

INTO THE WOODS

NEW ENGLAND FORESTRY FOUNDATION | SUMMER 2024

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Dear Supporters and Friends,

NEFF is turning from planning to action under our five-year Climate-Smart Commodities grant. We have launched financial incentive programs for family forest owners and commercial owners. It's the culmination of a strategic decision we made over 10 years ago: to offset 30 percent of the region's carbon emissions through better forest management, we need to provide financial incentives to landowners. After all, we subsidize homeowners to put solar panels on their rooftops—why not subsidize forest landowners to help the climate with climate-smart forest practices?

We have a long way to go, including how to secure long-range—or 30 year—funding for these transformative forest practices. Right now, we have our eyes on relevant components of the \$27 billion Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund. Would it be possible to create a low-interest rate loan program to help forest landowners do good forestry now, and then wait patiently for the timber and climate returns in two or three decades? With your support, we will explore these and other long-term funding possibilities.

But even as we mark our success in delivering financial incentives, my thoughts turn more to the other side of the forest stewardship equation—what are our moral and ethical responsibilities to future generations and the planet? When I directed the Land Ethic program for The Wilderness Society, I was deeply involved in those questions. Aldo Leopold, who put forth the idea of the “land ethic” in *A Sand County Almanac*, famously said, “Breakfast before ethics.” It was his way of telling us we better take care of core needs like food and finances before we can turn to ethics. Maybe that is why my thoughts turn this way now.

When I was at The Wilderness Society, I was given a strange request: to scientifically prove Leopold's land ethic. I had my doubts about mixing emotional or moral demands with science, but I gave it a shot. I broke Leopold's land ethic down to its essential elements and then considered each of them from a scientific perspective. Here is what I came up with.

Leopold's general moral maxim was that an action was right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. He thought we needed to do three things in order to live in accord with this maxim:

- 1. We can only be ethical to something we see, understand and love**, so we need to stop seeing land as a commodity and more as a community to which we belong. As scientific proof that it was possible for humans to achieve this goal, I referenced new findings on emotional intelligence and neuroscience, and theories like Biophilia which indicate all human beings have an innate capacity to connect deeply to the natural world.
- 2. We must develop an Ecological Conscience** that fosters within each of us an individual responsibility for the future of the planet. My scientific proof was the groundbreaking work on what is called brain plasticity that reveals how our minds can change their orientation with practices like meditation.
- 3. We must realize that we are co-members of an ecological community.** New explorations from the micro worlds of physics and quantum mechanics reveal that our conceptions of reality from the macro world do not work the same way there. Particles are connected and influence each other over vast distances and identities are malleable, sometimes things are particles, but sometimes they are waves. Apparently at this level, everything is connected in ways we don't often perceive in our normal lives. We are made up of starlight, me and you and the fox and the maple tree, and we are all interdependent.

Well, how did I do with this strange directive? I never developed this idea further, but I do have it earmarked for a book called, *The Heart and Mind of Environmental Leadership*. I hope that as we continue to make progress on the financial aspects of forest management, New England can also continue to be a leader from an ethical and moral perspective.

Robert Perschel, Executive Director

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SNEAK PEEK:

Land Trust Accreditation

What does it mean for New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF) to have received land trust accreditation?

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission conducts an extensive review of each applicant's policies, so the accreditation process has affirmed that NEFF upholds the highest standards in sound finances, ethical conduct, responsible governance, and an unwavering commitment to its mission of conserving forestland and advancing Exemplary Forestry.

See page 3 for the full story on NEFF's accreditation.

NEFF's
Colleen Ryan
Runs Boston
Marathon in
03:31:39



NEFF Forest Scientist Colleen Ryan ran the 2024 Boston Marathon this April on what she describes as a "miserably hot day" with an impressive overall placement of 9,960th out of a total 25,530 runners who finished the world-renowned race. We here at NEFF couldn't be prouder. NEFF Bioeconomy Initiative Director Jen Shakun, her husband, their two children and Jen's mom were even able to support Colleen in person.

