

My name is Nancy Hathaway. I'm a small woodland owner with scattered parcels in 5 counties so I've gotten to know many different ODF stewardship foresters.

What I appreciate about each one is the depth of knowledge each one has beyond my property boundaries. I may know the condition of my trees, my soil, my stream but they know the entire watershed system and what neighbors are doing that might affect or influence my decisions.

Their advice and support is invaluable and I can't imagine doing with 9 fewer stewardship foresters. I think it's important that we keep every one...particularly now.

I have 3 points to make:

1st--We are looking at new riparian rules to be adopted by the BOF in April. The new rules will go into effect in July this year exactly when we need those stewardship foresters. These new rules are far removed from previous standards and are vastly more complex.

For example, the old rules listed tree basal area required within a given buffer width. The new rules will require a certain percentage of tree basal area near the stream, on the outside 20% of the riparian buffer, and in the interior portion of the buffer.

For small landowners who are already planning to log this summer these complex rules will be a steep learning curve. Large landowners may just tape off the entire riparian area and call it good. But small landowners who may know every streamside tree by name will try to harvest as many as they can. They babied those trees and made sure they were free to grow. And there won't be time for the state to hold enough learning sessions. Who will be there to advise them? The timeline is really short but the need will be urgent.

2nd--The legislature has directed ODF to expand the FERNS notification system. But frankly, though it's a good idea in theory, FERNS is sometimes difficult to use and, 2 weeks ago, in frustration, I drove 20 minutes to the nearest ODF office to have the ODF forester input my data. Fortunately, I called ahead and he was available when I needed him. With a more inclusive and complicated system, there will be many more calls for help.

3rd--Stewardship foresters provide the necessary link between research and on-the-ground practical application. So, stewardship foresters are often the best and quickest resource for Best Management Practices. They're like the county neighborhood coordinator. You might think Extension foresters could fill the gap, but some of them are covering 2 or 3 counties.

The bottom line is "Who you gonna call?" Well...the stewardship forester because he or she will be the one to cite you if you do it wrong. Please retain all ODF stewardship foresters. Family landowners need every one!

Thank you,
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