



# Minnesota Woodlands

MFA: an organization of, by and for Minnesota's private woodland owners and friends.

[www.MinnesotaForestry.org](http://www.MinnesotaForestry.org)

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MFA Newsletter  
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MFA Board Meetings  
DNR Cambridge Office  
10 a.m. - 3 p.m.  
• January 9, 2018  
• April 10, 2018  
• July 10, 2018  
  
Conference Calls  
8 - 9 a.m.  
• February 13, 2018  
• March 13, 2018  
• May 8, 2018  
• June 12, 2018

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## MFA Hosts Annual Meeting, Fall Field Days, and Tree Farm Awards

Friday, Oct. 13 marked the beginning of the Minnesota Forestry Association's (MFA) Annual Meeting, Fall Field Days and Tree Farm Awards.

Programming on Friday was held at the Fireside Inn Restaurant in McGregor, Minn., and included a social hour and banquet, as well as a presentation of the history of the Libby Dam by Tammy Frauenschuh.

On Saturday, Oct. 14, the schedule of events reconvened at Long Lake Conservation Center in Palisade, Minn. Field Day events began with a series of PowerPoint presentations with information pertinent to private woodland owners.

Topics for discussion included Backyard Wildlife (Jim Ravis, Master Gardener and photographer); Amphibians and Reptiles (Jodie Provost, Minnesota DNR); Sharp-tailed Grouse and Woodcock (Jake Granfors, Pheasants Forever); SFIA Implications (Dennis Thompson, Aitkin County SWCD); and Rice Lake National Wildlife Refuge (Walt Ford, Refuge Manager).

After lunch, Field Day participants were then offered the opportunity to tour many of the sites they had learned about during the morning session.

Field Day attendees toured the following sites, where they were provided with information from specialists from the morning's presentations: Gun Lake Wildlife Management Area, Rice Lake National Wildlife Refuge, and Libby Dam.

*Continued on page 2*

*Top: Field Day attendees were able to tour Rice Lake National Wildlife Refuge on Saturday, Oct. 14 as part of MFA's annual Fall Field Days event.*

*Middle: Walt Ford, Refuge Manager at Rice Lake National Wildlife Refuge, provided members with information concerning the refuge, including information on the different species who call this area home, including more than 700 bird species, 220 mammals, 200 reptiles and amphibians, and numerous fish, invertebrates and plants.*

*Bottom: Tammy Frauenschuh provided members with a tour of the Libby Dam. According to the website, the original wood dam was built in 1895 and included a lock that allowed steamboats to travel through to the Mississippi River. The original wood structure was replaced with concrete in 1912 and the lock was last cycled in 1956.*



Minnesota Forestry  
Association

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**Away from home for a  
time?** Please contact the  
MFA office if you'll be  
away from home for an  
extended time and let  
us know when you'll be  
back. We'll hold onto  
the newsletter until you  
return so you won't  
miss a single issue!  
[Information@  
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or call 218-879-5100.



*Annual Meeting continued*

MFA Board President Dennis Thompson remarked that he was excited to see such a great turnout this year.

"The best part for me is the Tree Farm Awards," said Thompson. "The passion landowners have for their property continues to amaze me!"

**Stay Tuned:** Further details concerning the Tree Farm Awards will come in the next issue of the newsletter.

*Top: On Friday, Oct. 13, MFA hosted its annual banquet and Tree Farm Awards program. Tom Witkowski captured this crowd shot during the awards ceremony.*

*Bottom: Jodie Provost (left) and Jake Granfors provided members with information concerning sharp-tailed grouse habitat at Gun Lake Wildlife Management Area on Saturday, Oct. 14.*

## Federal Forests Act passes House 232-188

The Resilient Federal Forests Act of 2017 passed in the U.S. House of Representatives, 232 in favor and 188 opposed, months after being reintroduced and nearly two years of bipartisan vetting.

The bill, which will now move to the Senate, ultimately aims to decrease the devastation of wildland forest fires through forest management practices, and to decrease "fire borrowing," the transfer of funds budgeted to other programs of the U.S. Forest Service.

In 2015, for the first time in its 110-year history, the U.S. Forest Service saw more than half of its budget go to firefighting.

