Wilton’s Black Acres Farm Hosts 64th Annual Field Day
By Douglas Rooks, Maine Woodlands Editor

Every Field Day is the same, and every Field Day is different. For more than six decades, Mainers have been gathering at the woodland of Outstanding Tree Farmers to recognize the practice of excellent forestry, along with the sustainable and diversified use of land and its resources.

The tradition was honored, for the 64th time, at Black Acres Farm in Wilton on Sept. 8, where Russell and Susan Black, and their children and grandchildren, have carried on a family agricultural legacy that has now expanded beyond their forebears’ dreams, and perhaps even beyond their own expectations.

As for the new, this may be the first time a maple sugaring operation was front and center in the festivities, as Russell Black showed off the latest in processing technology that has established Black Acres, on Black Road, as a retail store destination for the area. And while many of the demonstrations for visitors were familiar from past field days, one was unquestionably new: flights of a drone used for forest mapping and data collection, operated by a team from the University of Maine.

In his opening remarks, Russell Black spoke movingly of his early experiences at Black Acres, after he took over management of the property from his father and became a Tree Farmer. He recalled the early contributions of his first consulting forester, Bob Leso, and of Abbott Ladd, a motivating force behind the establishment of tree farming in Maine and the first executive director of SWOAM, now Maine Woodlands Owners.

Black Acres achieved runner-up status in the annual competition back in the 1970s, but a devastating fire then destroyed most of the farm buildings. The Blacks “cut hard” over the next few years in order to keep the property. Russell said, “We had to over-harvest to pay our bills.” The next few decades were spent rebuilding, both the farm and the forest.

Acquiring adjacent properties even when it meant the family would do without some of life’s amenities, the Blacks gradually built their holdings, on both sides of Black Road, to more than 500 acres. Doug Denico,
director of the Maine Forest Service, later praised Black in his remarks, saying, “He’s bucked the trend” that’s led to smaller and less cohesive woodlots in many parts of the state. “I’d like to thank you for being different.”

Congressman Bruce Poliquin spoke, contrasting the worlds of Washington, D.C. and Maine’s 2nd District, where forests and family businesses are the norm. He said of the value of forest products, “It’s the backbone of the state economy,” and spoke of the Black family as “cornerstones of their community.” He said of Russell, after they met, “I just loved him immediately. He’s a great family business owner, and a great legislator.” Representatives of U.S. Senators Susan Collins and Angus King also offered congratulations.

Sen. Tom Saviello, who represents Franklin County in the Legislature, presented a legislative sentiment and spoke of his long association with Russell Black. His remarks were a series of quotations from a wide variety of sources, including an Indian saying, “We do not inherit the land from our ancestors. We borrow it from our children.”

Maine Tree Farm Chair Kyle Burdick presented Black with a donated gift certificate for a Stihl MS 170 chainsaw, which he noted was his personal favorite. Maine Woodland Owners President Jessica Leahy also offered praise. She said Field Day is an excellent example of how the two organizations cooperate to mutual benefit, while focusing public attention and reaching a new generation of woodland owners, calling attention to the diversity of ages and background among those attending.

During the tours and demonstrations, well over 200 visitors saw an unusual variety of displays. The drone flights captured a lot of attention, as did the dog training exercises from the North American Versatile Hunting Dog Association. A portable sawmill operation from M&Ns Lumber Sales and a bucking demonstration from Kennebec Lumber drew crowds, and resulted in many individual consultations as well. Jeremy Guerrette of Ground Perfection Specialists, showed off a 10-foot wide mulching machine that he’s used to create trail systems on large woodlots throughout Maine.

Other outdoor demonstrations and displays were offered by the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, USDA forestry assistance programs, the Maine Forest Service, Maine Natural Areas Program, and Maine CDC. In the display tent were the Sustainable Forestry Initiative flume table, modeling streams and water courses, an informative display on invasive plants, and many others.

