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the Forest Steward

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A place for Guild forestry

Celebrating the impact of inspiration, collaboration,
partnerships, and innovative perspectives.



Forest Stewards
Guild
putting the forest first

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*Cover photos are from the Stone Fence Farm
Guild Gathering in June 2019. Photos by:
Forest Stewards Guild.*

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As a board member of the Forest Stewards Guild and an owner of forested land in northern New Mexico, I understand how vital it is for landowners to manage their land to create a healthy ecosystem that supports wildlife and resists uncontrolled wildfires.

Fifteen years ago, my husband and I purchased land on Glorieta Mesa to preserve nearly 500 acres of an old ranching operation, mainly for recreational uses. We explored the land and it became obvious that the piñon and juniper (PJ) forest was heavily overgrown. Many tall ponderosa pines were surrounded by thick stands of PJ. These so-called “ladder fuels,” created the risk that a low-intensity ground fire could erupt into a massive crown fire in the canopy. To lower the risk, thinning work was needed. In addition, the land’s access road was a major source of erosion, making it necessary to mitigate the damage along the road and in the drainage/riparian area of the Padre Springs Creek that crosses our land.

As we learned more about the condition of the grasslands encroached by the overgrown stands of PJ forest, we realized that a more comprehensive conservation planning process was required. Without some yearly maintenance, the stock tanks along the intermittent Padre Springs Creek would silt up, thereby denying wildlife the critical water resource for their survival. Worst of all, a crown fire driven by hot, dry winds in the May and June wildfire season, could blacken the entire mesa for decades to come. Thinning and riparian restoration are not “options” for landowners.

We employed Jan-Willem Jansens, a Guild member and forest and watershed expert, to produce a long-range management plan. For more than five consecutive years we have hired tree-thinning crews and waterway restoration volunteers to rebuild the dams and spillways for two stock ponds in the drainage, as well as an old rock dam that had failed in a riparian willow zone. Thinning along the access roads complemented the watershed drainage structures that were installed to slow down the flow of water

and entrain it into the landscape and aquifer. The result is a more defined firebreak, and the grassland blooms again with knee-high grasses and wildflowers. We have also seen more bears, deer, coyotes, and birds in the last decade of restoration work.

The name “Glorieta Freedom Ranch” is meant to invoke the feeling of freedom from development and extractive energy grids, but it does not imply the freedom to do anything one wishes with the land; nor is it freedom from a sense of responsibility. We are proud to

tell people that we once thought of ourselves as owners of the land, and now, we understand that the land owns us — our hearts and souls.

Enjoy reading this Forest Steward issue, which highlights only a handful of examples where Guild involvement, expertise, and influence has equally shifted less sustainable perspectives, and supported and expanded responsible forest stewardship that was already happening. It’s a celebration for us all and after nearly 25 years, its just the beginning.



Kathy and her dog Doby on the original homestead part of their property, which was settled in the 1800's.

Kathy Holian

A Guild forestry long view: The Apalachicola River Timberlands Property, Florida

Written by Alex Finkral, The Forestland Group

Ecological forestry applied to natural forest systems has been the signature of The Forestland Group (TFG) as a forestland investment manager since our beginning in 1995. The Forestland Group was founded by a group of foresters, ecologists, and economists who came together from diverse backgrounds in academia, conservation NGOs, and business, to create innovative investment opportunities through the sustainable management of natural forests.

In 2016, TFG acquired a 40,000-acre property in the Florida panhandle, dominated by dense bottomland hardwoods lining the Apalachicola River with over 80 miles of river frontage. According to some data (e.g., www.biodiversitymapping.org), the property is in the hottest of biologically diverse hotspots in the United States, creating challenges for actively managing land with such high conservation value. This property was well known in Florida's conservation community, and a priority for the state's land acquisition program, Florida Forever.



