

Smith Hill Properties—Four Generations



Smith Hill Farm, early 1990s.

It all began in 1962 when Bob and Marge Fry, recently settled in Corvallis with their young family, Bob hard at work as the first orthopedist in town, were advised that owning farmland was a good invest—and could save on taxes as well. They purchased 700 acres on Smith Hill north of town from TJ Starker himself (Starker Forest’s founder), for a mere \$57/acre. Sure, most of the mature timber had been cut in the 20 years before, but Bob really just wanted a place to get away, drive his Scout over the rolling grassy hills, and hunt deer and fish. Over the next several years two more tracts were acquired in Alsea and South Corvallis, their world-class steelhead stream and trout pond more of a draw than their tree growing potential.

As Bob neared retirement, he took an interesting in Tree Farming, was a graduate of the OSU Extension’s first Master Woodland Manager course, and soon was transforming the rolling grasslands and farm fields into productive young stands. He developed his own management plan, and, always a forward-thinker, implemented a business plan to ensure the properties could stay in the family. He was concerned that John and Peggy, both new teachers in Redmond, might need some extra income down the road to get by.

John and Peggy Goodman shared these and other stories about how her dad came to acquire the now 880-acre Smith Hill Properties ownership. Their first memories of the property are as young teens, not yet high-school sweethearts, cutting Christmas trees with their folks—John’s and Peggy’s parents were friends. “It was always a Charlie Brown tree—Bob wouldn’t let them take any of good ‘timber trees’ he had planted”. There were a lot of trees to choose from—from 1983

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to 94 Bob and Marge, planted 27,000 trees, along with help from John and Peggy and their sons Mark and Ross (and contract planting crews).

It was natural for John and Peggy to take a larger role in tree farm operations as Marge and Bob became less active. It was easy at first—systems were in place and their forests were mostly young. After their first consultant died unexpectedly, they were thrust into new territory. They met Mark and learned of Trout Mountain Forestry at Tree School in 2010. It quickly became apparent this was a good match, leading to a now 10-year working relationship.

John and Peggy continue insightful planning to perpetuate the family legacy, recently updating their business plans and transferring ownership in the family corporation to their sons. “We don’t want to be doing this in our final days, and want to make sure our family shares our interests in the properties”, says John. The key to keeping family engaged is to make it fun to spend time together on the properties. “Sitting in a shed in the rain eating peanut butter sandwiches is probably not going to create great memories”, quips Peggy. This realization led them to replace the falling-down Smith Hill farmhouse with a modern vacation home, using proceeds from a recent harvest. Now their grandchildren Madeline and Jack love to come to properties for family traditions that include collecting mistletoe (shooting it out of the top of oak trees with a shotgun!) and cutting their own personal tiny Christmas trees for their bedrooms.

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Finding a Balanced Approach to Using Herbicides in Reforestation

Herbicide application is the most common practice for post-harvest vegetation management in our region. Herbicides can be very effective at reducing competing vegetation and improving the survival and growth of newly planted trees at a critical moment in stand development that determines its future productivity. It is for these reasons, and more, that many landowners opt to apply herbicides at least once prior to, or following replanting; yet for some, the idea of removing all competing vegetation may not be compatible with their management objectives or conservation values.

There are many reasons landowners may want to seek alternative or more balanced approaches to using herbicides for vegetation management in reforestation. Many birds, insects, wildlife, and beneficial pollinators depend on the diverse forb and shrub community that develops following a harvest (aka "diverse early seral habitat"). Retaining some vegetative cover may also protect the soil from erosion and help it recover from compaction. Deer and elk browse on

seedlings may also be reduced if other, more preferable plants are available. Finally, reducing overall chemical usage is often an objective in and of itself.

Though there are undoubtedly countless techniques available to accomplish some of these objectives, we are presenting some practical options here for consideration. In most cases we have found a site prep spray to be necessary to achieve at least 90% survival; however, one might modify the prescription to include "skips" to preserve pockets of the existing shrub community, perhaps in the vicinity of wildlife tree retention. This choice would be the most economical and practical. For many small woodland owners, maximizing early growth is not as important as it is for industrial landowners that practice short-rotation management, so subsequent release spray may be necessary only on drier sites to improve survival.

Another option would be to opt for a more expensive, though more selective "circle spray" around each tree, rather than a broadcast application, with some

supplemental control of bigleaf maple sprouts, blackberries, or other problematic species if necessary. Chemical choice can also have a significant impact on the plant community. Grasses and forbs tend to have the greatest impact on early seedling survival, and they may be selectively controlled through a springtime release spray that would have a lesser impact on the shrub community, particularly in situations where the stand did not have heavy shrub cover to begin with.

In summary, small woodland owners often have other values they are balancing with timber production, and it is our hope that they feel empowered to manage the reforestation process in a way that is compatible with those values.

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What do John and Peggy enjoy most about their properties? "Having our own personal herd of elk, watching the trees grow and seeing the results of our management, the peace and quiet—getting off the grid, fishing with our grandkids. And some timber income from time to time doesn't hurt too."