A special feature of the woodlot tours, by tractor-drawn wagon and on foot, was a bridge constructed with cost-share funding from the Natural Resource Conservation Service that provides year-round access to parts of the property.

Black Acres has also been honored with the Outstanding Northeast Region Tree Farmer award, making it one of four properties nationwide recognized this year by the American Forestry Foundation.
Why I’m a Tree Farmer

At this year’s Annual Forestry Field Day, Logan Johnson, the Maine Tree Farm Coordinator, asked Tree Farmers to share why they are Tree Farmers. Throughout the day Tree Farmers and others who support the program went to the Maine Tree Farm table to share their thoughts with the Committee.

Tree Farmers who answered the query included John Dudley, of Alexander; Dave Wallace, of Woolwich; Bob Seymour and Jessica Leahy of Orono; and Kyle Burdick, of Pembroke. John Dudley explained that his father was the first member of the family to have a Tree Farm, which was enrolled in the program in 1953. John himself got involved by purchasing a woodlot himself because he saw the issues that having an unmanaged forest can cause. John now manages both Tree Farms since he inherited his father’s. He said he enjoys the program because it puts together wood, water, wildlife, and recreation as key factors to satisfy the concept of sustainability.

Dave Wallace is involved with the Maine Tree Farm Program because it is “good advertising for the family,” “advocates for owners,” and “shows that [his] property is managed.” Bob Seymour and Jessica Leahy told the committee that they are in the program “for the sign!” Finally, Kyle Burdick, who is currently the Chair of Maine Tree Farm Committee said that he is involved with program because it recognizes landowners and he enjoys “getting people excited about forestry, wood products, and sustainability.”

Other, non-Tree Farmers who shared why they support the program include Andy Shultz, the Landowner Outreach Forester for the Maine Forest Service, who said “recognition is important, and the sign is a powerful thing that help tells the story.” Joe Wiley, a retired state wildlife biologist who is interested in enrolling his woodlot in the program said he “would like to be recognized for doing [management] responsibly. Ed Meadows, the former Commissioner of the Maine Department of Agriculture and Conservation Forestry, said that he supports the program because “nothing is more important than helping landowners get valuable information for managing their property. Tree Farm has been a good source of that information forever.”

We want to hear from you!

Please consider sharing your story with the Maine Tree Farm Committee so we can better serve you, the Tree Farmer. You can submit your “Why I’m a Tree Farmer” story by:

email: info@mainetreefarm.org

or

mail: PO Box 5470, Augusta ME, 04332.

Please include your town, Tree Farm number, and any photos you may have of you with your sign. If sending photos, please indicate if the Committee can use them in their publications.

Introducing Featured Tree Farmers, Inspectors, and Volunteers

Over the last few months the Maine Tree Farm Committee has been considering new ways of recognizing those who make the Tree Farm Program special in the state of Maine, our Tree Farmers, Inspectors, and Volunteers. We are excited to introduce our new initiative: Seasonal Features. Each season we will be featuring tree farmers, inspectors, and volunteers who represent the core values of the program. In this issue we feature Wicopy Woods and owners Drs. Bob Seymour and Jessica Leahy, Bishop Tree Farm and owners Herbert and Katherine Bishop, Inspector Mike Dann, and Volunteer and Tree Farm Committee Secretary Patty Cormier.

If you would like to be a featured Tree Farmer, please send a short story of you and your property to our program coordinator, Logan Johnson (coordinator@mainetreefarm.org)

The Maine Tree Farm Committee would like to congratulate the 2018 Outstanding Tree Farmers of the Year, Koral & Randy Clum of Ohio!
A Walk In Wicopy Woods
By: Logan Johnson

On August 25th, 2018, a group of 35 foresters, biologists, and other natural resource professionals convened at the Wicopy Woods Tree Farm and Forest Stewards Guild Model Forest in Sebec for a tour to marvel at 50 years of Ecological Forestry. Owned by Drs. Bob Seymour (Professor Emeritus) and Jessica Leahy (Professor) of the University of Maine’s School of Forest Resources, Wicopy Woods is an exemplary 130-acre woodlot that promotes the growth of merchantable timber products, and embraces forest ecology.

