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October 2020

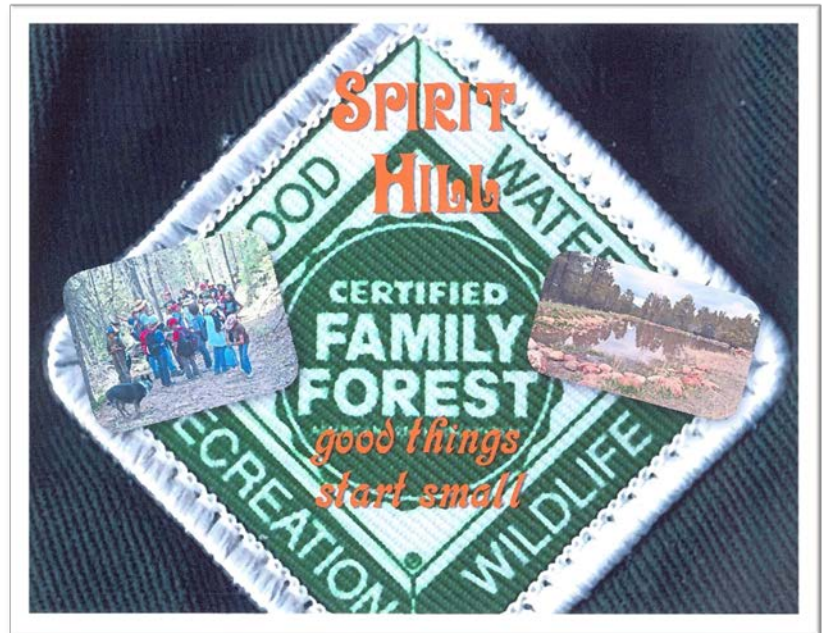


TREE FARM BULLETIN

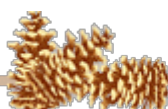
NEW MEXICO'S OUTSTANDING TREE FARMER OF THE YEAR CONGRATULATIONS CARL & JOHANNE

The New Mexico Tree Farm Committee is pleased to announce that Carl Struck and Johanne Riddick have been selected as the 2019 Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year for New Mexico. An Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year award is given to a Tree Farmer in recognition of their accomplishments on the ground and within the outreach and education realm.

Spirit Hill is a small, certified family forest of approximately 40 acres at 8,500 feet elevation southeast of Penasco, New Mexico. The old growth forest was cut around 1910 when a temporary 'mining' then 'narrow gauge' rail spanned the length of the property to transport the large saw logs from the surrounding forest to market. The second growth Ponderosa pine was harvested sometime in the 1950's and, in between and on either side of these two extractive events, the land was heavily or over-grazed with sheep and other livestock.



When we first acquired the land in 1987, the poor condition of the forest soils was evident but it took many years before we understood the historical reasons leading to the depletion/erosion of carbon cycling nutrients and the excessive over-stocking of saplings in our forest. In 1992 we reached out to the New Mexico Tree Farm System and a 'Forest Stewardship Plan' was generated with the help of the NM State Forestry Division. This gave us the needed expertise and support to achieve numerous management goals over the years.

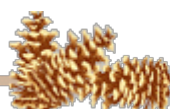
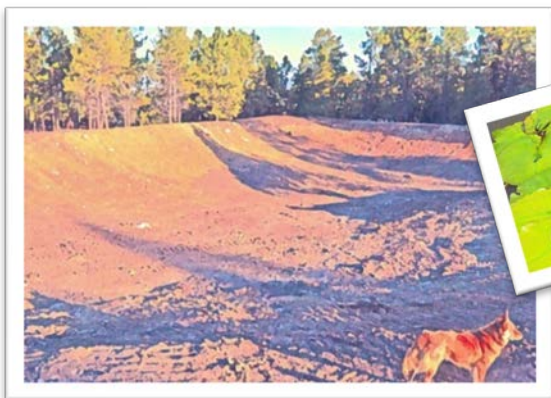