U.S. Rep. Bruce Westerman, R-Ark., the only forester in Congress and sponsor of the bill, said "forests are in desperate need" of management to curb wildfires, a sentiment shared by House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., who noted that the recent deadly wildfires in California's Napa and Sonoma counties placed a new emphasis on the need for forest management legislation.

The House Natural Resources Committee, led by Rep. Rob Bishop, R-Utah, approved Westerman's measure in June.

The 2017 wildfire season has seen more than 52,000 fires, 8.8 million acres consumed, nearly 8,000 homes lost and countless families displaced, Westerman's office said in a news release after the vote.

"The U.S. Forest Service has already spent close to \$3 billion on fire suppression, and a growing chorus of Americans — including mainstream environmental groups — are acknowledging that greater forest management can improve forest health, lessen the severity and cost of fires, and is needed to protect communities and the environment," stated Westerman.

At least 95 conservation, forestry and industry groups have signaled support for the Resilient Federal Forests Act.

"We have been reminded in recent months and years that America's federal forests are in desperate need of active management," U.S. Rep. Paul Ryan, R-Wisc., said in a release. "As a forester, Bruce has put together a bill that provides the U.S. Forest Service with the tools necessary to combat overgrowth, disease, and insect infestation in our forests which will reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire."

*More information can be found in "Westerman's Resilient Federal Forests Act passes House 232-188," by John Lovett, Times Record*

# Creature Feature

By Jodie Provost, MN DNR Private Land Habitat Specialist

## North American River Otter (*Lontra canadensis*) – Harbinger of Clean Water and Healthy Habitat

The North American river otter is one of Minnesota's most playful, clever creatures. This large, aquatic member of the weasel family inhabits most of North America north of Mexico, including our state's lakes, ponds and streams. I was alerted to their spirited zest for life by once encountering them shooting through the rushing water of a culvert for the apparent sheer thrill. But the most interesting otter story I've heard is that of a rehabilitated otter learning to retrieve ducks by first watching a Labrador retriever! Like some other wildlife populations, otters experienced a dramatic decline, but then a fortunate, amazing recovery due to concerted conservation efforts. As top carnivores in the aquatic food web, their presence in our aquatic ecosystems is an indicator of clean waters and healthy habitats, and thus highly desired.

**Skilled Swimmer** Otters have keen adaptations to life in water including long, flexible, sleek bodies; short powerful legs with webbed feet; a strong rudder-like tail; superb underwater near-sighted vision; long sensitive whiskers near their nose to detect vibrations of prey in dim light; and the ability to close their eyes and nostrils to keep water out. They can dive for up to eight minutes and 60 feet deep. As mammals, they must surface for air, swimming with their heads above water and occasionally rising from the water like a periscope to see farther and watch for predators. If ever paddling through otter territory, you may have detected an otter keeping an eye on you in this way. Their rich brown to black, silky fur is short and dense to repel water and offer warmth against cold water and ice. A silvery color graces their underside, throat, and cheeks. Adults can grow up to 5.5 feet and 30 pounds, but average 15-19 pounds.

**Romp and Roll** A group of otters is appropriately called a "romp." They romp, roll in the grass, wrestle, play with their prey, bump sticks across the water, drop pebbles to the bottom to fetch, and slide down muddy or snowy stream banks on their bellies. These antics likely polish their hunting skills. Their slide marks which alternate with footprints leave a "dot-dash" trail, a telltale sign of their presence. Other otter signs include their normal tracks (five toes in front and back, two to four inch



Photo by Joe Frisk.

imprints of heel pad and claws, wider than long); their toilets (piles of scat often on high spots along stream banks or trails between water bodies); and wallows of flattened and raked vegetation or dirt which they likely use when grooming.

**Family Life** Otter family life begins with mating in late winter/early spring. Males mark their territory, which intersects several females' territories, by leaving scent from scat and glands. Most females don't give birth until three years old, while males don't usually breed successfully until five to seven years old. Like other members of the Mustelidae or weasel family, otters have "delayed implantation." Mating occurs shortly after the birth of a litter, but the fertilized embryos do not implant and begin growing for about eight months. One to six pups are born 50 days after implantation in late winter/early spring.

