

Utah Forest News

Utah Forest Landowner
Education Program Newsletter

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Timber Harvest Tour

We want to share the story of how productive Utah forests can be by showing the results of good harvesting practices over three generations. Join us for an afternoon of fresh air and fall colors on the south slope of the Uinta Mountains. Don't miss this chance to see for yourself what timber harvesting can be and ask your own questions about timber harvesting. Expert loggers and sale administrators will be present and foresters from USU Extension and the Utah Division of Forestry, Fire & State Lands will be on-hand to facilitate the discussion.

Thursday, September 19, 2002

1:30 p.m. meet at the Blazzard Sawmill, on highway 32 just north of Kamas. We will arrange a carpool and leave for a woods tour, returning to Kamas by 7:30 p.m. Snack break and beverages provided. Please RSVP to Darren McAvoy by Tuesday, Sept. 17 at 435-797-0560 or to darrenm@cnr.usu.edu. Brought to you by Utah State University Extension's Forest Landowner Education Program.

How Productive Utah Forests Can Be

Although it seems unlikely, the second most arid state in the nation actually does have very productive forests. The work of rancher, sawmill operator and logger John Blazzard of Kamas demonstrates it well. Blazzard is proud of the way his family has treated Utah forests, and they have been at it for generations.



John Blazzard

It might be argued that no family in Utah has had a deeper association with its forests than these long-time residents of Kamas. Currently, John and his brother James (Jimmy) operate the family's sawmill, logging business, and cattle ranch in Kamas. Their father Jim Senior, built the mill there during the 1950s. Their grandfather added value to local forest products with his box manufacturing plant which produced, among other things, ammunition boxes for the Second World War. Finally, their great grandfather, John Pack, cut and delivered Brigham Young's first set of house logs as he erected the first buildings in Salt Lake City.

continued on page 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- How to Recognize a Good Timber Harvest
- Classified

That history is significant because it is part of what makes the Blazzards such careful loggers. Doug Page is the silviculturist for the surrounding Uinta National Forest, where the Blazzards get much of their wood. Page has been working with the Blazzards for years and was able to relate the value of that background when he commented that:



A picture of Jim Senior hangs on the office wall.

“The Blazzard family history in the area provides a perspective that makes them more conscious than the fly-by-night operations I sometimes see. They recognize that and manage it right so that their history becomes their future.”

When I walked into the front office of the Blazzard Lumber Company I was greeted by Anna Mae Blazzard, John’s mother, who was busy helping out a couple of firewood cutters. As Blazzard showed me around the mill, which employs 18 to 20 people, I was introduced to family members at every turn—from the front desk to the green-chain (a board-sorting station). This could stand as the definition of a family-run business.

The mill was a-buzz with news that in the next few days they would be switching gears from mill-work to woods-work. As it was early July, the surrounding mountains were finally dried out from the winter snowpack, and harvesting could begin without causing soil damage. I asked each person I met in the mill which job they would soon be doing in the woods. The answer was always preceded

with “whatever needs done.” The attitude of pitching in to get the job done was uplifting.

At most sawmills these days it is standard operating procedure to contract out most of the logging operations to other companies that specialize in timber harvesting. It was surprising, therefore, to see stacks of logging equipment lined up in the mill yard, including

several log trucks, cats, skidders, a log processor, a feller-buncher, and more, and then Blazzard told me it had all been idle since October.



Anna Mae Blazzard at the front desk of the Blazzard Lumber Company.

The Blazzards have maintained a traditional approach to the seasonality of woods-work that seems unique today. They log during the summer when the ground is dry and free of deep snow, and

saw those logs into boards all winter. Although it sounds simple, it comes with tremendous costs, such as having idle logging equipment all winter, and an idle sawmill most of the summer. On the other hand, it showed great advantages for the company employees, such as providing year-round work that involves a variety of tasks and working environments.

The Blazzards purchase most of the wood for their mill from the nearby U.S. Forest Service districts. Although

the wood they cut is grown locally, their product marketing and distribution are nationwide. As I stood in the mill yard, a truck load of wood paneling destined for Kentucky pulled out, giving an impression that diverges from the mom-and-pop feel.

The story of their success was enhanced when Blazzard showed me the results of their work nearby on the Uinta National Forest.

The first stop was a spruce stand along a highway where his family has harvested timber four times during his life. It is an excellent example of how Utah forests can produce wood products while maintaining their scenic beauty. It is safe to say that few motorists passing by on Wolf Creek Pass

notice that the area has ever been logged, let alone logged four times. I, coincidentally, stopped on top of that pass for a wildflower photo a year ago and didn't realize that the stand in the background had ever been harvested (see photo on page 7).