"The Boston fans were just as amazing as ever, including Jen and her family, who cheered me on at mile 3 in Ashland," said Colleen. "It was really great to see them." Colleen also noted the Wellesley scream tunnel is her favorite part of the race—other than the finish line. This was her sixteenth Boston Marathon and twenty-eighth overall marathon.



NEFF EARNS LAND TRUST ACCREDITATION

EIGHTY YEARS AFTER ITS FOUNDING, NEFF
IS THE NATION'S SIXTH LARGEST LAND TRUST

WRITING BY NEFF Communications Manager Tinsley Hunsdorfer

New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF) is celebrating its 80th birthday in July 2024, and we're pleased to have a grand accomplishment with which to commemorate the occasion: the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance (LTA), has awarded NEFF accreditation!

Accreditation recognizes the highest national standards for excellence and conservation permanence, and NEFF has now joined a network of 471 organizations that have reached this same milestone. We are in good company, and stronger than ever.

NEFF was also honored to receive this commendation from the LTA Accreditation Commission: "New England Forestry Foundation has made an extraordinary commitment to excellence, trust, and permanence in land conservation. The Commission especially recognizes NEFF for its successful initiative to convene, plan, and anchor the New England Climate-Smart Commodities Partnership, for the quality of its supplemental baseline documentation reports,¹ and for its publication *Into the Woods*."

Above: Kennebago River and West Kennebago Mountain, conserved by the Pingree Forest Partnership and now held under easement by NEFF. Photo by Ben Pearson.

The Journey to Accreditation

To get the full story behind NEFF's accreditation, we turn back the clock to March 2022, when then-Stewardship Associate (now-Stewardship Manager) Beth Gula agreed to devote over half of her worktime to overseeing and preparing NEFF's application for accreditation, while newly hired Stewardship Associate Corey Wrinn took on some of her former duties.

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission runs the rigorous accreditation process that became a core feature of Beth's professional life. The first sign of this shift? NEFF staff and Board members quickly grew familiar with the concise and compelling graphics Beth used to track our accreditation progress through this complex but worthwhile process.

"Earning Land Trust Accreditation is a major victory for NEFF, our staff, our supporters, and our partners," said NEFF Executive Director Bob Perschel. "It's also an incredible accomplishment for Beth and her team, who have dedicated two years of detailed work to this project."

LTA defines twelve Land Trust Standards and Practices that "describe how to operate a land trust legally, ethically and in the public interest," and accreditation verifies compliance with these guidelines. NEFF's Board of Directors voted to adopt the Standards and Practices in 2017. While much of our operating procedure is consistent with those guiding principles, the accreditation process highlighted certain areas in which NEFF needed to make changes. Take Standard 9, "Ensuring Sound Transactions," which has notable ramifications for 80-year-old organizations seeking accreditation. Among other things,

it has recordkeeping elements that call for land trusts to:

- Adopt a written records policy that governs how and when organization and transaction records are created, collected, retained, stored and destroyed.
- Keep originals of all documents essential to the defense of each real property transaction in a secure manner and protected from damage or loss.
- Create and keep copies of these documents in a manner such that both originals and copies are not destroyed in a single calamity.

What does this mean for an organization that has been accepting land donations since 1945, well before modern recordkeeping standards were in place?

For Beth, meeting Standard 9's requirements meant paper cuts, dust on her clothes, spreadsheets, feeding pages through a scanner, and pulling out boxes from hidden cubbyholes, closets and cabinets in the upper floors of the old Prouty house that now serves as NEFF headquarters in Littleton, MA.

"With help from staffers like Corey Wrinn and Executive Assistant Meaghan Guyader, I flipped page by page through decades of records," said Beth. "We pulled a range of essential records, including original recorded deeds, charitable gift tax forms, and critical correspondence such as letters that communicate donor intent."

