

Good Stuff

By Tom Berger

There have been some good things happening in Ohio's Tree Farm Program in the recent months. I want to try to keep you up to date on some statewide happenings. The National Tree Farm Program prides itself in its outreach to its members and to family forest owners. The Ohio program also tries to do a good job in our outreach to members and landowners. Therefore, let me update you on some good stuff that has been happening in Ohio.

Our Annual Tree Farm Luncheon was held again this year at the Ohio Forestry Association's Annual Meeting. This year's meeting was held at Deer Creek State Park, located outside of Mt. Sterling. The Tree Farm Luncheon is always very well attended and this year was no different – we filled the room. Walt Lange was the Master of Ceremony and did his usual great job. This has always been a great forum to recognize the Tree Farmer of the Year, and this year's winner is Mr. Joe Mattingly from Muskingum County. Joe did a good job of sharing his tree farm story with us. We also recognized our Inspecting Forester of the Year, Mr. Jerry Williams, of Smurfit-Stone Corporation of Coshocton. Jerry is a very dedicated tree farm inspector and does a lot for our program. The Division of Forestry was also recognized for its "Demonstration Forest" at Mohican State Forest. Bob Simpson, Senior Vice President of the American Forest Foundation presented Chief Dave Lytle with the Demonstration Tree Farm sign.

Our Ohio Tree Farm Mentoring Program needed a little re-vitalizing, and Jack and Janet Sweigart picked up the ball and ran with it. The purpose of the mentoring program is to get Tree Farmers to help their friends and neighbors learn more about the Tree Farm Program. Answering phone calls, distributing Tree Farm and other forestry information, hosting field days, and one-on-one site visits are all educational activities and areas where mentors will assist. The Sweigarts gathered all of the original mentors and a few more interested Tree Farmers to attend a daylong meeting held at Walnut Creek. Approximately 40 participants showed great interest in assisting the Tree Farm Program. The State Tree Farm Committee will now do its best to get the mentors involved in Tree Farm activities this year. Tree Farms that are in need of a five-year visit may benefit from the assistance of mentors. These are not the required inspections, but those that normally get a visit every five years. Mentors visiting these local Tree Farms would be a big help for the Division's busy service foresters.

I also wanted to mention that the new Project Learning Tree program "Connecting Kids to Nature" is up and running and is an excellent way to help kids understand the environment in which they live. I realize that there was a short article in the last journal, but if you did not read it closely – check it out. This is a great tool for "non-educators." My wife is a second grade teacher, and she brings home some sad stories of how many of the children at her school do not really understand nature or the environment in which they live. We all need to help with this problem and this is a great tool to use with friends or family.

Project Learning Tree has created a series of kid activities for "non-educators" (e.g. parents and families) to engage their children, grandchildren, neighbors' or friends' children in the outdoors. The activities are modified from Project Learning Tree's PreK-8 Environmental Education Activity Guide and are available online at <http://www.learnoutside.org/familyactivities.html>

Take your children, grandchildren, neighbors' or friends' children outside and try one of these activities today! For more information on a PLT workshop, please contact State Coordinator Sue Wintering. Sue's email address is plt@dnr.state.oh.us