The female otter doesn't dig her own den. She cares for her pups in an existing structure, usually close to water. It may be a natural hollow in a lake or river bank; an old beaver lodge or beaver or muskrat bank burrow; a space under roots, a log, or overhang; a dense thicket near water; a man-made brush pile; a hollow log; in a higher upland location such as a bluff or cave to protect her pups from floods; or even under a garage or deck. Pups begin expressing their frisky manner at four weeks, then leave the den to swim, explore and catch their own food at seven weeks. The male has little to do with raising them, though he may rejoin the family after they've left the den, as otters are fairly social. Pups are weaned at about three months, but stay with their mother until the next spring when she boots them out to search for a new home.

**Vivacious Voyager** Individual otters regularly move great distances and use multiple dens. Because they typically

follow streams and other small waterways in search of food, their home ranges are large and linear – up to 20-30 miles. They will travel across land too, particularly in snow. Activity occurs year-round and any time of day, with peaks from dawn to mid-morning and in

*Continued on page 7*

*Otter slide tracks. Photo by John Erb.*

# MFA Board Elections 2017

**ALL INCUMBENTS!** *You might be disappointed to see that all four candidates for the Board are incumbents. Yes, all four directors whose three-year terms are expiring have agreed to stand for re-election. Actually, for an all-volunteer organization such as ours, continuity is very important. From that standpoint, we are fortunate that all four are willing to serve again. Of course, you are free to write in the name(s) of any MFA member in good standing. If you have questions or comments, contact me, or any other member of our board. Our contact information is in every newsletter.*

Dennis J. Thompson  
President



## Dennis Thompson, Aitkin

Dennis is the District Forester at the Aitkin County SWCD and has been working with private landowners in central Minnesota since 1998. As a certified Forest Stewardship Plan writer and Tree Farm Inspector, Dennis has written over 475 Stewardship plans covering approximately 57,000 acres. In 2007, Dennis successfully developed a Forest Stewardship Council group certification program for private forest landowners in Aitkin County. Dennis has been an elected board member of the Minnesota Forestry Association since 2006 and currently serves as President and Treasurer. Dennis has a B.S. in Forest Resources from the University of Minnesota, College of Natural Resources.



## Lyle Keller, Peterson

Lyle is a retired civil engineer who worked for a road construction firm based out of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. In 1984, he and his wife bought what he calls an “abused farm” adjacent to the Root River near Peterson, Minnesota, which is about 30 miles southeast of Rochester and 15 miles from the Iowa border. Lyle has been living on that 146 acre farm since 1995. His first Forest Stewardship Plan was developed in 1986 and in 1987, the land was designated a Tree Farm. He has planted thousands of trees on his property and harvested 113,000 board feet of lumber in 1999. Lyle was elected to the MFA Board in 2012 and currently serves as Secretary.



## Gina Hugo, Elk River

Gina is a resource conservationist with the Sherburne SWCD. For the past 18 years, her work with the district has included native prairie restoration on public and private lands, Forest Stewardship Plan writing for private woodland owners, coordinating community forestry programs for the communities within Sherburne County and performing onsite forest health consultations for private woodland owners. In addition, Gina administers community engagement volunteer programs that support urban tree health and preparedness for emerald ash borer. She is a MN Forest Pest First Detector, a MN Tree Inspector and an ISA Certified Arborist.



## Brian Huberty, Hastings

Brian is a forester and the remote sensing lead scientist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Brian has B.S. and M.S. degrees from the University of Minnesota, College of Natural Resources specializing in geospatial resource inventory systems. Over the last three decades, he has applied remote sensing and geospatial assessment technologies for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, USDA Forest Service, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and U.S. Geological Service.

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# OFFICIAL BALLOT 2017

## DIRECTIONS

1. Select a candidate by placing an "X" in the appropriate box. Those with Family Memberships are entitled to TWO votes.
2. Return the ballot to the MFA office, postmarked no later than January 15, 2018. (Any ballot postmarked after this date will not be a valid vote.)
3. You may write in the name(s) of any MFA member in good standing.