Like many ‘newbie’ tree farmers, we started by mechanically thinning our Ponderosa stand and piling the slash in open areas to rot or in some cases burn when conditions were favorable. Through observation and studying research data on the inherent interconnection of biological processes in Ponderosa forest habitat, the poor condition of our soil came into focus. We shifted our thinning activities to enhance support of the forest soil micro-organisms and general biodiversity. The biggest change was purchasing a small chipper in the spring of 2012 to process the slash produced from our ongoing thinning projects. The chips are scattered on bare mineral soil patches as well as utilizing them for walking trails and mulch for our vegetable gardens and berry patches. By increasing the contact interface between forest soil, duff, and woody debris [chips] we are supporting soil micro-organisms, especially mycelium – the plant part of mushrooms – increasing recycled nutrients that would otherwise be lost if burned. Through this practice, we now

realize that underlying the motto of “Wood, Water, Recreation and Wildlife” is SOIL which is necessary for the other 4 elements to thrive.

Another major forest management project was undertaken in 2010. After careful study and planning, we constructed a 1/3-acre wildlife pond utilizing the annual spring snowmelt. In many parts of the country, this would not be remarkable but in the arid southwest where ‘el Aqua es la Vida’ [water is life] a year-round water source is transformative. We stocked the pond with minnows for mosquito control and grass carp for water weed control. A solar powered aerator is installed to increase the water oxygen level since there is no constant influx of oxygenated water. Once the 11 – 12’ foot deep oasis filled, and unintended creation of a micro-wetland down-slope of the embankment resulted.



In the past 10 years, the intersection of the various new and old habitats has led to visible increase in “edge effect” biodiversity [pond-meadow, pond-forest, meadow-forest, wetland-forest, etc.]. We notice an increase in nitrogen fixing plants and an obvious uptick in plant diversity at the pond-meadow interface which we attribute to the varied wildlife scattering seeds in coming to the pond for water and food [insects, minnows etc.].

Recreation and education...

There was NO grand plan for camp; a series of unusual events initiated the beginning. Nieces and nephews wanted to hang out in our forest the summer 1990. The following year they asked if they could bring their friends. There was no home or running water on the property at first, so tent camping was the only option. After a few years friends and colleagues suggested potential attendees, so a blended camper

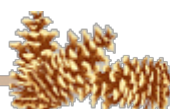
group of varying geographic, ethnic and experience who needed exposure to and an enhanced understanding of the interconnectedness of people to the natural world.



This concept evolved into a stable number of about 25 campers between age 5 and 13, with a consistent structure, supported by adult friends willing to volunteer for a week each June. Many campers returned until they aged out at age 13 in a final year of enhanced forestry and wildlife projects, semi-leadership duties and closure to their camp experience.



Living in the forest was primary always. Tents as home; outdoor water stations and outhouses for hygiene; individual mess kits as a camper responsibility; no electronic gear allowed. Although most food was prepared in an indoor kitchen, eating was around the campfire circle or outdoor tables. Eventually an open-air shelter served as ‘camp kitchen’ for serving and washing up.