When I asked Page about the recent harvest he explained that "normally we wait 25 years before re-

entering a stand, because that time of inactivity is important, but on Wolf Creek Pass we re-entered 15 years after the previous logging because that previous entry was so light; the stand was set up as prime beetle bait." The density of the stand and size of the trees were so great that it produced lots of cool and shady habitat, ideal for spruce beetles.



Brothers Jimmy and John Blazzard in the mill yard. Notice the equipment in the background, sitting idle until the ground is dry.

Just down the road, in Soapstone Basin, Blazzard showed me a forest of mixed conifer and aspen that the family had logged before, and are currently logging again. It was a different forest type from the spruce stand we had just come from, yet is an equally strong example of the ability of Utah forests to simultaneously

offer scenic beauty, recreational opportunities, wildlife habitat, and wood products. Page also believes the way the Forest Service has managed the stand has made a difference. "This area represents perhaps the best example of management with control in Utah, whereas much of the management that has occurred on private lands in Utah has occurred without controls."

How to Recognize A Good Timber Harvest

There are many components to sustainable forest management; one of them is high quality timber harvesting. With careful planning and implementation harvesting can result in more diverse and beautiful forests that are resilient when natural disturbances occur. Timber harvesting is one of the keys to managing the mixture and density of trees in western forests and is an essential component of sustaining the health, beauty and resilience of these forest ecosystems.



This is another central Utah timber harvest where many big trees were removed. However, many of the best trees were retained and protected, one component of a good timber harvest.

and in what condition, than what is taken. Choosing the correct silvicultural approach is a necessary first step toward achieving the desired future condition.

These points apply to selective harvesting practices, which can be done in ways to improve the health, beauty,

Any timber harvest should begin with the assistance of a professional forester and should be part of an overall forest management plan. A forester can help a landowner visualize what the stand might look like in the future under different management scenarios. Quality harvesting practices often focus more on what was left

and resiliency of the forest while producing needed wood products. Although it generally takes the hard work and dedication of landowners, foresters, and loggers to achieve a good timber harvest, these points will help anyone recognize what a good harvest looks like.

1. Leave-trees and vegetation

The trees left after a harvest (leave-trees) are often the first indication of a good harvest. Leave-trees should represent a portion of the best trees available before the harvest and should be designated in advance by a forester. The quality of the future stand can be seen in the quality of the leave-trees after a harvest.

Leave-trees should be generally free of insects and diseases that will pose a threat to the future stand. The foliage should have good color and a vigorous appearance, and should be balanced in its distribution along the stem of the tree, covering at least one third of the trunk. The bole or trunk of the tree should be reasonably straight, lacking major forks and crookedness. Diversity of species, ages, heights and diameters should be maintained and protected. Preferred species are those that are more long-lived and resistant to disturbances like fire, wind, and disease. Snags, or standing dead trees have tremendous wildlife value and should be retained on each acre.

An objectionable and all-too-common practice that can be confused with selective harvesting is to high-grade a stand of trees or take the best and leave the rest. Diameter-limit cutting is usually equivalent to



Trees left along the stream recently harvested area stabilize its banks.

high-grading. Clearcutting, although ugly, can be an appropriate prescription for encouraging regeneration of certain species such as lodgepole pine and quaking aspen.



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shade the creek and

2. Water

One hallmark of quality timber harvesting is protecting the forest's water resources. It is often argued that the most important product of our forests is clean water. In Utah, where water is at a premium, forests tend to grow in the headwaters of our rivers, making forestry practices all the more important.

Most water quality problems associated with timber harvesting come from poor drainage of water from the road surface, caused by poor road construction or maintenance. Drainage structures such as rolling dips, water turn-outs, and water bars should be used to safely get water off a road before erosion starts carrying sediment into the creek-bed. Ruts cause water to run down a road; water should run off a road, not down it. Culverts that are too small, plugged, or poorly placed cause roads to fail, damaging fisheries and water supplies, and require costly rebuilding. (See the Utah Forest Water Quality

Guidelines for more information; call 435-797-0560 for a free copy.)

3. Soil

Operating during very wet conditions causes ruts in the woods, a key indicator of soil damage. Logging operations should cease whenever rutting occurs until the

soil dries. Skid trails should be limited in number, widely spaced and their use closely adhered to. Although some soil disturbance can be beneficial for regeneration, an excessive amount of exposed soil on steep slopes presents erosion problems.

4. Visual Quality

Protection and promotion of visual quality is a goal that can be compatible with timber harvesting. Consider how a



Excessive skid trail construction damages soil, water, forest productivity and visual quality.

harvest will look from both near and far. Harvested areas should blend into the landscape whenever possible. Hard edges such as along the side of a clearcut should be avoided; feathered edges improve wildlife habitat and visual quality. Manage to leave large trees that are well spaced. Stumps should be cut less than 12 inches tall. Slash should be cleaned up enough to limit fire danger, but not so much that the nutrient cycling from the decaying limbs and foliage is lost.