Peggy and John are modest about their accomplishments, but they have created a productive and attractive legacy that their family is eagerly and actively perpetuating. I asked them their tips to new forestland owners, they were quick with their response:

1. Spend time and money to figure how to pass the property on to your people, before it's too late!
2. Make it fun for the kids!
3. Find a good forest manager, one who understands and shares your perspectives!



Marge and Bob Fry at Smith Hill back in the day.

Benefits of Slash Retention

Recent research findings from southwest Washington detailed in the October 2019 US Forest Service publication *Science Findings* show that leaving slash on the site after logging reduced the spread of invasive species and encouraged the development of native plant communities. Douglas-fir seedlings planted through well-distributed logging slash had higher survival and better growth than sites where most slash was piled and burned—the typical industrial approach. Leaving up to a 12" layer slash resulted in significantly cooler soil temperatures, more available moisture for planted seedlings, and fewer invasive species (especially Scotch broom and exotic blackberry). The effects can last for 3-4 years or more. While results may vary between different sites, this study shows that retaining slash as a soil mulch can reduce the need for herbicides.

Science Findings is a monthly publication of the US Forest Service Pacific NW Research Station that summarizes recent research findings. View online at <https://www.fs.fed.us/pnw/sciencef/scifi220.pdf> or visit <https://www.fs.usda.gov/pnw> and click on Publications. Print subscriptions are available by emailing pnw_pnwsubs@fs.fed.us

Mike Messier Reaches the 10-Year Milestone

Mike joined Trout Mountain Forestry in the spring of 2010. Hard to believe that ten years have gone by.... Thanks, Mike, for your hard work and dedication!



Mike's son, Miles.

Mark Miller Entering Semi-retirement

Mark Miller knew as a teenager that he wanted to work in the woods. It was either that, or race mountain bikes. But mountain bike racing was still in its infancy in the 1970s, so it was off to study forestry at Oregon State University. Thus began a career that has seen him practice forestry in Oregon and Maine, start and participate in several forestry firms, and still find time for his other pursuits, including biking and skiing.



Now Mark is scaling back his work schedule to allow more time for those other passions, and especially to spend time with his wife Dawn, who recently retired from the health care field. This year he will be passing the baton for serving his clients to the capable hands of his colleagues in our Corvallis office, Matt Fehrenbacher and Shane Hetzler.

Many of you may know Mark and his dual enthusiasms for forestry and outdoor recreation. If not, here are some highlights. He met Scott Ferguson at OSU in the early 1980s, beginning a career-long collaboration. While Scott dove right into consulting forestry in Oregon, Mark headed to Maine and took up the profession there. While he thrived in Maine and served a variety of landowner clients there, he could never quite shake the grip of Oregon's forests. Raised in Portland with family roots in the Hood River Valley, the landscape of the Northwest eventually drew him back to spend part of 1995 in Oregon, where he worked with Scott and got to know some of his long-term clients.

This pattern repeated and grew stronger, as he came back for a two year period starting in 1999. Mark was there for the founding of Trout Mountain Forestry in 2006 and by the fall of 2008, he had moved back permanently to Oregon.

Mark's many accomplishments include providing forestry services to the City of Corvallis watershed since 2006, an incredible community resource of 2,400 acres that provides drinking water as well as old growth habitat. He collaborated with Dr. Bill Emmingham of OSU on published research regarding conversion of even-aged Douglas-fir stands to uneven-aged structure. And he helped the greenbelt Land Trust with large oak restoration projects needing a forester's guiding hand. Numerous family clients have grown accustomed to relying on Mark as their forester. He's been a part of the Trout Mountain Forestry family—he even officiated at Mike Messier's wedding!

Mark is not going away, but 2020 will see him step into semi-retirement. If we can get him off his bike again, maybe you'll see him out in some woods near you striding through the brush!



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Forestry in the Time of the Coronavirus

Just when we thought the housing market had recovered from the great recession of 2008, when (at last) national housing starts had reached 1.6 million—a level that is necessary to meet our nation's needs—just when we thought a higher level of log and lumber prices could be finally sustained, a tiny, peripatetic virus from China decided to show us how vulnerable we really are and how our best plans may not be enough to prevent our lives from being up-ended.

As many of us take a new look at the year ahead, we see much uncertainty everywhere, and the forestry world is no exception. At the time of this newsletter we are unsure how many lumber mills in our region will even be operating in the near future. In fact, several have already stopped production for the present, waiting for the



extent of the pandemic's social and economic impact on building and lumber demand to be determined.

Although we are concerned about our log markets over the next three months, we think a recovery in the third and fourth quarters of this year is a possibility. In the meantime all of us here at Trout Mountain are feeling fortunate that we are able to

continue to work towards serving our client's needs.

This is a time when all of us have a chance to slow down and reflect on what is essential in our lives. The health of our family and loved ones, the connections we have with others, the importance of supporting each other and nurturing relationships we may have neglected in the past, all these things are vital in times of great uncertainty. Let us take advantage of this opportunity.

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