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>> Welcome to the Forest Overstory Podcast. This podcast explores forest stewardship in the Pacific Northwest, helping landowners and professionals gain new insights and information in the field of forest management. The Forest Overstory is a product of the Washington State University Extension Forestry program. And is supported by the Washington Department of Natural Resources and the Society of American Foresters.

[Music]

All right. Well, Happy New Year and welcome back Forest Overstory listeners. As you know, we took a short hiatus over the fall since our last episode in September. We are back in the swing of things for season two, as I'm calling it. I am, of course, Patrick Shults returning as your host. As we announced in our last episode, Sean Alexander has left his position at WSU to take a job in Oregon. We really hope he is doing well down there. But he will obviously be missed as co-host. I'm running as solo host today. But in future episodes, you're likely to hear some other voices from the WSU Extension Forestry team either as co-host or host, just to keep things interesting. But I'm really excited to kick things off today. We have a great episode in store. We're joined by a very exciting guest. He is an award-winning tree farmer and the current Chair of the Washington Tree Farm Program. Dave New is on with us. How are you doing, Dave?

>> I'm doing fine. How are you, Patrick?

>> I'm great. Great. Thanks for joining us. Very excited to talk with someone like you. You've been such a strong partner for WSU Extension for a long time, especially for my colleague, Kevin Zobrist, up north. Because you manage Nourse Tree Farm. And that's a very well-known tree farm in the area. And I'm wondering if you could tell us a little more about that.

>> Well, okay, where do I start?

[Laughter]

We didn't –

>> Start with maybe, where is Nourse Tree Farm? Let's start there.

>> Okay. Let's start with that. Okay. It's really easy to find. If you're driving north on Interstate 5, or if you're driving on Interstate 5 at all, you take Exit 212, which is the Stanwood, Camano Island exit. And instead of driving toward Camino Island, you drive east 1.5 miles and we've got the big sign right in front of it that says Nourse Tree Farm. So you can't miss it as you go by.

>> So the listeners can come and find you.

>> They can, yeah. And well, if any of you have seen any of the videos we produced of our Wildlife where I've got a YouTube channel with wildlife on it. You'll see that we have a bridge that has a sign on it that says Golden Gate

Bridge because the gate is gold. And so, like I said to everybody, your visitors are welcome and if you come, you can even go across the Golden Gate Bridge without paying a toll.

[Laughter]

>> I like that.

>> So this property that's been in my wife's family since 1942. Her grandfather, Leroy Nourse, that's the name Nourse Tree Farm bought it for family recreation. He was kind of a hardscrabble chicken farmer during the depression. Just made a living any way he could. And he had land all over the place. And this was one of those last remaining parcels that didn't get sold off at the end. And we were able to acquire it when Dar's uncle died. And he left quite a bit of property to 10 heirs. And then we didn't think we were going to be able to keep it. But then the recession hit in 2008. And though the property had been sold to a developer, the developer went bankrupt and we were able to – the estate had to take the property back, which then gave us the chance to acquire it from the estate because of changes in zoning regulations for Snohomish County, availability of water, and a reduced price of land in general during that time, which then allowed us the opportunity to buy it from the estate.

>> Wow. I didn't know that. What an interesting story.

>> I could talk an hour just about that. It took us six years to settle the estate. And as a part of that, from Kevin, I took the Ties to the Land class. And I highly recommend that class to anybody who hasn't taken it to help with their family planning or legacy planning for their properties. And that helped us immensely so that in the future we won't have that problem at our tree farm.

>> Yeah. And just for a little background for the listeners. Ties to the Land is actually – it's a program out of Oregon, Oregon State University that helps landowners sort of navigate the process of succession planning. It's a really great course. And those resources are available online if you just look up Ties to the Land.

>> I highly recommend it.

>> Yeah. Yeah. It's a course we don't get to do a lot because it doesn't deal with the nitty gritty necessarily of management. But it's something that I didn't think I was going to enjoy doing, but I actually did, you know. Yeah. I didn't go to school for forestry to talk about succession planning. But that class is always really interesting because you get all these families together and they have to kind of talk about some of this stuff for the first time, which can be uncomfortable. Yeah. So what was that like for you guys? Sounds like you had a really big and complex family situation to deal with.