Beth and her team then relocated documents to secure fireproof storage cabinets and digitized the documents so duplicates live on NEFF's secure server.



Stewardship Manager Beth Gula in the Green Mountain National Forest. Photo by Beth Sebian.

"It was eye-opening to realize much of those early files are the equivalent of an email inbox for NEFF's staff team, just one from decades ago where each message is printed and saved," Beth continued. "The recordkeeping elements of this process guide what physical pieces of paper are essential to secure and protect versus what might not need to take up space in a permanent file."

The Land Trust Accreditation application process culminated with the announcement of NEFF's accreditation in February 2024, while continuing to implement the Standards and Practices is ongoing during the five-year term. NEFF is the United States' sixth-largest land trust, and accreditation is now another feather in our land trust cap.

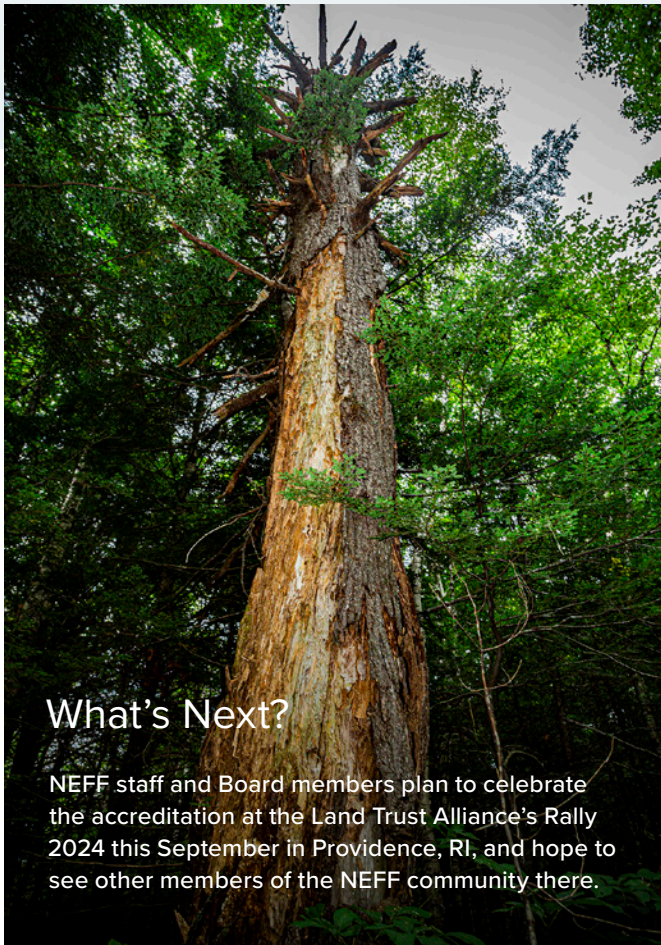
¹ Supplemental baseline documentation reports document the current conditions of an existing conservation easement (CE) and are prepared when there are significant changes to the land or the CE, such as when an easement is amended to strengthen its protections or add land, or when an ownership subdivision occurs. The report documents the important conservation values protected by the easement and the relevant conditions of the property as necessary to monitor and enforce the easement.

How Many Acres?

When NEFF staffers were preparing to announce the organization's accreditation, we decided to see where NEFF ranked among other land trusts by acres conserved. Our land conservation team had reason to suspect NEFF would be toward the top of the list.

LTA's most recent National Land Trust Census was conducted in 2020, so NEFF staff asked LTA for the largest land trusts by acres conserved as of the census, and then accounted for the progress each has made since 2020 to produce this list of the United States' current largest land trusts.