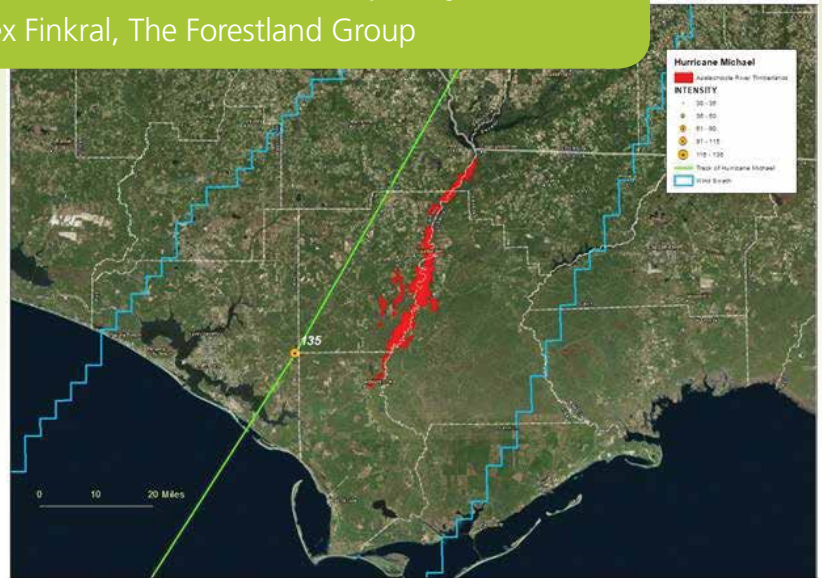
Cypress-tupelo stand on the Apalachicola River Timberlands Property, before Hurricane Michael. Photos by: The Forestland Group.

The Forestland Group's forest management strategy leveraged the prior owner's experiences and combined it with the evolving body of knowledge around managing bottomland hardwoods in the Southeast, much of which is coming from the Guild (see: https://foreststewardsguild.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/FSG_Bottomland_Hardwoodsweb.pdf). And things went well for a while...

On October 10, 2018, Hurricane Michael made landfall in the Florida panhandle as a Category 5 storm, the third-strongest hurricane to make landfall in United States history. Michael's storm track roughly paralleled TFG's Apalachicola River Timberlands (ART) property. Then it entered Georgia as a Category 3 hurricane (GA's first in 120 years).

The storm's results were devastating in this part of the panhandle, including loss of life, extensive property damage, and serious disruption of schools and government services. In addition, over 2.8 million acres of timber were damaged in Florida alone, estimated at a value of \$1.29 billion dollars.

On the Apalachicola Property, beyond the significant timber damage and economic loss, the ecological fallout was diverse and complex – and still is!



Storm track and intensity of Hurricane Michael east of Apalachicola Timberlands Property. By: Elizabeth Martinez.

While the region's pine plantations were clearly destroyed, damage in hardwoods was much more variable, with trees snapped off, tipped up, bent over, crown damaged, and defoliated.



Bottomland hardwood stand on the Apalachicola River Timberlands Property, two weeks after Hurricane Michael.

What is the biological cost of leaf flush in October? How quickly will vines and herbaceous species establish, and how long will they arrest sites?

After a period of assessing damage, and when river levels dropped to allow more property access, we embarked on a salvage harvesting campaign which is balancing present values - selling merchantable materials - with the facilitation of ecological processes to build healthy and diverse future stands. On an acre-by-acre basis we are designating buffers around watercourses, identifying and retaining valuable habitat features, and leaving groups and patches of intact trees for seed sources and structural diversity.

Facing forest management challenges like these is when the value of being a member of the Forest Stewards Guild community is most obvious to me. The single most valuable resource within the Guild is the collective wisdom of the membership. I've called several other Guild members over the past 11 months to discuss the Apalachicola Property, in some cases seeking specific guidance and in others, just wanting to puzzle through ideas. These discussions, and the forestry practices that result from them, help me improve as a forester, help TFG expand its experience as a manager, and help the Guild become an even stronger organization.

The existing forest inventory and management plan were suddenly irrelevant as we were facing dozens of difficult-to-answer questions: How much of the crown can a tree lose and rebound to full vigor? To what extent will crown damage serve as entry points for pests and pathogens? How do we best steer a regeneration process from here?



Guild forestry doesn't just happen

Written by Kendal Martel, Pacific Northwest Region Coordinator, Forest Stewards Guild

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Photos provided by Lakeview Stewardship Group.

Natural resource professionals tend to rightly focus on the ecological or economic outcomes of the work we do in the forest. But a community, much like a forest, is dependent upon diversity, participation, and the exchange of ideas and resources to be healthy. Over the last quarter century, the Guild has worked hard to support ecological forestry around the country by engaging with people and facilitating dialog. In New Mexico, the Guild is often called upon to help ensure that local perspectives are part of public lands management. As the Guild expands, there are opportunities to share lessons we've learned working toward an ecological forestry balance with other communities.