>> Yes. And like I said, it took us six years to settle the estate so that we could then make all the other heirs happy and keep this section of land, this bit of land. It's 160 acres for ourselves. And so it hadn't been managed as forest

land before that point. But because it had been sold to a developer, it came off of the open space, out of open space. And so we needed to get it back into open space. And so I hired a forester to write our first forest management plan for us. And this is when I had my first aha moment with the property. He came back and he said, “Dave, you have an overture stand of 60 acres of alder up on top of the hill. And unless you take it down, it’s going to fall down and then you’re going to have a real mess on your hands.” And so we had a long hard family discussion. And there was a lot of resistance in the family to cutting the trees down because what! cut the trees down. That’s not going to grow back in my lifetime. We’re not going to have those woods. Well, before I retired, I worked as a civil engineer and land surveyor. And I had seen people hire professionals to help them with their land, and then not follow the advice of the professionals they hired and really get themselves into trouble. And so that’s what I said, “Look, we’ve hired a professional forester to give us some advice. We’re best off to follow it so that we don’t get into trouble.” And so we ended up doing that. And we hired the forester to manage a timber sale forest and then replanted. And as it turns out, there’s a clump of trees that was the same vintage as the ones up on top of the hill that wasn’t an area that didn’t get harvested. And those trees have all died now and are falling down. And so we caught it just in time to get a market value out of it and then replant. Otherwise, we’d had – like they said, we would’ve had a real mess on our hands.

>> That’s interesting. That was your sort of forest management awakening.

>> Yes.

>> Understanding that a declining red alder stand is exactly that [brief laughter]

>> Exactly that.

>> And it’s not going to get good. Yeah, that’s interesting.

>> And so with that then, knowing that we were going to go into this harvest situation, I needed to learn all I could. I didn’t know anything about forestry. So this is where Kevin came in. I started taking classes from him. Right and left as going to the field days and whatnot, and taking the coach planning class so that I ended up writing my own forest management plan. And so that then, my original goal there was just to be able to ask, know what questions to ask as we were going through the whole process of harvesting. So that was my first aha moment. And then the second aha moment was actually when we were doing the – as we were preparing for the harvest, we had to get it permitted. And the forester was doing all of that. But whenever he had somebody on site, I would come there with him. And we needed to build a bridge, which is now the Golden Gate Bridge so we could go across a creek to get up the hill to access the harvest site. And they sent Wayne Watney [assumed spelling]. And some of you who have been around a while, remember Wayne Watney, who was a biologist for the Fish and Wildlife Department, who was doing the HPAs, the hydraulics permits for timber harvest at that time. And he pointed down into

this little creek right where we were going to put the bridge and there were some fish about three inches long. And he said those are baby cohos. And I said, "What?" This is the second aha moment for us. How can this be? Because this creek goes dry every summer. And cohos are a fish that have to be in the stream for two years before they go out to sea. So how could they be in this stream that goes dry every summer? But there they were. And so we knew that this stream went down into a lower field that had been a hay pasture, and at the time, and still is reed canary grass. And the stream loses all definition whatsoever in this field. And there's no channel or anything. And the previous winter we had seen a bunch of dead salmon in that field. And there had been flooding in Pilchuck Creek, which is adjacent to our property. And we thought, well, those are just fish that kind of washed up as part of the flood and got lost from Pilchuck Creek. But with this now we could see that no, they were indeed trying to get up the little stream that goes behind the barn. And so I said to Wayne, I said, "Who do we talk to so that we can get the stream channels fixed in the lower field for these fish?" And he said, "Talk to the Conservation District." And so we approached the Sonoma Conservation District. And it took a couple of years before we could really get started. But they helped us re-channel the stream through the lower field. So it actually has a channel now. And that is a way for the fish to come up. And this being what? This is about the time of year when they come up so.

>> Right. And so, I've never actually had the pleasure of seeing your tree farm. And it's something I would love to get up there eventually. But I have heard about this riparian restoration project, quite a bit actually. And my understanding too is that you've also done quite a bit of planting in some, I think, some interesting experimentation in that regard. Can you tell us a little bit?

>> Yeah. Well, we had a lot of help from the Conservation District there too. Everywhere we have stream frontage, we've put that area into a CREP easement.