- 1 | The Nature Conservancy: 125 million acres
- 2 | The Conservation Fund: 8.8 million acres
- 3 | Trust for Public Land: 3.9 million acres
- 4 | Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation: 1.5 million acres
- 5 | Montana Land Reliance: 1.29 million acres
- 6 | **New England Forestry Foundation: 1.21 million acres**
- 7 | Forest Society of Maine: 959,000 acres
- 8 | Vermont Land Trust: 824,100+ acres
- 9 | Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust: 765,000+ acres
- 10 | Colorado Open Lands: 677,607 acres



What's Next?

NEFF staff and Board members plan to celebrate the accreditation at the Land Trust Alliance's Rally 2024 this September in Providence, RI, and hope to see other members of the NEFF community there.

Above: Downeast Lakes Forestry Partnership easement lands.
Below: Part of the 335,000 acres NEFF conserved through the Downeast Lakes Forestry Partnership. Photos by Michael Perlman.

Our Thanks

NEFF thanks all of its staff members for the parts they played in this success, and also recognizes the accomplishments of Beth and those who directly played a role (though a few have departed NEFF in the past year): Sophie Anthony, David Ayers, Andrew Bentley, Bonnie Cody, Thiciane Costa, Will Brune, Kim Doherty, Penny Flynn, Maria Garcia, Meaghan Guyader, Tinsley Hunsdorfer, Tiffany Mierop, Bob Perschel, Chris Pryor, Lindsay Sherman, Donna Sibley and Corey Wrinn.

Stewardship staff began preparing for accreditation years before NEFF formally expressed its intent to apply, and efforts by past staff members, including Betsy Cook and Carson Hauck, paved the way for new policies and protocols that aligned with the Standards and Practices. NEFF's thanks go to them as well.

NEFF is also grateful to Attorney Ray Lyons, who helped guide policy creation and was always available for advice; to those who submitted public comments about NEFF's application; and to the French Foundation for its financial support of this effort. Finally, accreditation would not have been possible without the dedication of the NEFF Board of Directors, who supported and tracked each step of the accreditation process. Board President Rick Weyerhauser and Board Clerk Anne Stetson, who guided the Records Policy creation, provided particular leadership. 🌿

Downeast Lakes
Forestry Partnership
easement lands.
Photo by Michael
Perlman.



A PROMISE TO FUTURE GENERATIONS

WRITING BY NEFF Development Communications Specialist David Ayers

When the Land Trust Accreditation Commission concluded its review of NEFF's application on February 22, 2024, it had good news and congratulations to offer: NEFF had received accreditation.

The Commission's recognition resulted from years of hard work on NEFF's part and our dedication to the highest standards of conservation and stewardship, which have been integral to NEFF's mission since its inception in 1944. NEFF has always been committed to fiscal transparency, ethical conduct, and responsible governance, which have earned it other accolades, such as a four-star rating under Charity Navigator and a Platinum Transparency rating under GuideStar, the rating arm of Candid.

To comply with the Commission's standards and practices, NEFF had to meet strict governance, finance, transaction, and stewardship criteria. Staff members provided evidence of proper monitoring of NEFF's easements and inspections of the forestlands—Community Forests—owned and conserved by NEFF, management plans for NEFF's forests, conservation easement stewardship records, stewardship and defense fund documentation, and more.

NEFF's accreditation is a testament to the organization's unwavering

commitment to excellence and its willingness to invest necessary resources to get vital work done. NEFF's determination and laser focus on its mission further allowed NEFF staff to achieve this important milestone.

NEFF's accreditation is also an achievement you made possible. Donors, partners, advocates, and landowners are the lifeblood of this organization. NEFF is a team-oriented, outcome-driven force for good that you helped build. Accreditation is recognition of the success you made possible.

As a supporter of NEFF, you can be assured your investment in the organization is being put to good use. We take your trust in us seriously. We take our role as a land trust seriously. NEFF has been and always will be committed to utilizing the highest conservation and forest stewardship standards. NEFF may be small, but it is mighty, and achieving accreditation is a testament to NEFF's dedication to its mission; more importantly, NEFF is an efficient and lean organization that accomplishes big things—like conserving 1.2 million acres, or nearly two times the size of Rhode Island!

