

Member Profile:

Palm Family Forest

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It's been an evolution. This phrase describes much of the process that the Palm brothers and their wives have experienced in their 44 years as woodland owners. Dan and Linda, with Charles and Cora, purchased a 200 acre parcel in 1974 for hunting access. The land was close to their childhood home and they knew it would be productive. Their ownership expanded in 1976 with 120 acres from a neighbor, then 125 in 1978, and again by

40 acres in 1980. The parcel is managed as one unit, but Dan and Linda own 253 acres and Charles and Cora own 233 acres that include the camp. Their land is in Delaware County, towns of Stamford and Roxbury.

As the land holding evolved, so did their knowledge and skill. They enjoyed hunting, but they embraced their opportunity to steward a land and forest back to health following mistreatment

by previous owners. They started with a management plan prepared by the NYS DEC. Their first step on the owner's learning curve was that NY land taxes are high, and the 480-a forest tax law would help them afford the land and be better managers. They enrolled in 480-a in 1978, and have continued with assistance of their forester Rod Jones for the last 38 years. The need for help with taxes prompted them to enroll in 480-a, but that led them to gain knowledge and experience for successful and sustainable management.

The management on the property started with the need to reduce the abundance of low-grade (i.e., low value and poor quality) trees that dominated the woods. In 1980 their first harvest included 1000 cull trees and 700 timber-quality trees, reflecting the need to reduce the growing space and light captured by trees that didn't contribute to their ownership objectives. This was

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The Palms enjoy having camp on the north side of the property. Camp offered a place to stay in earlier years during work projects, and throughout camp has been central to their hunting and family recreation.



The Palms gather to review their management plan, inspect maps of recent management projects, and strategize for future efforts.

followed by a 25 acre timber stand improvement, TSI, of low grade stems by the brothers in 1984. By 2005 their labors of love and energy, patience, and the progress of tree growth, was rewarded by a sawtimber harvest of 172,000 board feet. On a different section of the property they

were able to harvest another 150,000 board feet in 2010. Other projects that helped the property and families to evolve in their stewardship included control of invasive plants, tree planting, wildlife food plots, USDA NRCS programs for wildlife habitat, WHIP, and land conservation, CSP.



The property climbs from 1600 to 3360 feet. Upper elevations are better timber lands and dominated by sugar maple and cherry. Lower elevations are historically agricultural lands that now include fields, softwood plantations, and scattered apple trees.

Dan retired as a naval officer at the rank of captain, and later worked as a regional director for DEC. Linda is a retired school teacher. Dan and Linda have two sons, Matt and Jake. Charles is retired as an attorney, and Cora is a retired school teacher. They have two daughters, Andrea and Katie. Cora is a transplant from St. Lawrence County, though Dan, Linda, and Charles all grew up in the vicinity of the property. Dan and Charles demonstrate their wisdom by including their wives in all decisions regarding financial expenditures, and have been delegated to the “lesser” decisions about best management practices (BMPs), harvests, and TSI to execute alone or with guidance from professionals. This policy seems to fulfill their philosophy for “happy wife, happy life.”

The land encompasses the ridge that divides the east and west branch drainages of the Delaware River, and all the land is in the New York City water supply area. Road access is on the north side, and this provides entry for their camp. The elevation of the property rises from 1600 feet to 3360 feet. Seventy percent of the land is at the higher elevation, and is northern hardwood forest dominated by hard/sugar maple (90%), cherry (8%) with limited beech, yellow birch and basswood. This area is managed for timber production. The lower 30% of the land was at one time pastured and when they purchased it about half was early successional forest and half fairly open predominated by rose spirea and thorn bushes. Currently the dominant trees are ash and soft/red maple. A 345 KV power line crosses one corner of the property. A half-acre pond and seven vernal pools have been developed. Twenty three acres were planted with Norway spruce and red pine about 35 years ago.

The Palm’s land is bordered by the 1300 acre Relay State Forest on the south and west. The 250 acre Village of Hobart property borders the east, including a reservoir that provided the village with water until about 1990. The water source for the reservoir was two springs on the Palm’s property at about 2500 feet elevation.

Over the years they have seen many changes in their land. The upper 70% of the land now has a much higher quality of hardwood than when the property was purchased due to improvement harvests and management to reduce low-grade

trees. The lower 30% now has a better and greater variety of habitat than it did when purchased. Habitat improvement is due to the planting of food plots and conservation shrubs, and the maintenance of low shrub habitat through rotational brush hogging. Construction of the pond and seven vernal pools, pruning of the 70 wild apple trees and planting of 23 acres of evergreen have also improved and diversified the habitat.

The timber and forestry projects blend nicely with wildlife interests. Both Charles and Dan are avid hunters. They live at camp most of May to hunt turkeys and from mid-October to December to hunt deer with both bow and rifle. An additional six people hunt with them. They also donate a two day hunt for two during spring turkey season to the Cornell Cooperative Extension 4-H Sports Shooting Program. Management to support recreation include maintaining all log roads — brush hogging and cleaning water bars — planting food plots, planting/caring for conservation shrubs, brush hogging fields on a rotational basis, and pruning the 70 wild apple trees on the property. The pond is also used for fishing,

swimming, and an exercise area for Dan's black lab, Pepper.


Dan's activity and contributions to forestry in NY have changed through time. As a regional director for DEC he was involved with regional and state level policy that impacted public and private land. He later became executive director for NYFOA and worked throughout the state with private owners. As chair of the NYC Watershed Agricultural Council Forestry Program he focused on the NYC watershed. As a Master Forest Owner volunteer he focuses mostly on Delaware County. Most recently he spent time in Washington working with congressional and senatorial staff helping them understand the importance of forestry programs in the farm bill. At this point, Dan enjoys interacting with other forest owners, and especially serving as an MFO volunteer to assist new owners as they begin the management process.

Dan and Charles belong to the New York Forest Owners Association and Catskill Forest Association. These memberships have been important to connect them with a network of people they can learn from,

and who provide assistance and advice. They enjoy the written materials from both organizations, plus have benefited from information provided through the Watershed Agricultural Council and USDA programs. On a more tangible level, their recent up-grade to a 27 HP Kubota tractor with a bucket has increased efficiency.

They recognize that their tenure is short in "forest time," and offer these suggestions to other owners: (1) identify your management goals and use those to develop a plan; (2) actually follow the plan; (3) hire professionals to assist you; (4) always bid your sale and insist on a contract; (5) enjoy your land by doing your best management, but don't stress if you can't do all that you would like. Phrased another way "use a professional forester, participate in programs that support your management objectives, and invest your time in efforts that have the greatest return because you can't do it all." 🌲

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