Seymour and Leahy, a husband and wife duo, purchased the property from Ron Locke in 2015. Locke, a forester himself, purchased the property in 1968 as a “run-down farm and woodlot” and then began taking detailed notes compiling seven journal volumes worth of data and details. This year marks the 50th anniversary of Locke’s purchase. Over Locke’s tenure as owner, Wicopy Woods became one of the Forest Steward Guild’s first Model Forest and was named the 1984 Maine Outstanding Tree Farm. Locke, who was in attendance said “I am so pleased to be alive to see the continuity of [this property].”

The walking tour featured discussions from Seymour, Leahy, and fellow University of Maine Assistant Professor Amber Roth. Roth has conducted two bird surveys on the property. Her first survey was in the early summer of 2017 to recreate a survey conducted 20 years prior. She was back in the field the following summer of 2018 to survey the property following the lot’s 2017 fall harvest.

Stepping foot in Wicopy Woods, it is immediately apparent the amount of time and care put into the property, not just in preparation for this most recent harvest, but for the forty-nine years leading up to it.

**TREE FARM PROFILE: Wicopy Woods**
*Owners:* Drs. Bob Seymour & Jessica Leahy
*Organization:* Sociosiv, LLC
*Town:* Sebec
*Tree Farm Since:* 1970
*Acres:* 130

*Honors:*
- Maine Outstanding Tree Farm of the Year - 1984
- Forest Steward Guild Model Forest
Oh, Christmas Tree Farm  
By: Logan Johnson   Photos by: Pamela Wells

The Bishop Tree Farm sits on the shore of Boyden Lake, a popular fishing lake in Washington County, where owners Herbert and Katherine Bishop manage a Christmas tree farm and their business, Boyden Lake Seasonal Creative Products. They make wreaths, cemetery boxes, candle holders, and other creative products. Herbert harvests the wood used for these products from their land and Katherine designs the products.

The Bishops, married for 56 years, have lived on the land for most of that time. Herbert was born on the property, where his father operated a dairy farm with 25 milking cows. Around 1960 his father sold the cows, went to work at “the store,” and planted Norway spruce to find value in the land that was occupied by his herd. In 1965 Herbert and Katherine bought the property from his father. In the late 1980’s, wind had begun to blow down their valuable crop trees. It was then that they decided to plant balsam fir Christmas trees.

Since they planted the Christmas trees, the Bishop’s have been growing and selling trees to families of Washington County and beyond. According to Herbert, they sell nearly 350 Christmas trees a year averaging six feet in height. They also sell roughly 50 large trees which are around seventeen feet tall. Every year Herbert shapes every single Christmas tree on the property by hand. Not only is Herbert responsible for the Christmas trees, he also harvests 5 to 6 cords of pulp wood annually by himself, using a chainsaw to fell the trees and a 1977 cable skidder to get the timber out of the woods. “I do the trees to pay the taxes” said Herbert.

On February 8th, 2016, Herbert and Katherine lost their home to a fire, the home Herbert was born in. This didn’t force them out though, and they rebuilt next to where the old house stood. The only remnants of the old house, the chimney, remains on the front lawn in front of their new house.

When asked why they are Tree Farmers, Katherine replied “we love the woods and land and want to improve the property.” Herbert followed her response, “I love the woods and feel like I’m doing something.” He continued “I believe in the program… We are lucky to be able to do it.” Speaking on the hardships that the two have faced, Herbert said “The toughest times are your best times.” He continued “I’d do it over again,” and Katherine quickly followed, saying “we did buy a Powerball [ticket] though.”
Featured Inspector: Mike Dann

Mike Dann has been an inspector with the Maine Tree Farm program for 38 years. He got involved with the program through Seven Islands Land Company, his employer at the time. He joined the Maine Tree Farm Committee in 1992 to work on the system’s database and inspection forms. He has served as the Chair of the Committee and has been a long-time inspector training facilitator.