>> Okay.

>> So we have 30 acres of CREP easement on our property, which is a lease program. CREP was a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program –

>> Yes.

>> – with the NRCS USDA program. And so they pay us as a rental for this. So we can't do anything commercial-wise, plant anything that would be of commercial value within this easement. But they pay us the rental fee for that and which helps cover taxes and some maintenance on the property as well. But we have replanted the CREP area with live stake willows. And then in the field, we're struggling to get the reed canary grass shaded out. That's a real chore.

>> Yeah.

>> [brief laughter] With the tree farmer of the year that we had this last year

Bob Barker in Whatcom County. He converted 70 acres of marginal pastureland mostly with reed canary grass into a forest over a 20-year period. So I know that it can be done.

[Laughter]

So we'll keep at it.

>> I mean, yeah. Maybe we could take a little side trail here and get into the nitty-gritty. Because reed canary grass, I mean, anyone listening that deals reed canary grass, just knows exactly why we're referring to the headache that it causes. I mean, it's just such a painful thing to try to get rid of and try to get trees planted into. So do you know what Bob Barker did? What was his success, you know, in terms of site prep?

>> Yes. What they did – now there's a little bit different situation than we are. They don't have as – our property is slightly sloping, so we don't have as much standing water as he did. What they ended up doing was de-leveling. Where they'd take an excavator and dig holes out and then make mounds, the equivalent of a tree falling over and leaving a big root wad.

>> Interesting.

>> And then planting on top of that. And it worked for him. He used the blue tubes, the biodegradable blue tubes that are still there 20 years later.

>> Yes.

[Laughter]

Yeah. I have my issues with those. So that's really interesting. I had not heard of that method. What did you do prior to planting?

>> Well, the tall live stakes for the willows that would stick above the reed canary grass. And then there's some spruce some other things. And this again, most of the replanting was done by a crew with the Conservation District. And they had a whole bunch of mixture of plants and whatnot. And quite a bit of that has died back now. But there are some spruce trees that are coming that have now poked their heads up above the reed canary grass. And I originally told them, I didn't want any cottonwoods out there because –

>> Not a fan.

>> – not a fan of cottonwoods. But I think now that if you want to shade them out, that might not be a bad way to go because they grow fast and they can again be done from live stakes. And so I've tagged a bunch of – we've got a bunch of cottonwood stems that are – oh, they're not really trees yet, but they're about 10 feet tall that we're going to cut off this winter and plant in the reed canary grass. And they should do all right.

>> Like yeah. That's a great strategy, live stakes. It's kind of like a jumpstart. Yeah. They really kind of rip out of the ground once you put them in there.

>> The willows don't do really well at shading out the reed canary grass. It grows right in them. But it's not quite as dense as it is out in the field. But there's still quite a bit of reed canary grass in and along the channel there. But they did grow up pretty quick. And since that time we've had beavers come back along the creek. And the willows are fodder for the –

>> Sure.

>> – for the beavers. But that's okay. Because then, they come back as [inaudible] stems, right, everywhere where they cut them off, they come back pretty quickly.

>> Right. Yep. It's funny with landowners, I noticed there's – well, there's two kinds of landowners. There's those that really want beavers and those that really don't. And my understanding too is there's actually programs out there that do beaver exchanges. They can trap a beaver in one area and move them to another area where there's not as, you know, there's a low population. And it's a really interesting idea.

>> Because this stream is in an area that we can't harvest anyway. The fact that there's beavers in there doesn't bother us.

>> Right. Yeah.

>> And they have created some ponding, which is good. But again, this is a stream that goes dry every summer. So they're there. Typically they become active in the early spring, and they build their dams. And this last year, they built a lodge. But then in July, the water went away, and they had to leave.

[Laughter]

>> Poor planning on their part.

>> Yeah. Poor planning in their part.

[Laughter]

>> That's funny. So I mean, I have to ask because, you know, you're not alone in dealing with a degraded, you know, riparian stream on your property. You know, what was the impetus to actually get in there and get all that work? It's a tremendous amount of work. What was the motivation for that?

>> For the fish.

>> Yeah.