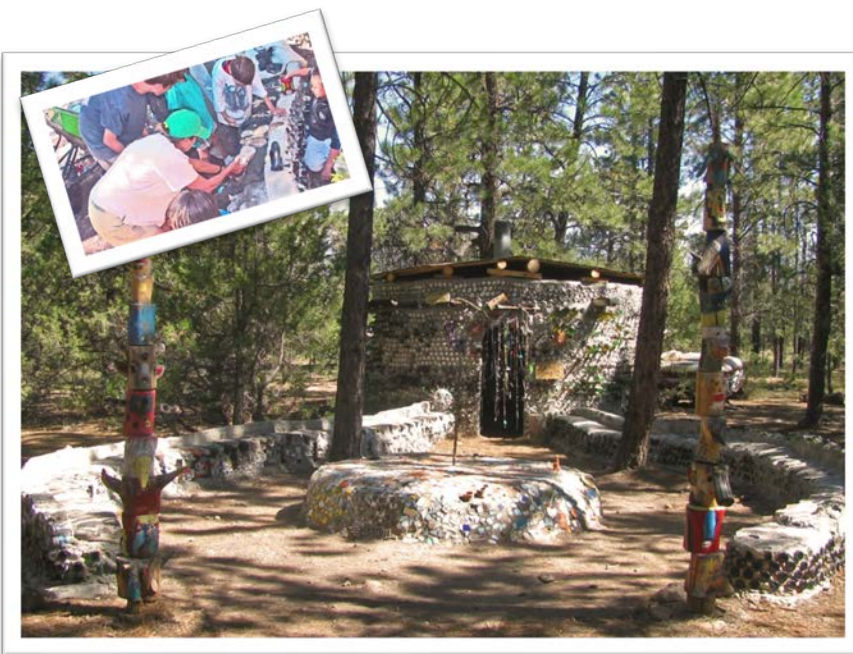
We learned and refined the program each year, but a basic format evolved quickly which stressed both individual and group growth.

The daily activity pattern was morning classes of art, building, woodwork in teams with the addition of specialties depending on volunteer interests after celebrating the new day around the campfire circle. Full group activities such as cooperative games led by a team building couple, hikes focused on learning about the flora and fauna, swimming first in local streams and then the on-site pond and an afternoon with the local Penasco theater learning skills such as stilt walking in the meadow and occasionally a visiting specialist in forestry or wildlife followed lunch.



Before dinner, a variety of activities were offered from quiet time reading and writing, creative activities to team sports. The final gathering around the evening campfire to sing and share the day ended with lights out shortly after dark.

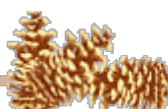
One of the favorite activities became building a recycled can and bottle structure, one of the campers named 'the spirit house' where the opening and closing ceremonies were held.



Former campers, after an absent year or two, asked to return as volunteers which was critical in expanding activities and relieving the owners of the more demanding activities.

In 2018, after 29 years, the torch was passed along. About a dozen 'alums' decided they wanted Camp Colin to continue so have been gathering during June camp week to plan the continuation – not yet with new young campers but stay tuned!

By: Carl Struck & Johanne Riddick



The Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year event will be held on April 24, 2021 at the Spirit Hill Certified Family Forest owned by Carl Struck and Johanne Riddick. Lunch will be provided by the New Mexico Tree Farm Committee. Additional information will be forthcoming as we get closer to the Spring Field Day.



1) FALL FIELD DAY

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the New Mexico Tree Farm Committee will not be holding a Fall Field Day this year. We look forward to seeing you in person next year.

2) COMMITTEE MEETING

All Tree Farmers are invited and encouraged to take part in our 3rd New Mexico Tree Farm Committee Meeting of the year (three held annually). Please join us at 1:30 pm on Wednesday, December 9th, 2020. Location to be determined. Come out and hear what other tree farmers have been up to and share your tree farm accomplishments with the group. We look forward to visiting with you. If you have any questions, please contact Arnie Friedt at arnie.friedt@state.nm.us

3) BUY, SELL OR TRADE

Are you looking for forestry related equipment to buy (i.e. chipper, splitter, chainsaw, etc.)? Or do you own forestry related equipment you would like to sell or trade? Forestry related equipment only, please, no homes or land. We would like to help you make the connection with other New Mexico Tree Farmers. Provide us with a description of the equipment, price, photo and contact information and we will post it in the New Mexico Tree Farm Bulletin. If you would like us to help you make the connection, please provide information to Arnie Friedt at arnie.friedt@state.nm.us

4) E-MAIL INSTEAD OF SNAIL MAIL

Would you prefer to receive your Tree Farm Bulletin by e-mail instead of snail mail? If so, contact Arnie Friedt at arnie.friedt@state.nm.us and provide him with your contact information. By receiving your Tree Farm Bulletin by e-mail our operating costs are reduced. Thank you for considering this option.