This spring, I was able to pack up my flip charts and markers and facilitate a partnership meeting between the Klamath Lake Forest Health Partnership (KLFHP) and the Lakeview Stewardship Group (LSG) in Southern Oregon. These groups operate in Klamath and Lake Counties addressing ecological restoration, stewardship needs for wildfire mitigation, and options for supporting the rural economy. It's important that these groups are locally supported, incentive-driven, and rely on the power of solutions that integrate the environmental, economic, and social needs of communities.

Though some themes in Southern Oregon echoed issues in New Mexico, each community is different, and each has different goals. The KLFHP and the LSG are both doing amazing work in this part

of Oregon, so my goal as a Guild facilitator was to bring these groups together and lead them through a series of exercises to identify connections, opportunities for leveraging resources, and action plans for next steps. I was pleased to see that many of the action plans involved interest in work that the Guild has done in New Mexico, such as hosting an "Era of Megafires" screening or creating a year-round wildfire

information network. This speaks to the importance of the work that the Forest Stewards Guild does across the country by bringing people and ideas together, finding what works and what doesn't, and seeing how to apply good ideas in different places.

Currently, the KLFHP is working on a couple of exciting projects in Southern Oregon, such as completing a forest health and fire risk mapping project of private lands through the Chiloquin Community Forest and Fire Project. This mapping will provide landowners information on forest health and recommended treatments to reduce wildfire risk. I look forward to continuing work with these awesome partners to build both community and forest resiliency.

■ Anchoring our roots

Written by Michael Lynch, Lake States Region Coordinator, Forest Stewards Guild

The forest stewards that make up our *Guild* interact with forestland in different ways across the country. Many of you are, or work directly with, landowners to determine a series of goals and objectives based on your scientific and ethical foundations. Then you must identify a management approach to account for the opportunities and limitations that exist between the current state and the future goals. The Forest Stewards Guild prides itself as an organization that is in touch with real world problems and solutions. In 2016, the Guild became the owner of 410 acres of predominantly northern hardwood forestland in Houghton County Michigan. Ownership of this land has given us the opportunity to experience first-hand many of the challenges that landowners face, such as budgeting for ongoing costs and dealing with limited timber marketing opportunities, as well as the pride in seeing partnerships develop, students gaining confidence, and good forestry happening.

Houghton County is located on the Keweenaw Peninsula which juts out into Lake Superior. It is best known for the 18-20 feet of 'lake-effect' snow it receives throughout the winter. This is a harsh climate, especially in winter, but all this moisture coupled with relatively rich soils means that the region features beautiful northern hardwood stands of sugar maple, yellow birch, and hemlock in addition to scattered aspen, oak, and mixed conifers.

The Guild acquired these parcels from Forests for the Future of Harbor Springs, MI upon the dissolution of that charitable organization. Forests for the Future (FFF), and the forestland accumulated by FFF, were the dream and life's work of Fred A. Prince, Jr. Mr. Prince accumulated many small parcels (40-160 acres) throughout the Upper Peninsula and sought to preserve these parcels as healthy, productive, forests. His goal was to demonstrate to other small-tract forestland owners that forestland can be managed sustainably through sound silviculture. The Guild was determined to be a good fit to carry on this vision for the parcels located in Houghton County.

The Guild saw great potential for these properties as demonstration sites for "Guild-style Forestry" and agreed to take on these parcels as an opportunity to develop regional partnerships and create a land base on which our Michigan Technological University (MTU) student members could hone their forest management skills.

In 2017, the Guild created an internship for then Michigan Technological University student and current U.S. Forest Service employee Russell Lipe to develop the forest management plan with help from staff at the Guild, Green Timber Consulting Foresters, and the Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science. After completing the plan Russell helped set up a timber sale on two of the parcels that will hopefully be harvested soon – representing the first timber sale on Guild owned lands.

In 2018, we worked with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to join their Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Group Certificate. The FSC group certification system offers an opportunity for smaller landowners to share the administrative and oversight costs of certification. And, perhaps most importantly, provides a network of others with experience achieving and maintaining certification that can be shared with the new applicant. Achieving and maintaining FSC Certification is important to the Guild as we add the process of becoming certified to the list of things we can use these properties to demonstrate.

