their mineral riches.

Who cared about the UP when all we had to boast about was pasties? Or Wisconsin with its cooows (oh ya, the Packers)? And Minnesota with what? Taconite and grey wolves. (and the Vikings)? Then along came the geologists and their Failed Rift –and GREED stepped in. And with it a need to control mineral rights and mining laws and regulatory agencies, using proven propaganda backed by controlled media.

I'm still betting that not one of you can comprehend what a billion looks like. All the people in the whole world = 7 billion....yes, 7 billion!

3. Now consider the value of the Eagle orebody, in February 2006. More has been added since that time. That small but rich orebody alone was worth more than 4.7 billion. And several more have already been defined. In my mind there are too many zeroes west of the decimal point but I have very serious doubts about the integrity of anybody who has to deal for such a prize. That's serious money.

First we must understand how Big Business obtains permits to mine – when their plans are somewhat iffy. Here is the standard approach today:

*Do anything, say anything, promise anything – but get the permits!
We can always make changes as we go along.*

We have seen and heard the first stage at the Eagle project – the promises, the money, the jobs, the add-on jobs, prosperity forever. With no serious damage to come.

Now we are in the second stage – making changes with no public hearings or other input. All opposition has been squelched.

PIF: And just where will it end? Not far from the western edge of the UP, in Iron and Ashland Counties of Wisconsin, the commotion is running rampant about the new Gogebic Taconite Mine (GTac) proposal.

GTac is proposing a 900 foot deep open pit mine in the Penokee Hills, even though the ore body is 1800 feet deep, and apparently legislature intends to be as friendly as possible to the company. Apparently Iron County needs to give over 3000 acres of county forest land for the term of the mine. Is this an environmentally and socially safe and honest proposal? You have said this should be an underground mine, as that would be safer socially and environmentally.

There appears to be deep divisions brewing amongst the populace concerning this GTac proposal. I found it interesting last week, that one of the promoters of AB426 (the ferrous mining legislation) learned for the first time at the hearing in Hurley, that the Native Americans have treaties which give them a seat at the table when resources are at stake. Are the natives correct, have they been ignored and is this legislation going to threaten the natural resources, especially the Bad River? Can the tribe stop this mine? The Bad River tribe says they will,

with their clean water standards blessed by the EPA. Some opponents state that the attitude of GTac is appalling, akin to “we will supply some badly needed jobs, but you must pander to us, sacrifice your water and divide your populace.”

CJ: At Penokee the preliminaries are being played out. Billions of dollars are floating in the air (but not a mine in sight).

At the Eagle we had a strong sense that we, the people, were being duped, manipulated, but not many people realized the extent of it. More recently writer Woods Person described the methodology very clearly in this parable. I can do no better than to quote direct, as follows. Soak it up, memorize it. See it in our daily lives.

THE PARABLE OF THE SILVER FOX.

http://woodsperson.blogspot.com/2011_10_01_archive.html

(Note by Joe)

I listened to the story of the Silver Fox by Woods Person. It is the same semantics we have seen in development schemes, etc., through the years. The outsider (Silver Fox) comes in, offers big money which will satisfy every financial woe in the community, (or company stockholders), the very price that nobody would turn down. He then states that there is no rush to decision, we will talk next week. When he returns he says that his offer stands, but HE names the terms, which are next to impossible for people of sound judgement to agree to if selling. By that time, of course, the decision makers had the proceeds spent in their minds. Now the internal disagreement starts as the fox recedes into the background. In turn, the divisiveness creates such turmoil among the stakeholders that the valuation is severely diminished, and ripe for take over. Is this what has begun to transpire in the Penokee Hills? GTac originally promised a socially responsible mine, then shortly after claimed the laws needed to be changed or they would not even conduct further exploration. By this time neighbor is pitted against neighbor, and no one locally really knows if a responsible ore body exists. Remember an ‘ore body is mineral deposit which can be extracted at a profit.’ If there are sulfides or pyrites in the deposit or the wasted rock, the whole process of a new law is a shame. Read on!

The Lesson (excerpted from the parable of the Silver Fox....thanks to Woodsperson from Iron County}

We, the citizens of Iron and Ashland Counties, are the target “company” and GTac is, well, you know who.

GTac came to town in October of 2010 promising 700 to 3000 jobs, tax revenues and a return to prosperity for our community. We spent 6 or so months “spending” the money.

Then, at the May 25th meeting in Ironwood, we learned the terms and conditions – rewriting our mining laws, weakening our environmental laws and permitting process, eliminating local input, reduced tax revenues, etc.

We are now in the divide and conquer phase.

We have become angry with our neighbors and friends or afraid to mention the subject at all.

There are those in the community – the unemployed or under employed, the struggling small business owner, the local leader -- hurting for revenues – who are desperate, who want a mine under any terms.

There are those who are happy with things the way they are, or the NIMBY’s who don’t want a mine under any condition.

And, there are those in the middle who see the possible good things about a mining economy but who are not willing to agree to terms that are too dear.