Vote for four, each for a three year term on the MFA Board of Directors	First Vote	Second Vote (Family Members)
Dennis Thompson, Aitkin (incumbent)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lyle Keller, Peterson (incumbent)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gina Hugo, Elk River (incumbent)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Brian Huberty, Hastings (incumbent)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Write In: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Write In: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
For Family Members, please print your name here so we can verify that you are entitled to two votes: _____		

## Vote for a New MFA Logo

In this digital age of social media, a simpler graphic MFA logo is needed to fit on the small screens of cell phones to provide more instant recognition and branding. At this year's annual meeting, attendees picked their top three favorites from a slate of a half dozen choices in order to help narrow down the choices. Please vote for just one of these three choices for MFA to use into the "digital" future.



Small versions of icons



<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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*Thank you for voting!*

Tape Here

Tape Here

Tape Here

Return Address (Optional)

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<p>Affix a 1st Class Stamp Here</p>
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TO:

MINNESOTA FORESTRY ASSOCIATION  
 1111 CLOQUET AVENUE, STE. 7  
 CLOQUET, MN. 55720

Any comments you'd like to add? Put them here and then fold this side in first.

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## *Creature Feature continued*

the evening. Food items are comprised of clams, muskrats, frogs, tadpoles, salamanders, snakes, turtles, a variety of fish including minnows, pumpkinseeds, crappies and bullheads, and especially crayfish. On land, insects, chipmunks, mice, young rabbits, and small birds are fair game. Otters have few predators other than bobcats, coyotes, and wolves when on land, plus human-caused mortality from trapping and vehicle collisions. They may live 10-15 years in the wild, and as long as 25 years in captivity.

**Otterly Amazing Recovery** The decline then recovery of our otter population is a shining example of conservation success. As a native species, it was once found statewide. Changes in land use, destruction and degradation of wetlands and habitat along water bodies and waterways, reduced water quality, and unregulated trapping during the late 1800s led to otters' near disappearance from Minnesota by the early 1900s. Today, otters are again common in northern Minnesota, have expanded into suitable habitat of southern Minnesota, and the population is relatively stable.

Most of the otter population recovery has been "natural," resulting from harvest management and improved habitat and water quality. Wetland restorations and better regulations (e.g., federal Clean Water Act of 1972, Minnesota DNR Public Waters Permit Program, and Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act of 1991) have been instrumental. In the early 1980s, 21 otters were released in the upper Minnesota River basin in west-central Minnesota. The current estimated fall population in Minnesota is about 18,000 otters, probably the highest in the last 40 years.

**Harvest Season** As a result of otter recovery, otter harvest limits, season lengths, and trapping zones have increased over the years. Prior to 1917, otters were unprotected. They received complete protection from 1917 to 1942, and in 1942, limited harvest began in northern Minnesota. Harvest is now allowed statewide. Trapping season generally runs from late October/early November to early January. This year's season is Oct. 28 to Jan. 7, with a total limit of four otters per licensed trapper. In the 1986 to 2016 seasons, the lowest registered otter harvest was 777 and the highest 3,450. Last year saw 1,170 harvested. Population fluctuations are related to trapper effort, which is primarily related to fur prices. Pelt prices this year are expected to be \$20-30. They have been as high as \$87 in 2004. For more detail on trapping regulations, see the Minnesota Hunting and Trapping Regulations handbook (pages 47-56, [www.mndnr.gov/hunting](http://www.mndnr.gov/hunting)).

**Close Monitoring** Despite its recovery and greater adaptability than once thought, our otter population still requires close monitoring and efforts to provide healthy

habitats due to several factors. Otters will not inhabit highly degraded habitats and polluted waters, and are prone to population decline and slow recovery. They have low reproductive rates, occur at low densities, have restricted distributions, concentrate contaminants in their bodies as top carnivores, and continue to have one of the highest sought after pelts in our state. Rivers and wetlands continue to be altered or destroyed. Impacts from oil spills, water acidification from mining operations, siltation in waters, pesticide accumulation in waters and prey, invasive aquatic species and climate change must all be considered.

To help provide close monitoring of our otter population, Minnesota DNR classifies otters as a furbearer. Trappers must have small game and trapping licenses and otter tags; need a trapping education certificate if born after 1989; and each pelt must be registered with the DNR. When registered, information is collected on the sex, date, method of take, and harvest location, and the pelt is tagged. Accurate harvest data allows for better population modeling and adjustment of trapping regulations.