In our 80th year, NEFF has a lot to celebrate. Our Western Maine Habitat Restoration program is growing, and with the help of private landowners like you, we are actively creating prime forest habitat for native fish, bird, and wildlife species. Our \$30 million Climate-Smart Commodities project is making fascinating progress in a variety of fields (see page 7), and NEFF is the sixth-largest land trust in the U.S. These are but a few examples of the ways you helped build NEFF. The impact you have made is significant.

NEFF's accreditation is a promise to future generations. As one of the largest U.S. land trusts, we are responsible for upholding the highest standards. We welcome the ongoing process of re-accreditation as a renewal of our commitment to exemplary land stewardship and as a pledge to our supporters. Every gift to NEFF ensures the protection of our forests. Gifts to NEFF also guarantee forests remain healthy and resilient, whether they are managed for conservation value; ecological services; renewable, sustainable and climate-friendly wood products; or a combination of these options. Forest science and sound silvicultural practices guide us. Donors like you inspire us. The next 80 years will be just as remarkable. 🌿



HELP WRITE A NEW CHAPTER IN NEFF'S STORIED HISTORY.

Scan the QR Code or visit newenglandforestry.org/support to make an impact today.

CLIMATE- SMART PROJECT LAUNCHES LOGGER TRAININGS, LARGE LANDOWNER INCENTIVES PROGRAM

WRITING BY

NEFF Deputy Director and Climate Fellow Andrea Colnes,
NEFF Program Forester Daniel Hohl

CLIMATE-SMART COMMODITIES PROJECT OVERVIEW



In May 2023, NEFF received the paradigm-shifting **Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities** award from the USDA, and is now anchoring a five-year pilot project in New England to build a climate-smart, forest-based economy as a powerful tool for climate action. The project will produce nationally significant climate benefits by helping forest landowners implement climate-smart forest practices—on large commercial forests, smaller family woodlots and Tribal Nations woodlands—and by building markets for climate-smart forest products that can be used in place of fossil fuel-intensive materials.

NEFF's Climate-Smart Commodities project is a bold and complicated undertaking. It's funded by \$30 million from the USDA, and intended to pilot ground-breaking, transformative climate-smart forest management as part of a \$3 billion signature initiative by the Biden Administration. We're dreaming big here, folks.

This article provides a wholistic look at the NEFF Climate-Smart Commodities team's work and progress, with a deeper dive into two major program areas. Hold onto your hats and enjoy!

— Tinsley Hunsdorfer, NEFF Communications Manager

Photo by Kari Post



Current Project Status and Timeline

DELIVERY OF FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

- Incentive program for small woodlot owners launched in ME, NH, VT and MA in partnership with the Family Forest Carbon Program, administered by American Forest Foundation and The Nature Conservancy, and partially funded in New England by NEFF's USDA grant
- Qualifying forest practices defined for large commercial landowners
- First round of large commercial landowner incentive program launched in spring 2024
- Tribal Nations incentive program has begun and will unfold through 2024
- Logger training program launched in spring 2024
- Incentive program for southern New England landowners will launch in November 2024

Logger training run by Trust to Conserve Northeast Forestland (TCNEF). Photo courtesy of TCNEF.



CLIMATE-SMART WOOD MARKETS

- Report on affordable housing needs in the Northeast and the potential for mass timber construction to serve that critical part of the housing market is in process
- Finalizing "A Blueprint for Designing Mass Timber in Affordable Multi-Family Housing"
- Collecting case studies and examples of affordable and workforce housing projects built with mass timber from across the U.S. and beyond
- Development of climate-smart wood sourcing guidance for the building sector is underway

MODELING AND MEASUREMENT

- Draft modeling plan created; first phase of the modeling to estimate future carbon benefits of various forest management practices will begin in summer 2024
- Draft MMRV (Measurement, Monitoring, Reporting and Verification) plan submitted to USDA; expert advisors are helping to refine our approach to track on-the-ground implementation and measure carbon benefits that result from the forest management practices funded through the project

Incentive Program for Large Commercial Forest Landowners

The "Design Phase" of NEFF's commercial, climate-smart forestry incentive program has launched! Our team has solicited applications from forest landowners interested in piloting the implementation of climate-smart practices on commercial lands with the intention of improving forest health and productivity.