>> For the fish. And now at every fall, in late fall, there is a run of silvers that comes up and spawns in the creek right there. Now, I haven't seen them yet this year. There's a crew from the Department of Fish and Wildlife that do surveys of the fish that are there, counts the redds. The redds being R-E-D-D-S that's where the fish are, have laid their eggs in the gravel. Each nest, it's called the redd. And they count the redds and count the fish. And they said, yeah,

this has been great the last few years because of this restoration. They've been impressed with how it helped.

>> That probably feels pretty good.

>> Yeah, it does. And in a previous life, before I was into – as I was growing up, I used to go fishing all the time with my dad down on the Columbia River. And so fish, salmon coming back upstream has always been important to see for us. And just seeing them there and not even not catching anything, just actually just seeing them. And I also fish commercially parts of two summers in southeast Alaska too. So it's –

>> Oh wow. I didn't know that.

>> So yeah. Just being able to provide for the salmon is really important to us.

>> That's really cool. And it's a great example of not just what landowners can do, but I think to what people can do with assistance, you know, in taking advantage of those programs. You took advantage of multiple programs –

>> Yes.

>> – to get that work done.

>> Yep.

>> So landowners, you know, that are facing something similar, it's good to know they're not really in it alone.

>> Yeah. And we couldn't have done it without the help from the Conservation District and also with that CREP easement. We couldn't have done it ourselves.

>> Right.

>> Wouldn't have really, would not have been successful. And with that, then also, as I said, it was the Conservation District that did all the permitting for that. And so we could do that. And you know, it's funny how the Corp of Engineers is concerned about wetlands. Well, the whole area that we restored, the stream was a wetland area. The stream itself is not wetlands, but everything around it is, that can be in our case. And so they were concerned that we were going to be filling wetlands as we excavated the stream. So we had some issues to get around there, but we made it all work. [brief laughter] Thankfully, I had the Conservation District to run interference for us on that.

>> Yeah, that's good. It wouldn't be a restoration project without a little bit of bureaucracy, so.

>> Yeah.

>> So I'm kind of curious, kind of back to where we started this conversation. You had these aha moments. And just in thinking about your management objectives for the tree farm, what were they before your aha moments? And what are they now?

>> Well, before we had our first management plan, we had no plans whatsoever. We thought the place would take care of itself.

>> Right, yeah.

>> And so then with the management plan then, you know, we did the harvest and now are managing the return of that replanted area. And then we also have 30 acres on the other side of the road that was harvested, where there was a gyppo logger, who came in and basically took Dar's uncle for a ride. And he never got anything out of it except for a ruined stand of trees. And so it grew back without any management whatsoever. And in our management plan up until now for the last 10 years, it has been wait 10 years and see where we are and then go from there. So we have come to the end of that 10-year period. And so we're going to basically look at that again and do some sort of a harvest. We don't expect to make any money off of it, but what we do expect is – what we do hope for is to be able to harvest and then replant with something that'll be more durable than alders that are real spindling, they are going to fall down in a few years. Alders and cottonwoods, again my beloved cottonwoods.

[Laughter]

>> Why don't you like cottonwoods?

>> Because you cut them down and they fall down, and then they lie on the ground and then they sprout up again. And you can't leave any branches around or they just grow like wild. And then you have to deal with it multiple times. So they have their place, you know, down in the riparian area where we can't do anything. But up in areas where we're trying to create stands, they have created a lot of problems for us.

>> [brief laughter] Everybody has their favorite and their maligned trees so. [brief laughter]

>> When we replanted the 60 acres I planted about – we had 15 of those acres planted with alder. And so now those trees are just going gangbusters. They're up to 6 or 8 inches DBH after eight years. They're just going great guns. And so they're getting to the point where we need to thin them out. And as it turns out, most of the thinning that needs to be done are cottonwoods. And so we're not cutting them down again. Again, if you cut them down, they lay on the ground, and then they re-sprout. So what we're doing is we're just hack-and-squirt using the herbicide.

>> Sure.

>> And then leave them standing and get the leaves off them. And so they'll provide the light necessary for the alders around them. And if it turns out that the alders are too spindly, then perhaps they would provide some structural support to hold them up so they wouldn't blow down. Also, by leaving them standing, then they won't cause any damage to the standing trees as a process of falling them.

