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TREE FARM BULLETIN



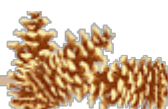
Hart and Utilia Alex 2015 New Mexico Tree Farmer of the Year

By Matthew Silva – Chair

As always, autumn in New Mexico sets the perfect stage for any celebration. On October 15, my wife and I traveled to Peñasco to meet with fellow tree farmers and to recognize the 2015 New Mexico Tree Farmers of the Year – **Hart and Utilia Alex**. At the festivities, we were treated to local hospitality, thought provoking presentations, helpful publications, and a wonderful tour of the forest by our hosts, Hart and Utilia.

Hart Alex summarized the ongoing work on their forest. Until recently, the treated property was a thicket of pine, fir, spruce and aspen. But it was not always that way. Hart spoke of the early condition of the property as described to him by the previous owner. Some decades ago, as a boy, the owner would gallop his horse, between majestic trees, through fields of grass as high as the belly of the horse. In the following decades, the forest had grown into an overwhelming thicket of stunted trees, with no grass.

Mary Stuever of State Forestry gave a wonderful, interactive presentation on forest fires (complete with props). She distributed two slabs of wood with tree rings. For centuries, forest fires had occurred every few years as seen in the tree rings. These natural fires were sustained by the verdant fields of grass and forage. After 1890, the tree rings showed a dramatic drop in the occurrence of fire. The first major event was the large-scale grazing of livestock. This grazing reduced the amount of grass needed as fuel to sustain naturally occurring fires. Livestock grazing was prevalent until the 1940s. Then a second major event occurred. Active fire suppression became a policy and practice throughout the country. Even in areas where grass and forage were present, fires were extinguished as soon as they began. Hence, thickets of stunted, overcrowded trees remained unburned and began to take over the landscape.



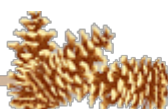
Our host, Hart showed us the project on which his crew was currently working. They were felling selected trees per the prescription needed for their area. The felled trees were limbed and bucked into firewood. The firewood was then sold to individuals and removed from the forest. Eventually the forest would be returned to a self-sustaining condition that would allow for natural recurring fires.

There is much work left to be done on the Alex property. And there is even more work needed to be done on the adjacent properties. Hart and Utilia Alex embody the underlying essence of the American Tree Farm System. This is a labor of love that will transcend generations. And therefore, it was our honor and privilege to recognize Hart and Utilia Alex as the 2015 New Mexico Tree Farmer of the Year.



"Focus on the journey, not the destination. Joy is found not in finishing an activity but in doing it."

Greg Andersen



1) BUY, SELL OR TRADE

Are you looking for forestry related equipment to buy (i.e. chipper, splitter, chainsaw, etc.)? Or, do you own forestry related equipment you would like to sell or trade? We would like to help you make the connection with other New Mexico Tree Farmers. Provide us with a description of the equipment, price, photo and contact information and we will post it in the New Mexico Tree Farm Bulletin. If you would like us to help you make the connection please provide information to Arnie Friedt at arnie.friedt@state.nm.us

2) COMMUNITY CORNER

If your community is having a forestry related public event let us know the details and we would be delighted to promote your event in the New Mexico Tree Farm Bulletin. Give us the event details, Who, What, Where and When with contact information and we will include in our monthly bulletin. If you would like us to help you promote your event, please provide information to Arnie Friedt at arnie.friedt@state.nm.us

3) NEW WEBSITE ADDRESS

The New Mexico Tree Farm Program is in the process of switching website addresses. Our current website is at <http://www.nmfamilyforests.org/> and will be discontinued at the close of this year (2016). Our new website is at <https://www.treefarmssystem.org/new-mexico> and is already active. Current feature include: contact information, resources, newsletters, bulletins and our calendar of events. Take a few minutes and check out our new website (provided to us by the American Tree Farm System).

4) NEW MEXICO TREE FARM COMMITTEE MEETING

All Tree Farmers are invited and encouraged to attend our 3rd New Mexico Tree Farm Committee Meeting of the year (three held annually). Please join us at 1:30 pm on Wednesday, December 14, 2016 (Albuquerque meeting location to be determined). Come out and hear what other tree farmers have been up to and share your tree farm accomplishments with the group. We look forward to visiting with you. If you have any questions please contact Arnie Friedt at arnie.friedt@state.nm.us