In April, NEFF issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) inviting commercial forest landowners across New England to participate in the first round or Design Phase of the program. The goal of the Design Phase is to develop, test and refine the program, and this initial round will specifically help test NEFF's approach to the design of our incentives for landowners; refine the climate-smart forest practices landowners will implement; and inform the modeling, monitoring, reporting and verification work needed to track carbon and ecological outcomes of the program.

The first round of projects is intended to address the following components of the incentive program with participants selected in part for their willingness to participate in the Design Phase.

- **Forestry Practices and Forest Types:** Landowners who demonstrate several of the qualifying forest practices across a range of forest types and stand conditions to maximize the information to be gained from this first round of projects.
- **Modeling:** Landowners who will collaborate with NEFF and its partner organizations on designing, testing, and conducting relevant modeling work.
- **MMRV:** Landowners with whom NEFF can develop and test the measurement, monitoring, reporting, and verification systems needed to assess the carbon outcomes associated with the program.
- **Incentive Design:** Landowners NEFF can involve in a collaborative process to design the incentive program, including cost per forest-management practice, contract design, and interface with loggers and foresters for incentive payments.
- **Incentives and Trainings for Loggers and Foresters:** Landowners who support engagement of foresters and loggers trained and/or certified in applying climate-smart forest practices.

The NEFF team will use lessons learned from the Design Phase to shape the next two larger rounds of commercial climate-smart forestry incentives within our overall Climate-Smart Commodities program.

Logger Training Program

NEFF and the Trust to Conserve Northeast Forestland (TCNEF) have joined forces to develop a training course that teaches professional loggers throughout New England the science and value behind implementing climate-smart logging practices. Loggers do the physical work of harvesting trees, so they are the people who ultimately determine whether a planned harvest is carried out well, with the least possible impacts on soils, water quality, and the trees that are left behind to grow.

A central part of NEFF's Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities project is to introduce climate-smart logging practices to professional loggers and to provide education and training. Early on, NEFF acknowledged the importance of engaging with loggers and developing partnerships with organizations that have longstanding relationships with the logging community.

"TCNEF is the perfect partner because they have a history of providing top-notch training and educational programs on various logging topics, and their insight into how to present climate-smart harvesting to the professional logging community is invaluable," said NEFF Executive Director Bob Perschel.

NEFF and TCNEF are now at the forefront of promoting climate-smart logging and defining what the term means for loggers throughout New England. TCNEF has long been committed to offering training to loggers through their popular Logger Safety and logging Best Management Practices workshops. As a sub-awardee of NEFF's USDA award, TCNEF will be providing in-person climate-smart logging workshops throughout New England for the next four years.



"TCNEF is very excited to partner with NEFF on this project," said Ted Wright, Executive Director of TCNEF. "As we've seen from the 2023-2024 winter and other recent winters, logging practices are changing to meet the warmer and wetter winters, and so we want to accelerate this change in practices so loggers are ready to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change."



Lower left and above: Logger trainings run by Trust to Conserve Northeast Forestland (TCNEF). Photos courtesy of TCNEF.

The workshops focus on introducing and educating loggers about ways to mitigate climate change through reducing greenhouse gas emissions and maintaining long-term carbon sequestration in the forest and carbon storage in soils, as well as on ways to adapt to current and future climate trends. Specific practices like increasing the resiliency of forests to maintain carbon sequestration rates, and technologies that can help loggers achieve climate-smart operations, will be a focus. Loggers will have the opportunity to learn how climate-smart logging practices complement existing best-management practices and how to use climate-smart logging to promote their business.