>> Well, I want to switch gears for a sec, because I mean, I could talk management for several hours. I'm sure you could too. But I alluded to something earlier and I want to make sure we talk about it. You are an award winner and a pretty big award winner. You're the National Tree Farmer of the year from, was it 2020?

>> 2019.

>> 2019. So for those of you that aren't familiar the American Tree Farm program awards the National Tree Farmer of the year, well, annually. And it's a very prestigious award. I mean, you're competing with Tree Farms from around the country. And yeah. Nourse Tree Farm won in 2019. I'm wondering if you could just tell us a little bit about what led to that and like what that experience was like.

>> Well, at the time, and then somewhat, I still feel sort of like an imposter because, you know, we haven't been at it as long as most of these people that win these awards have been at it forever. But what we did have, what we did bring to it was just persistence and use of programs to help and looking for assistance. You know, we reached out and got a lot of help. And as I said in the acceptance speech, I wouldn't be standing here in front of you or receiving this award if it hadn't been for all the help we had received from all kinds of people. The local tree farmers, the Washington Farm Forestry people, the WSU Extension, the Conservation District. And even my wife's grandfather for buying the property initially. Her uncle for not selling it to a developer. And even the recession for making it so we could keep the property. But the recession, that was bad news for everybody else except us in this case.

>> Well, yeah, I mean, it is such a cool story, and I imagine that contributed to the award. But I also have to say it like I know, or it's my understanding at least that part of the criteria for that award is exactly what you described is, utilizing resources.

>> Yep.

>> And not just utilizing, but also giving back to some degree and, you know, offering up your property as a place for learning.

>> Yes.

>> And I know you've done a lot of that too. So I mean, you know, a lot of tree farmers, you know, you could be a great steward and that's a big part of the criteria as well, obviously is being a good steward. And just doing it all yourself and kind of keeping that to yourself, that's totally fine. But, you know, such a big part of this award is that interaction that you've emphasized. So I think it makes sense that you're a winner.

>> When we received the state award in 2018, there were some, well, it was an election year. And there were some things that we needed to get publicized in terms of assistance programs like WSU Extension Forestry. There was a lack of

funds for that. The Conservation District needed money. So we had an open house right after we received the state award. And we said, “Look, these are people that have helped us, and these are people that need help from funding wise. And this is how they were able to help us.” And so in addition to the general public, we had a number of elected and officials there and people running for office. And we were able to impress upon them the need for these kinds of programs.

>> That’s amazing. Yeah. It’s such a big platform.

>> And we got a front-page story on the Everett Herald because of that. And as a part of the lead up to that open house, which all helps.

>> Yeah.

>> And we had a lot of good help from the Tree Farm Program and the Farm Forestry for getting the publicity out for that again. And so we have made our property into a place where it is possible to have classes and whatnot. We can park 100 vehicles there.

>> Oh, that’s nice.

>> And we haven’t ever had to put that money there, but we’ve been able to do that. And when we built our cabin there, I guess we call it a carriage house with the – we finished it a year and a half ago. We’ve had quite a bit of problem with vandalism. So we didn’t want any windows on the first floor. So the first floor is a two-car garage. And then also on the first floor, we have a bathroom that has both an inside door and an outside door so that we don’t have to have porta potties. We can have 50 people there without having a porta-potty just by having the outside door to our bathroom. And we’ve hosted a number of events there because of that. And are always willing to do more that way. Obviously, we don’t want to have everything there because there are lots of other great properties to see. But when our turn comes up, we’re more than willing to share the property.

>> Well, and I know that I mean, because you’re up north, you’re in Kevin’s region. And I know he’s been incredibly grateful to you for that. And I have to just say, and I’ve probably said it before maybe many times on this podcast. But we just rely so heavily on landowners like you. We really couldn’t make so many of our educational programs. They just have to be hosted by someone, right, and with someone with forest land. And I have to say too, we always joke, it’s very difficult to find landowners that can host. And a lot of it is because of that parking piece you mentioned. So many tree farmers, we joke just fill every square foot with a tree, right?

>> Yeah.

>> If there’s a place where a tree can be planted, then it’s going to be there [brief laughter] which is great. But we, you know, we need parking lots for our workshop. So it’s good that you have that accessibility. It’s really important. And yeah, just it’s incredible that you’re offering up your property for that.

