

"Forest Management is the most important Environmental Consideration"

By Robbo Holleran - Vermont Forester and Educator

As Mike celebrates his 30th year for the America's Forests calendar, I am reminded that I met him shortly after he started and have been honored to be his friend and a contributor. We have toured together through his Pacific Northwest and my New England stomping grounds. He has widened my horizons and I hope he will for you. These calendars are proudly displayed around the country by those who care about forests: people who earn their livelihood from forests, landowners, legislators, artists, and bird-watchers.

Forests are always changing. It is natural that trees grow, and forests get crowded. Some trees die from crowding, insects, and disease; some trees and forests are consumed by fire. Those of us involved in active forest management know that we can influence this change in the forest toward desired conditions. These conditions vary by region and by ownership. Overall, our stewardship works to keep forests healthy and productive, with goals for managing habitat and structural diversity, matching the species to the site, and doing things well.

"Wood is good!" It is the best raw material on environmental grounds: renewable, recyclable, biodegradable, and usually organically grown. The growing of this wood provides a broad range of other benefits: wildlife habitat, clean water, clean air, non-timber products, and recreational opportunity. These forests, even intensively managed plantations, have more biodiversity than other crops and are used for more than just wood production. Manufacturing of wood products uses less energy and creates less pollution than other raw materials. As Dr. Patrick Moore says "Trees are the answer!"

Wood products are part of the global economy. Our products have to compete with lumber and fiber from all over the world, and the prices are determined by that global market. Our costs are determined locally, however. We do a better job of forest management here than most other parts of the world and our efforts should be better encouraged by



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public policy. America produces 10-15 billion cubic feet of wood products annually, which is less than half the annual growth, and about 1% of the total standing inventory. We have more trees, more wood, more acres of forest, than we did 20 or 100 years ago. Harvesting less than the growth rate in nearly every state and nearly every year for the past 100 years sounds like a great success story, and it is.

But there are many challenges. Mortality rates have increased about 3-fold in the past 60 years. This is the logical result of forest crowding, but is exacerbated by forest insects and diseases, including exotic pests. The western forests burn, but the eastern forests merely rot. Each forest type has its own problems, and we have local solutions. The forestry community is full of innovation. Fire risk reduction in dry western forests fascinates me, with the differences between management of lodgepole and Ponderosa pine, for example. Southern pine plantations are intensively managed with many new practices such as fertilization to increase yield.

Two-aged silvicultural systems in northern hardwoods bridges the gap between traditional even-aged and uneven-aged methods. In every region, we see wildlife habitat integrated into forest management practices with more frequency and effectiveness.

We are all proud of our contributions to America's forests, their health and productivity, and providing natural forest products for American families. We are helping the country to enjoy clean air and water, abundant wildlife, forest recreation, and the myriad of other benefits our forests provide. We are part of a long tradition of living close to the land, enjoying the natural cycles of the seasons and the growth of the forest. As you flip the pages of this calendar through the year, you will tour the country through the eyes of a man who loves America's Forests: Mike McMurray.

I want to thank my good friend, Robbo for his tireless work with agencies, industry, environmentalists and the public to help inform and educate people on the benefits of 'Wood' and the best ways to manage this wonderful resource.