Problem is, that the company isn't saying what it's real terms are. Why should they?

We, the arguing, are busy in a race to the bottom – a race to improve their bottom line.

The "Middle's" Moral Dilemma.

Those in the middle most often want to keep peace with their neighbors. They may see the strong points of both sides. They also see the well-funded extremes using tactics such as false information, exaggeration, bias and scapegoating to make their arguments. They may want to “call out” their neighbors for these tactics, to point out the lies and exaggerations, but, they hesitate because they don't want to cause even more polarization, or be unfriended, or be left out of the discussion and decision process.

The best course would be to empower the “middle” to dominate the conversation (and the media) with dissemination of facts. What will be the real economic benefit of a mine? Who will benefit? What will be the cost of hosting a mine? What are the real environmental issues? And, if the company is given what they want, what is the probability that they will go forward with the project?

CJ: Now, having read the story through a couple of times, it should be abundantly, embarrassingly clear how easily we have been manipulated into splintering our efforts as each little red herring is dropped on the trail.

There is no united front facing the enemy when he ponders or makes his next move. That being the case he can afford to simply ignore us and our arguments. He can be sure that we will fall by the wayside, beaten. We will run out of money, time, press, supporters and eventually we will give up, defeated.

Certainly there will be differences of opinion. Some, for example, will want to save every tree. Some, like me, would like to have trails for non-motorized traffic. Some would like to split up the territory into small plots with a camp on every acre. Some will say no to all mining. Some will want mining jobs. My thinking is that for the time being all of these many wants should be set aside until the anxious enemy has been laid to rest and we can figure out acceptable compromises. I don't think the Penokee is hurting anybody. It took billions of years to make that so called 'ore,' it is not going anywhere while the details are worked out. Demand in this country has plummeted with the recession, perhaps by the time it is figured out it will not need to go to China.

So first stop bickering. Turn emphasis away from pet projects – which necessarily detract from the common goal – and search for legal avenues to pursue and to stymie that enemy. If possible, define his illegal activities so that he can be prosecuted by authorities. If politicians step out of bounds nail them and remove them by exposing their misdeeds. I give an example:

On Day One of the permitting process for the Eagle project, in 2006, there were two covering letters for the document.

Each included a statement that the document had been prepared according to the requirements of the new Michigan Mining Law. One was signed by Donahue for Foth – the engineering group which assembled the application, the other was signed by Jon Cherry – the Project Manager at that time. Anybody who had read the few pages of the new law – “Part 632” would have noticed that the requirements had NOT been followed, many times.

That should have been a “Showstopper” and the prescribed penalties should have been applied.

AT THE PENOKEE here would be a good place to start looking: Part 632 (Michigan) warns that any person making false presentations in the permitting process faces cash penalties and/or jail time.

Any suggestion that there is an ore body at the west end of the Penokee Range is, I believe, a false statement. And the list of those who use the term, both proponents and opponents – is long.

The new definitions of ore as ferrous or non-ferrous are, I believe, incorrect and misleading – hence false. Probably the most telling comment on the proposed pit is that, even if profitable ore were defined, the presence of pyrite in the Tyler formation and, to a lesser extent, in the “ore,” would lead to unacceptable acid drainage from waste rock and from tailings. The known presence of pyrite (iron sulfide), in modest amounts in the iron-bearing rocks of the Ironwood Formation and in abundance in the overlying Tyler formation - the waste rock - would eliminate the possibility of open-pit mining anyway. There would have to be acid drainage from the proposed waste piles and from the tailings ponds - for ever - as at the Buck and Dober mines at Iron River, Michigan.

That should silence the proponents until they could prove otherwise. Other issues are superfluous at this time and stage.

Take that to your legislators.

CJ

PIF: I suspect we may learn more from cousin Jack before this all plays out. We experienced the Silver Fox story several years back while opposing the development plans around the UP flowages. The developer wanted the laws and public FERC agreements, and local zoning severely compromised in order to proceed. The rest is history, in this case the opposition slowed down the process enough for the recession to put it in a coffin.

* Visit www.partnersinforesstry for PIF's position on the mine proposal in the Penokee Range*

Have you checked out

PIF's website?

www.partnersinforesstry.com

Please use the website to expose your business, service, or tree farm. Share thoughts, ideas, articles, photos, links.

All suggestions are welcome and appreciated! This is your COOP, we need your input as much or more than your dues.

Please forward the information to Margo Popovich at margo122050@mac.com.

As a service to PIF members, contact Joe for special pricing on your needs for:

- Napoleon wood stoves
- wood finishes and preservatives
- garden and tree amendments
- grass seed for trails

PIF is working with E G Nadeau of Cooperative Development Service and Pam Porter of the Biomass Energy Resource Center, in exploring our greater involvement in wood energy.

If you have an interest in this topic please contact us, as we would like your participation.

Future Articles

PIF members are encouraged to submit articles, announcements, photos, and items of interest for future newsletters. Submissions may be forwarded to Margo Popovich at margo122050@mac.com or mailed to:

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"This institution is an equal opportunity provider."

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