*Photo by Joe Frisk.*

**Healthy Habitats, Clean Waters** To help provide healthy habitats and clean waters for otters, landowners can protect, enhance and restore streams, rivers, wetlands, ponds and lakes, and adjacent upland buffers. Chemical and pesticide use can be minimized and pollutants kept out of waters. Forest, trail and stream crossing management can minimize erosion and siltation. Large downed logs, brush piles, burrows and other natural structures can be left and encouraged near water to provide dens. And beaver, and their dams and lodges, allowed on the landscape. These actions will also benefit numerous water birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fishes, providing food for otters, greater recreation for us and our fellow forest and outdoor enthusiasts, and clean water for all.

**Thank you** to John Erb, Minnesota DNR furbearer research biologist, for input and review of this article.

For MFA members, the two best online sources of woodland information are the MFA website at [www.minnesotaforestry.org](http://www.minnesotaforestry.org), and the University of Minnesota Extension Forestry website at [www.myminnesotawoods.umn.edu](http://www.myminnesotawoods.umn.edu).

  
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
EXTENSION

# Upcoming Events

Find more events, and more information on these events, at the MFA website, [www.MinnesotaForestry.org](http://www.MinnesotaForestry.org) or by calling MFA at 218-879-5100.

## Aitkin County Private Woodlands Committee

**Saturday, Dec. 9, 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.**

Palisade, Minn. Pre-registration by Dec. 4 is required. Contact Dennis Thompson at the Aitkin County SWCD at 218-927-6565 ext.111, or email [dennis.thompson@mn.nacdn.net](mailto:dennis.thompson@mn.nacdn.net) to reserve a spot. Cost of \$10 includes coffee, cookies, lunch, bus tour, and handouts.

## Webinar: Wood Utilization Options for Urban Trees Infested by Invasive Species

**Tuesday, Dec. 19, 12-1 p.m.**

## Family Forest Workshop

**Wednesday, Dec. 20, 5:30-8 p.m.**

Duluth Heights Community Center, 33 W Mulberry St, Duluth, MN 55811

South St. Louis SWCD is hosting a family forestry workshop. With the end of the year coming, it is time for an update on all the things that have happened in the world of forestry. There will be guest speakers presenting on fire safety, the logging and timber industry, and invasive species. There will also be refreshments, handouts, and time for individual questions. Take a peek at what will be in the 2018 tree sale and get important dates on your calendar. RSVP: [Bethk@southstlouisswcd.org](mailto:Bethk@southstlouisswcd.org) or 218-730-8002. More information is available online at <http://www.southstlouisswcd.org/docs/workshop%20flyer%2012-20-17.pdf>

## Gifts in Memory

MFA has a policy recognizing donations made in memory of someone. The proceeds are deposited in MFA's endowment fund so that the gift can continue to grow, providing a revenue stream to support MFA's programs in perpetuity while the principle remains intact.

Donations were recently received in memory of David Adams from the following: Barbara LeCuyer, Margaret Ekstrum, Sandra Hamre, Nancy Knoell, Elisabeth White, Mary Handrick, Guy & Elaine Bartolain, Kristen & Randal Olson, Blinda McArdle, David Zosel, James & Cathleen Chester, Thomas Fischer, Janice & Richard Clemens, Lyle Keller, Marypaul Foreman, Diane Merritt, Shirley Jane Geib, Joanne & Val Bednarski, Mary Gaffney, Jerome Weidemann, Mark Reier, John & Patricia Canby, Brenda Carlson, Gene, Marianne & Grant Morgan, William Hunt, Orville Hansen, Ted & Noel Paukert, and Gwen & Eric Heimer, Dennis Adams.

A donation was also received from Joyce & Jesus Rivera in memory of Lowell Thurnber. Thank you all.



## Minnesota Forestry Association

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*Change Service Requested*



## A word from the editor:

As this year comes to a close and we find ourselves in a season of expressing gratitude and thankfulness, the MFA, and myself personally, want to extend gratitude to you, our readers. We look forward to continuing to work on behalf of family forest owners and, through education and advocacy, promote wise stewardship of forest lands. May your holiday season be joyous, safe and prosperous.

Happy holidays!

P.S. Please contact me with member profile ideas, other story ideas, or concerns.