>> Well, we don't do just that. We live in the city. And so we have lots of friends that live in the city. And our daughter, again, also lives in the city. And as such we have a big garden at the property. And so a part of the garden is we have a big pumpkin patch, and so that every October then we have a pumpkin party where people come and everybody gets to take a pumpkin home. And so this last year we had 80 people here for that.

>> Oh, that's so cool.

>> And so that again, allows us to reach out and tell our tree farm story to people that normally wouldn't hear it.

>> Yes. That's awesome. That's really important, you know. We focus so much on landowner outreach, but public outreach, getting people aware of the issues and small forest owners and what they do, that's really important. And that sounds like a really good time, to be honest.

>> Yeah, it was. It is every year.

>> All right. Well, we are getting towards the end. And I want to make sure that we discuss, you know, this other facet of what you do in the realm of small forest owners which is you're the current chair of the Washington Tree Farm Program which actually administers at least the state level Tree Farmer of the Year award. And I want to make it very clear that you are not the chair when you won the award [brief laughter] –

>> No.

>> – just so everyone knows that.

>> Well, part of that was, we ask our current tree farmer of the year every year to serve two years on the committee, to attend our quarterly meetings. And that's how I became involved, is they asked me to. And so even up until – I know I've become a little – we were managing our own property, but I wasn't really involved on the greater issues things until they asked me to participate on the state committee. And so I'd like to say that they gave me the opportunity to drive four hours each way through rush hour traffic in Everett Seattle, Federal Way Tacoma, and Fort Lewis to go to a two-hour meeting in Olympia four times a year.

>> That's right.

[Laughter]

That's funny. I live in Olympia, so I don't get to – I don't have that issue. And I think they're mostly online now anyway but –

>> Yeah. The pandemic changed that. We changed all our meetings to being on Zoom. And we're going to change it. We're going to do a hybrid meeting this next meeting in January.

>> Oh, cool.

>> And so, yes, like once again, I'm going to drive through the rush hour traffic to go to Olympia. But everybody else, they can come and meet with us in Olympia or they can participate online. And that's been really good this way because we have expanded our attendance to be truly from all over the state.

>> Yeah, that's great. I mean, that is like, it's a curse blessing. We all like to see each other, but the online platform, it makes it so much easier to get –

>> It sure does.

>> – a broad audience. But I want to explain to the listeners if they're not aware what the Washington Tree Farm Program is and what the kind of primary function is. But I know there's lots of special projects going on too. Can you give us kind of an overview of what the program does?

>> Yeah. The main thing that we do is to certify tree farms as being sustainable to standards that are set by the American Tree Farm system.

>> Right.

>> There are about 1,500 tree farms in the state of Washington covering 370,000 acres in the state that are currently certified in the program. Now, if you look at the overall number of acres of forested land in the state that's privately held, that's a drop on the bucket. So we're trying to reach out the more. But it does take quite a bit of – it takes a concerted effort by a whole bunch of volunteers. We have about 100 volunteer inspectors that are – well, some of them are on private practice. Others work for the DNR. We've got a whole bunch of DNR ones that have just come online with their new expanded program that go out and – we assist people to get with their management plans so the foresters do. But once you get a forest management plan in place, then we'll send an inspector out to look at the property and with the owner. And basically go through the form which are the standards for the AFF standards or the Tree Farm standards. And it doesn't cost anything. It's entirely free. And once you're approved, then you get to put that nice green and white diamond sign in front of your property.

>> Right. Yeah. I'm sure people have seen those around.

>> Yeah. And it's a good program.

>> [multiple speakers] I know.

>> It does. Yeah. And in Western Washington here, that's just it. We get that pride of ownership of having that sign. In Eastern Washington, especially the farther east sections where they are within range of the Idaho Forest Group mills, they will pay a premium for wood that comes from certified tree farms. We don't have that quite yet here in Western Washington. But not only will they pay a premium for timber harvested to the owner, but as the Tree Farm program, then we get a little bit from them as well on that. So that helps fund some of our programs.

>> Right. But it's not unreasonable down the line to think that that could exist in Washington too or Western Washington, you know, as log buyers are. And the market in general is going to want to ensure that the wood is coming from places that are practicing sustainable harvesting. The tree farm programs are well on place to fit into that.