From the beginning, Mike has believed that the main impact of the Tree Farm program “is to the individual Tree Farmers who are looking for advice on realizing their management goals.” He also believes the Tree Farm Sign is a strongly recognized symbol of woodland stewardship. When asked about the future, Mike said “Tree Farm will continue to serve Maine landowners who want… the sign as an indication of their desire to manage responsibly.”

Mike and his wife Judy live on and manage their family’s Tree Farm in Dixmont.

Featured Volunteer: Patty Cormier

Patty Cormier has been on the Maine Tree Farm Committee since 1998. For the past 20 years, she has served as the Somerset County Chair and since 2002 has been the program’s Secretary. Over that time, she has been the rock of the program; her participation provides a continuous source of knowledge and consistency as things change over time. Her advice is especially key when planning the Annual Forestry Field Day, as she remembers all the things that have gone right and wrong over the years. Recently she has started attending the National Leadership Conference, developing her leadership skills even further, and sharing them with the other program volunteers.

When asked, what impact the Maine Tree Farm Program has on landowners and communities, Patty responded:

“Landowners struggle daily with the decision of whether to develop or [sell] their land. I see the Tree Farm program as another positive aspect of keeping the land and showing everyone with the sign that they mean business with keeping their land forested and managed. Any community benefits from that.”

Patty is a District Forester for the Maine Forest Service, based in Norridgewock, and participates in other woods related programs including Maine Woodland Owners (Upper Kennebec chapter representative), Cooperative Extension, the Farmington Conservation Commission, and the Franklin County and Somerset County Soil and Water Districts.
Dear Maine Tree Farmer:

Recently, the Maine Tree Farm has been asking itself, what is Maine Tree Farm, and why do our members, volunteers and donors participate? It may be no surprise that the answers are as diverse as the forests in our program. Some people are in it for the sign of sustainability, some are in it for the resources Tree Farm provides landowners to make good forest management happen, and some support us just because we get people excited about forestry! Why are you a tree farmer or Tree Farm supporter? We want to hear from you, and how we can better meet your expectations.

The Maine Tree Farm Program is currently undergoing a period of self reflection, and possibly restructuring. The resource demands to maintain a certification program has been challenging, and our financial support has seen a slow and steady decline. If there is something MTFC can do to better serve our members and supporters, we want to know. We challenge you to challenge us! Do you still care about forest certification? Would you like to prioritize personalized outreach? More events?

If you have the time, please contact Logan Johnson (by phone: 207-613-6837 or email: coordinator@mainetreefarm.org) to answer these questions and give any suggestions on how to make the program better!

We appreciate all our donors, past and present, have given us. I’d also like to make a special thank you to our Tree Farmers who contributed to our first ever members appeal. We intend to make sure that money is going back into landowner and volunteer recognition and events. We hope to hear from you, and to see you in the woods!

Sincerely,

Kyle Burdick
Maine Tree Farm Committee Chair

The day to day operations of the Maine Tree Farm Committee would not be possible without the support of the following supporters:

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Photo by Pam Wells
Maine Tree Farm Committee
American Tree Farm System
PO Box 5470
Augusta, ME 04332

The American Tree Farm System is a program of the American Forest Foundation

Upcoming Events and Call For Volunteers!

Agricultural Trades Show—January 15 - 16, 2019
We need volunteers to help staff our educational display booth at these events. We hope you will consider donating a few hours of your time to talk with potential Tree Farmers and the general public and share your experiences with the program. As a Thank You, all volunteers will get a free Maine Tree Farm t-shirt or coffee mug!

For more upcoming woodland events, check out the calendars at these locations:
Maine Forest Service
Maine Woodland Owners
Hidden Valley Nature Center

Yes! I will support the Maine Tree Farm Committee with a donation of:

☐ $2,500 ☐ $1,000 ☐ $500 ☐ $250 ☐ Other: $

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