The first series of in-person logger training workshops were held this spring in four locations in Maine and Vermont, with more in the works. NEFF and TCNEF will hold in-person, annual workshops through 2028. Loggers interested in attending future trainings may look for event postings on TCNEF's Facebook page, or on NEFF's website at newenglandforestry.org/events

By promoting the advancement of climate-smart logging and providing credible guidance, tools, and resources, we can support the incredibly important role loggers play in achieving the forest industry's potential to address climate change.

Funding is available through the Climate-Smart Commodities award to continue the in-person workshops through 2028. Working together, TCNEF and NEFF are increasing awareness and accelerating the adoption of climate-smart logging practices. With funding earmarked to offset the costs of implementing these practices on lands enrolled through our USDA award, there has never been a better opportunity to see climate-smart logging practices applied on the ground. 🌱

LEARN MORE: newenglandforestry.org/climate-smart-commodities, tcnef.org



REMEMBERING FRED A. HUNTRESS JR. 1933–2023

WRITING BY Peter Farrell, Forester, New England Forestry Consultants (NEFCo)

It takes 80 to 100 years to grow a “Big Tree” in New England. Few people are fortunate enough to have and spend a lifetime caring for and managing trees for anywhere near that length of time. Fred Huntress was one, and truly a forester’s forester.

Born and raised in Lewiston, ME, his mother taught him about trees, birds and flowers, and his father about hunting and fishing. Fred attended University of Maine starting in 1951. During his summers, he worked in the woods, and spent a stint as a log scaler in Colorado. Graduating in 1955 with a B.S. in forestry, he jumped directly back into the northeastern woods working for Eastern Pulpwood Company in Calais until 1956. He married Shirley H. Sanders of New Brunswick, Canada, in December 1955, and then his start in forestry and family was paused for two years of service in the U.S. Army, when he was stationed in post-war South Korea until December 1957.

Upon his return, he was hired by NEFF Executive Director John Hemenway. In Fred’s words, “a true gentleman.” This was the start of a career and association that lasted five decades. Fred found his home and voice in consulting forestry, but expanded his skill set to include surveying and real estate brokerage. His influence and skills went far beyond those that generate income. As NEFF’s mission included and his resume stated, it was his job to, “Provide leadership in educating the public of the importance of forestry and of private landowners’ rights.”

As an ambassador of forest conservation and management, he maintained numerous professional and forestry organization memberships, serving often in leadership roles. He particularly valued activities in his community of Poland, ME, where he and Shirley settled with their two children in 1961. He served as a selectman, zoning board member, conservation commission member, President of the Stanton Bird Club, Poland historical society member, and a Director of the Pine Grove Cemetery, as well as Town Forester from 1964 until 2023.

While an unapologetic forest utilitarian, he was sensitive to the beauty and health of the landscape. He grew and sold many high-quality trees but did not hesitate to say to his colleagues, “you’ve got to leave some of the big ones; people like to see them.” He was an avid fan of blue birds and white oaks—which he said, he never cut a one of as a consultant. While respectful of nature, Fred was also considerate of the loggers and lumberman who worked with him, and it earned him a reputation as a reliable, honest broker that served his clients’ best interests.



Read Fred’s obituary in the *Lewiston Sun Journal*: bit.ly/NEFF-Huntress

Fred had hundreds of clients in the Androscoggin Center, and over a dozen NEFF forests under his stewardship. A number of those forests were donations from his clients who got his message about NEFF’s mission. Over years, practicing what he preached, he also acquired and tended his own forests that eventually totaled more than 1,000 acres.

In the last two decades of his career, Fred worked as a NEFCo forester managing the company with less senior peers. We learned he could be your harshest critic but also your best advocate. One thing was certain, Fred never lost sight of the original NEFF mission—to manage forests for the benefit of people and the forest itself. 🌿



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