>> We are entirely or not entirely, but mostly a volunteer program. We have one halftime paid administrative staff person who keeps us all in line and manages the program for us. But the rest of the positions are all volunteer. In my current position as chair, it's a six-year commitment on my part. For this first two years as – I was two years as the vice chair. And now, I mean, I've just finished my first year as chair. I've got one more year as chair. And then I will be two years as the past chair to help with institutional knowledge. And then the past chair is also in charge of the selection of the Tree Farmer of the Year. But in addition to the tree farm certification, the Tree Farm of the Year, we have our fall seminars, the educational programs where we lean on – let's see. You've been involved with those, haven't you, Patrick? You've been in –

>> Oh yeah. I've helped plan the west going on for the last three or four years with Nick Kunz.

>> You and Nick. Yeah, you and Nick have been very good, very helpful with that. And then we have an east side one now as well. Last year it was Andy [inaudible] on the east side that ran it. And originally back in the day before the pandemic, we had it as – we did it all in person. We'd rent a place like the, well, like one year, was it Park Forest? And another year –

>> That's right.

>> – it was at the museum, the Veterans Museum in Chehalis.

>> Yep.

>> And we had a pretty good attendance at both of those and good programs, good speakers that came. And in each of these cases, you can go to our website and see these webinars that were put on, we've saved them. There's some really good information on all that that's available online.

>> Right. Yeah. And COVID really changed the way semi-permanently how we do things.

>> Yeah.

>> But you know, we've been able to do some in-person components for the last – well, actually the last two Fall Forestry Seminars. And last year's, it was a lot of fun. We've been getting out in the field more than going off to like, you know, the Veterans Museum and doing it conference style. But someday we may get back to that model.

>> But yeah. It's amazing how many really outstanding tree farmers there are out there that are a part of the program. And yeah. And I've had a chance to

visit and see a number of these places. And it's just an amazing group of people to be associated with.

>> It's an excellent program and really I encourage any forest owner out there, if you've got a management plan, you're most of the way there. If you don't have a management plan, there are resources to help you get one. So reaching out to the Tree Farm program, get that process started. Well, you know, Dave, how do people get that process ready?

>> Once you have your management plan in place, contact the Tree Farm program. I don't have that contact information right here in front of me but it's watreefarm.org.

>> I was just going to – yeah, I just googled it to make sure. But yeah, [watreefarm](http://watreefarm.org), [W-A treefarm.org](http://W-A-treefarm.org). Yeah. That the landing page.

>> And there's a place right there where you can just contact us and we will send an inspector out to – we'll contact you and we get you into contact with one of our inspectors to come out and go through the standards with you. And like I said, because of the way – if you've got a forest management plan, and if you're in Washington state complying with all the rules, forest rules, you're 99% of the way there.

>> Right.

>> And there are a few things like the forest of – what is it? FORI, Forest of Regional Importance.

>> Forest of Recognized Importance, yeah.

>> That's right. Yeah. FORI. And those are all the – the inspector will help you get through those parts of it. And it's a point of pride to be able to put that green sign in front of your property. And as I said before, it doesn't cost a dime, and we'll give you the free sign, the first one. The second one costs \$25 or so.

[Laughter]

>> That's not too bad.

>> Not too bad.

[Laughter]

And the other thing that we do is we started putting out a calendar every year.

>> That's right.

>> And they're available for sale now at the tree farm website for next year. And if you are a forester with SAF, Society of American Forestry in Washington State, or if you own a certified tree farm, then you're eligible to submit pictures every year to be in that calendar. And we have typically sometime in September a deadline for submitting those pictures. And all the pictures on that calendar came from either tree farms or foresters that are with the SAF.

>> Yeah. I thought that was a really cool idea because I mean, landowners always have lots of really great pictures from their property, whether it's like, you know an owl or just like a great landscape shot. I've really loved those calendars so far. So yeah. I know that Washington Tree Farm Program, the inspection process, I mean, it really does rely on a lot of volunteers. Like you said, some people in the private market, but also DNR Foresters, Conservation District foresters, to get those inspections done. I mean, it's awesome that there are certified inspectors out there volunteering their time. But then I know that at the higher level, there are people that contribute quite a bit of time and are involved with the Washington Tree Farm Board and various committees. Yeah. Who else is on that list?

