Please accept this invitation to apply to become a “Master Forest Owner” volunteer in New York’s Master Forest Owner Program. You either requested information or you were nominated by one of NY’s forestry related organizations or agencies, or a current Master Forest Owner (MFO), to receive this invitation due to your experience, dedication and accomplishments as an owner and manager of forest land.

This is the 24th year of the Master Forest Owner Program. Response to the program has been overwhelmingly positive from all involved and we hope to carry on the fine work accomplished to date.

Based on the proven success of the Master Gardener Program in NY State and similar Master Woodland Owner programs in other states, this program’s goal is to have a trained, volunteer corps of “Master Forest Owners” pass along their experience and motivation to neighbor forest owners. MFO’s primarily convey their passion and the relevance of woodlot management. The MFOs’ role is to encourage interested landowners to consider the benefits of forest management and help them find the information and services needed to be deliberate owners and managers. Thus, through the efforts of exemplary forest-owning volunteers such as yourself, hundreds of forest owners will be better able to make informed management decisions that reflect their ownership objectives and stewardship values. Improved, purposeful forest management will enhance local economies by increasing the value of forest lands for wood products and recreation, and ultimately lead to improved forest owner satisfaction and commitment. For more information on training, please see enclosed materials or visit our website at: www.CornellMFO.info.

ALL new Master Forest Owners will have the following obligations:

BEFORE YOU APPLY:

1) Request a forest visit from a current MFO volunteer. A list of volunteers is enclosed. It is critical that you gain an appreciation of the role and services that MFO volunteers provide. If you do not own forest land, then please arrange a visit to a local volunteer’s forest. Please include the specifics of that visit with your application. If you have previously participated in a visit, please provide the specifics of that visit.

2) Meet with the Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) Educator in your county to discuss how you may be able to help your County CCE Association meet some of its educational goals. When you call to arrange that meeting, ask for the Educator involved with Natural Resources programs, or the Agricultural Program Leader.

AFTER YOU ARE ACCEPTED:

1) Watch a total of 6 1-hour recorded webinars, posted at www.CornellMFO.info, prior to the training workshop.

2) Participate in the training workshop; Wednesday evening through Saturday afternoon. The format and topics will be similar to the enclosed sample agenda. Instructors and speakers will come from a variety of educational and forestry-related institutions, agencies, and companies. There is a $125 fee per accepted applicant ($200 per couple) to defray costs.

Arnot Teaching & Research Forest, VanEtten, NY, Sept. 23 – 26, 2014
REGISTER BY: August 28, 2014
3) Contact and meet, within 12 months of your training, at least 5 neighboring forest owners, one-to-one in their forests, to promote wise forest management and stewardship. Typically the meeting consists of about a half-day, on-site visit and perhaps a follow-up phone call. MFOs are free to make more contacts or devote more time per contact if so motivated! Call on individuals you know that would benefit from your assistance, and/or meet with referrals provided by agencies or organizations such as CCE County Associations, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Regional Offices, or the NY Forest Owners Association.

4) Keep a detailed record of your time, efforts and evaluation of your accomplishments for program summary and review. MFOs are provided forms for this purpose. A wide variety of informational resources will be provided at the workshop and periodically through the year.

PLEASE NOTE!

1) It is critical that you make a realistic assessment of the time and effort you can devote to being a volunteer. Considerable professional and volunteer time is invested in the training and we all want to see the program succeed. To get a “first-hand” evaluation of what it means to be an MFO, you are required to contact a volunteer near you (refer to enclosed list).

2) If you have any on-going professional involvement in the forest industry, please do not apply. Any activities, that, could be perceived as a “conflict of interest” is unacceptable in a volunteer program. You may however, as a professional forester or industry person, be involved in many ways as a source of assistance to the volunteers.

3) The MFO program is a strong partner with the NY Forest Owners Association. Please consider joining NYFOA (www.nyfoa.org), and seeking opportunities to support your local chapter.

4) Please let me know if you definitely do not wish to be considered as an MFO candidate in future years. I need to purge our candidate list, for your benefit as well as mine!

I appreciate your consideration of this offer. Please contact me at 607-592-3640, pjs23@cornell.edu or Diana Bryant at 607-255-2115, dlt5@cornell.edu and we will gladly answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely yours,

Peter Smallidge
NYS Extension Forester &
Arnot Forest Director

encls.: MFO Application, MFO flyer, MFO listing, sample agenda

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