For the Guild, land ownership allows a "reality check" that keeps us in tune with the issues our land manager members experience, and a demonstration space for some 'lessons learned'. While the Guild isn't actively seeking new forestland donations, we're always open to new possibilities. This is especially true where landownership supports our goal of promoting responsible forestry as a means of sustaining the integrity of forest ecosystems and the human communities dependent upon them.



Forest Stewardship Council audit behind a large yellow birch in November 2018. Photos by: Forest Stewards Guild.



Early November snow blankets the Guild land in Houghton County Michigan.



Guild intern Russell Lipe discusses integrating climate change resilience into the land management plan with Stephen Handler of the Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science.



Engaging landowners in the Zuni Mountains to build fire adapted communities

Written by Matt Piccarello, Southwest Region Director, Forest Stewards Guild

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The Zuni Mountains in west-central New Mexico exemplify many of the challenges facing forests and rural communities in the west. A history of boom and bust railroad logging in the early 20th century created a legacy of dense, homogenous forest in need of restoration. After rising gently from grass and shrublands, much of the mountain range consists of ponderosa pine. This forest type has a frequent fire regime and is often the target of restoration efforts due to more than a century of fire exclusion. Because the Zuni Mountains are consistent in their elevation, climate change may have an outsized impact here as winter precipitation falls more as rain than snow in the future. The Zuni's are already only just high enough to support snow throughout the winter. A subtle shift in the snowline will have a great effect.

All these factors contribute to the Guild's investment in the Zuni Mountains; both in the forests and communities living there. The Guild's involvement in forest restoration here began in the early 2000's with the creation of the Collaborative Forest Restoration Program (CFRP). The Guild has been a part of several CFRP projects in the Zunis, culminating with the 10-year Collaborative Forest *Landscape* Restoration Program (CFLR) that greatly increased the scale of forest restoration efforts nationwide. In 2013 and 2019, the Guild led updates of the McKinley County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), identifying several communities in need of fire adaptation and risk reduction work.

Timberlake Ranch is one such community where the Guild has invested efforts to help residents improve their fire adaptation. In 2014-2015 the Guild coordinated the implementation of 20 defensible space treatments and 12 acres of fuels reduction in the Timberlake Ranch Landowners Association (TRLA) community. The forestry crew from the nearby Ramah Navajo chapter were contracted to complete all thinning

operations, adding a socio-economic benefit to the project.

The primary goal was to reduce structural ignitability of private residences by reducing fuels in Firewise Zone 1 (0-30ft from the home), Firewise Zone 2 (30-100ft from the home), or through establishment of a fuel break. The treatment of 32 acres for 20 different landowners was funded. Guild staff and community leaders solicited landowner applications to participate in the cost-share program. Landowners were responsible for 10% of the treatment costs, or \$100/acre. Secondary goals included education about living in a fire adapted forest and creating and giving the adjacent land managers on the Cibola National Forest a buffer to allow natural ignitions to do ecological good and anchor future fuels reduction projects.

Beyond the number of acres treated, and perhaps more importantly, the project successfully created awareness of the need for landowners to take steps to make their properties defensible in the face of wildfire. Conversations included why and when it's okay to cut trees and about the role of wild and prescribed fire in New Mexico's forests. Several landowners were initially resistant to thinning. In many cases once the work was complete, they personally identified more trees to be removed near their homes.

That foundation has helped with current efforts to build the statewide Fire Adapted New Mexico Learning Network (FAC NM). FAC NM is a grassroots effort to engage residents and community leaders to take action to make their homes and communities more adapted to wildfire. Becoming a Fire Adapted Community, one in which residents

take responsibility for protecting their homes from wildfire and learn to live with fire as a natural disturbance, is a process. Twenty landowners have participated in the project, yet the entire community of Timberlake Ranch benefited, on its way to being a fire adapted community.



Pre-treatment meeting with landowners, Forest Stewards Guild and Ramah Chapter Forestry.



Stacked fuelwood generated from defensible space thinning. Photos by: Forest Stewards Guild.



Example of thick growth before a thinning treatment.

When Guild perspectives are introduced...

Written by Colleen Robinson, Communications Coordinator, Forest Stewards Guild



Jeremy and Laura describe what they know from extensive research, observations, and hands-on management, and ask for more advice and ideas from Guild Gathering attendees at Stone Fence Farm in June 2019. Photos by: Forest Stewards Guild.