>> Well, there's never people that have put a lot of time for a lot of years. Bob Obedzinski is our immediate past chair. He's been as involved for as – I don't know how many years. And then I'm the chair and our vice chair is Tom Agnes, who is a forester, but also a wood chip buyer in Eastern Washington at a mill in Wapato. And then Elizabeth Ide is our administrator in Olympia. And we rely on our – let's see. We have four regions where we have inspectors, coordinators. In the northwest, Tom Westergreen. In the central west, it's Bob Obedzinski. In the southwest is Charles Lorenz. And then on the east side, Tom Agnes, again has just taken over in that job over there for the east side of the mountains. We've had problems in the past with getting inspectors on the east side. But now with the DNR having a whole slew of new inspectors coming into our program, we should be able to catch up and get ahead of where we have been in the past. We hope to enroll a whole bunch of new people as well. I also want to give a shout-out to Anita Crow, our secretary, who does all our minutes and whatnot out of – even though our minutes are – excuse me, our meetings are supposed to be in Olympia. She does it online out of Klickitat County. And Doug Hooks, who is a representative on our board, as a representative from the Forest Protection Association. And we get lots of support from members of the Forest Protection Association. Those are the big timber players in the state. We're especially appreciative of the support we get from the members of the Forest Protection Association including Port Blakely, who volunteers all our bookkeeping for the program.

>> That's right. Yeah. Yeah. That's very generous of them. So yeah, I mean, it's an amazing group of people. Some really brilliant minds coming from all across the state. And I think we'd be remiss to not shout out to some of the foresters that are listening, because we get a lot of landowners listening to this. But we also get a lot of professionals. And if we have any foresters in Washington that aren't certified to do tree farm inspections and you're interested, please yeah. Look into that. That's also on that watreefarm.org website.

>> Yes. And it gives you a chance to reach out and find new clients amongst our tree farmers. And also it's fun to visit tree farms. It just is –

>> It is.

>> – as a part of the whole process.

>> Yeah. It's always a lot of fun. I think I end up getting a really good lunch out of it about half the time too. [brief laughter] So it's always a really nice day. And I know, I mean, we talked about the certification, the fall forestry seminar, the calendar, but it doesn't really stop there. There's a lot of interesting stuff and ideas that the Tree Front Program has. And I know one of the things that they're trying to do is figure out how can we value or more accurately talk and portray the value that small forest owners have to the environment. And you guys have been making some interesting moves in that way as well.

>> Yes. One of the things that we did was Bob Obedzinski, Andrea Watts, John Hendrickson, and John Madsen put together an ecological systems survey for all of the tree farm owners. And we had a pretty good response. I think 50 or 60 people responded saying all the different things that are provided to the general public, to society in general just by us being good tree farmers, and you know things like that, wildlife habitat.

>> Right.

>> Wetland preservation enhancement, carbon uptake, and just all kinds of things. And there's a whole report that's again, on our website that shows all those things. And that has now led to – Elaine Oneil with Farm Forestry now has a grant from the legislature through the DNR to look at how small forest landowners can participate in carbon credit payments. We haven't got that finalized yet, but it looks like we're going to be able to well, hopefully, we can solve – we can crack the net so that the local small forest landowners can participate. The American Forest Foundation has a similar program for the east, but that's a whole different ballgame back in Pennsylvania.

>> Right.

>> We have a whole different ecology out here, and so we have to look at it a new from out here. And so hopefully, within the next few years, we'll have something like that in line that people can participate in.

>> Well you know, it's been amazing talking to you, Dave. I really appreciate you coming or I guess tuning in and joining us for the podcast between Nourse Tree Farm and Washington Tree Farm Program. You're doing a lot of really great work. And yeah, just really appreciate you joining us. And we'll close this one out. And unless you have any final thoughts.

>> Well, it's been a pleasure to talk to you, Patrick.

>> As always. And I'm sure I'll be talking to you again soon. So thank you Forest Overstory listeners. As always, I want to plug any and all WSU Extension events that may be happening in your area. You can look and find those on forestry.wsu.edu. And then I'll plug again, the Washington Tree Farm program, watreefarm.org.

[Music]