5. Post Harvest: Buttoned up and put to bed

The harvesting process concludes with rehabilitating the sale area in preparation for a period of reduced management activities. Soil that was exposed during harvesting, such as on skid trails and landings, should be re-seeded with a native seed mix and water-barred if on a slope. Roads that will no longer be used should be physically closed with barriers, water-bars installed to control erosion, and culverts removed to prevent future erosion and stream sedimentation problems. Disposal of excessive logging debris, or slash, is another task that often occurs post-harvest. When most of the better trees are removed replanting often is needed, and should be done using nursery stock whose seed came from and was grown for that specific area. Monitoring the remaining stand is important; examining seedling survival, wind damage, erosion potential, and noxious weed spread.

These are some of the differences between a harvest that is well planned and executed, and a fly-by-night operation. These points should illustrate good forest stewardship principles and show how timber harvesting can be used as an effective and increasingly necessary forest stewardship tool. Public understanding of these principles has also become necessary, as the idea of harvesting a portion of

the timber existing on public lands becomes a necessary part of restoring forest structure in a way that is environmentally sensitive, aesthetically pleasing, and cost effective. Finally, this approach can help to reduce our dependency on foreign wood supplies; wood that is grown and harvested at home is likely being done under better environmental and social conditions than wood that is harvested abroad.



This northeastern Utah timber stand was logged recently by Blazzard Lumber Company and still has a diversity of tree species, heights, and diameters with some of the best of each being retained and protected.

the practice. When done right, though, these become short term inconveniences that are outweighed by the societal benefits of long-term proactive forest management.

Without a doubt, to most people timber harvesting is not a pretty sight; the ground appears torn up by equipment, ugly slash piles and the smoke they will produce are just a few of the nuisances associated with

Utah Forest News

Classified

How Productive Can Utah Forests Be?...continued

With one of Utah's last and largest running sawmills, and a 300 mother-cow ranch, the Blazards are in the midst of challenging times in today's changing world. When I asked Blizzard how they are holding up in the face of these difficulties, he just responded with a smile. "You've got to run a pretty good sawmill to afford raising cattle."



In the background of this wildflower picture is a beautiful spruce stand that, unknown to the photographer at the time, has been logged four times in the past.

Do you have forest resources you want to sell? Are there specific timber resources you want to buy? Do you offer services useful to forest landowners? This is the place to advertise your needs! Advertisement is free. If you would like to place an ad, call Darren McAvoy at 435-797-0560 or e-mail darrenm@cnr.usu.edu.

• **Standard Wood Supply** is looking for truck loads of pinion, cedar, or pine to purchase. Call Don at 801-485-9663.

This classified section is a service for forest landowners. Listing of these services, companies, and individuals in no way implies endorsement by USU Extension. We suggest that you use the same precautions you would use in the purchase or sale of any goods and services, including asking for and checking references and using a written agreement to clarify the obligations and responsibilities involved in a sale or service contract.

COMING THIS FALL:

• **Fire Effects on Forest Health:** Workshop series featuring monthly weekday-evening presentations in Moab beginning this October. Contact Grand County USU Extension Agent Mike Johnson for details at 435-259-7558.

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For More Information:

Regarding any of the information presented in this newsletter, please call Darren McAvoy at Utah State University, 435-797-0560, write him at 5230 Old Main Hill, Logan, UT 84322-5230, or email darrenm@cnr.usu.edu.

State of Utah Division of Forestry, Fire & State Lands (DFF&SL) service foresters for your area can be contacted by calling 801-538-5555.

Ideas and written contributions to this newsletter are encouraged. Send your comments to the return address above or call 435-797-0560, or email darrenm@cnr.usu.edu.

COMING EVENTS:

- **Tour of Harvested Areas: Kamas, Thursday September 19, 2002, 1:30 p.m.** Meet at the Blizzard Sawmill, on highway 32 just north of Kamas. We will arrange a carpool and leave for a woods tour, returning to Kamas by 7:30 p.m. Snack break and beverages provided. Please RSVP to Darren McAvoy by Tuesday, Sept. 17, at 435-797-0560 or to darrenm@cnr.usu.edu.
- **Aspen Management Tour for Private Landowners: Cedar City, Saturday, September 21, 2002, 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.** Aspen regeneration and planting will be the focus of this field tour. Transportation, lunches, and breaks provided. Please RSVP Melanie (USU Extension) at 435-586-8132 as-soon-as-possible to attend.