Jeremy Turner and Laura French work for Meadowsend Timberlands, Ltd. and are long-time Guild members. In fact, they met through the Guild back in 1999, later married, and purchased what is now the 300-acre Stone Fence Farm in Unity, New Hampshire. Their forest stewardship perspective aligns with Guild principles, and they credit the Guild community for largely influencing how they approach forest management.

The dream of Stone Fence Farm has been a long time in the making. Forest types present there include spruce and fir, hemlock, and northern hardwoods with sugar maple. The diversity offers many management options. Stone Fence Farm aspires to be a demonstration area, where responsible stewardship, learning, skills-building, and livelihoods are made. Being part of the Guild before and after their property purchase makes it more possible to realize this dream in ways that are good for the people, the forest, the soils, and everyone the ecosystem serves.

Learning is Jeremy and Laura's main strategy for achieving their number one goal of managing Stone Fence Farm for all its values and inhabitants. They jumped on a unique opportunity in spring of 2019, when they hosted a Guild Gathering with a national draw. More than 50 Guild members, partners, board members, staff and founders gathered at Stone Fence, received amazing tours of the property and descriptions of management history and future options in mind. The attendees were asked to provide advice, input, thoughtful discussion, expertise, research data, and innovative ideas to help Jeremy and Laura continue to make big decisions on their land for ecological, economic and social benefit.

An example management option they asked for input on included their sugar bush. In the Northeast, maple syrup is a cultural and economic mainstay. There must be 20 different ways to manage a sugar bush and likely they are all happening in the area. The potential sugar bush at Stone Fence Farm promises to provide income and

some stability for the property and its endeavors, though they want to manage it sustainably for wildlife and water quality, with low-impact, while still being feasible. Does this mean intermittent harvest rather than every year, every tree? Does it mean buckets instead of gravity-fed tubing? What about markets and their impact on sustainability? They've learned it's not just about the trees and the wildlife impacts and the access road. It's about the materials that go into tapping, harvest, production and packaging. It's about the fuel needed for processing and transport. And it's about the consumers and their connection to a locally sourced, culturally significant commodity. This is the scope at which Guild members look at a potential, small but promising, sugar bush operation.

Wildlife openings, prescribed fire management and spruce-fir management in light of climate change were additional challenges Jeremy and Laura have faced head-on, made great progress with, and were still asking for advice around.

Jeremy and Laura said they have gained a tremendous amount by being involved and connected with the Guild. Because they are committed forest stewards, an entire forest

community and all who depend on it will also benefit. The successes will branch out even farther still as the owners of Stone Fence Farm reach more broadly in their own endeavors, and as foresters with Meadowsend, always employ a responsible stewardship ethic.



Birds capture the attention of experts on the Stone Fence Farm Guild Gathering tour.



Celebrating 25 years of good forestry....

2020 marks the Forest Stewards Guild's 25th anniversary. We have much to celebrate. Thank you to our members, donors, and partners, whose work and support yield positive results for forests and all who depend on them. Without you, we would not exist.

Starting now, and throughout next year, we will reflect on where we've been, celebrate our accomplishments to date, and look enthusiastically to the future. We invite you to be a part of it all!

► **Events 2020 – more details coming soon.**

Join a national gathering in late summer of 2020 in Asheville, North Carolina. Collectively honor our roots, reflect on who we are, and celebrate this community.

We hope to gather next year in Corvallis, Oregon for an innovative forestry event. Here, our focus is the future, in a growing region for the Guild.

► **Events 2019**

Bottomland Hardwood Learning Exchange

November 6 (11:00 a.m.) – November 7 (4:30 p.m.), 2019

Join us in Baton Rouge, LA for a field-based event in partnership with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries and The Nature Conservancy. Leveraging our previous efforts, we bring together forest landowners and resource professionals from across the South to understand *wildlife forestry* practices in the Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley. We'll emphasize how robust forest product markets, low-impact harvesting equipment, and selection system silviculture can play an integral role in meeting wildlife habitat improvement goals for forest interior birds. We will also connect family forest landowners to resources to better steward their woodland.

► **Submissions**

Share reflections, photos, or aspirations as we proceed in our quarter-century together! Contact Colleen at membership@forestguild.org anytime. A new anniversary webpage and other venues will be available for our collective celebration. As always, thank you for all you do for forests.

► **Contributions**

We'll need your help to mark the 25th anniversary and build for the next 25 years. If you'd like to support the events, written celebrations, expansion of membership, or anything else please contact Zander (zander@forestguild.org) or Colleen (membership@forestguild.org).