

Somebody. Please talk to me!!

By Clyde Samsel

Good Morning, My name is Clyde Samsel and I have been a tree farmers for 60 years. My wife and I are responsible for 320 acres of wooded land in Waushara County. Most of it is under MFL. 270 acres is under a conservation easement to protect about three miles of the Ice Age Trail.

Several years ago we had an uncontrolled fire race thru about 10 acres of oak and 2 acres of pine. I was impressed by the fire fighting skill of my DNR forester who led the team that put out the fire. The same forester prepared my MFL plans 15 years ago and it is my goal to be in full compliance with the several mandatory requirements by the end of this year. The plans were well done. So with this how can I speak ill of the DNR? But I Must!!

10 years ago I hired a consulting forester to upgrade my management plans to comply with FSC standards (I was ahead of the times). I was told the cost would be about \$250 per plan since all the field work had already been done by my DNR forester. The revised FSC plan was done in a short period of time and submitted to DNR forester for review and approval. Nothing happened for weeks. I assumed there must be something wrong with the revised FSC plan so I submitted a copy to Paul Pingrey, the Private Lands Forester, at that time. He found nothing wrong. I was told it cost the consulting forester about \$2000 in staff time dealing with unanswered emails and phone calls and attending long unproductive nit picking meetings with the DNR. After 11 months the plan was finally approved by the area forester. Similarly I had hand carried a three page memo of forestry concerns I wanted to discuss with my DNR forester but never received any reply. I was led to believe that another DNR forester might be assigned to me if I made the request.

I requested that a DNR forester be assigned that I could talk to. So up the chain of command of foresters I went. All the way up to Gene Francisco and I was turned down at each step. All I succeeded in doing was shooting my self in the foot in regards to my working relationship with my DNR forester.

It's My Way or the Highway.

Recently a friend of mine, was told he must clear cut his 40 acres of oak which he did want not to do. I have seen his stand and it consisted of low grade scrub oak with some wind damage. There was a lot of white pine regenerating. The land owner was making patch cuts and removed fire wood regularly which he uses to heat his home. I urged my friend to appeal. He consulted with a retired DNR forester who said that would be a waste of time. Bad advice in my opinion.

So my friend parted with \$27,000 to get out of the MFL program. He said he can now sleep at night. I can assure you that the DNR took a big ongoing public relations hit as my friend is very active in the community. A neighbor described a similar situation at a town meeting (almost in tears). It cost my neighbor \$33,000 to leave the program and the sad thing is he had made a good faith effort to comply. Why couldn't that DNR foresters in these cases have been a little more flexible? We are dealing with low grade scrub oak.. Better yet why couldn't there be a fair appeal process where issues like this can be reviewed by our peers.