

Utah Forest News

Utah Forest Landowner
Education Program Newsletter

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Proprius Casket & Coffin Company

A variety of products come from our Utah forests. One of the more unique products comes from the Proprius Casket & Coffin Company, located east of Park City in Oakley, Utah. After four years of refining his designs, John Sundberg is creating hand-crafted solid wood caskets and coffins. Sundberg uses local spruce and pine to construct beautiful and dignified caskets and coffins, much of his wood coming from the Blizzard Sawmill nearby in Kamas (see UFN Summer 02).

With 35 years of woodworking experience behind him and a deep respect for the products he manufactures, Sundberg has recently begun to ease away from cabinet making and focus his energy on caskets. Sundberg sees a potential increase in the demand for his caskets as a growing trend evolves for more natural and affordable burials. A Proprius casket costs about a third of what one would expect to pay for a typical casket. While standard caskets may cost several thousand dollars, Sundberg's caskets usually sell for just under a thousand.



His designs are “inspired by traditional Jewish casket requirements; each casket is composed entirely of natural materials.” Some varieties of orthodox Judaism require that no metal be used in a coffin. In place of metal nails or hinges, wooden pegs, traditional dovetail, and tongue and groove joinery are used. Even the handles used by pallbearers are wooden staves secured by strong canvas straps. Caskets remain without a finish or stain of any sort other than a coat of protective wax.

Sundberg offers both traditional six-sided coffins and four-sided caskets at his well-equipped shop along Oakley's main highway. According to various sources, the word coffin is derived from the Greek

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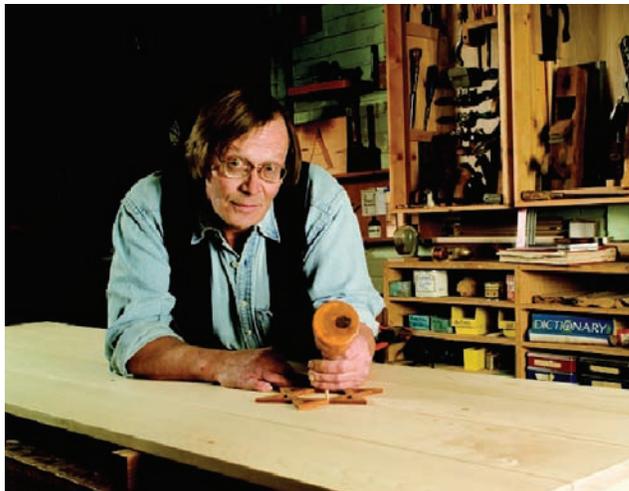
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word *Kophinos*, which means basket. Any box used to bury the dead is a coffin. The use of the word “casket” was introduced by American undertakers; previously, the word had been used to describe a jewelry box. Some consider a coffin a tapered hexagonal or octagonal box, while a rectangular burial box is called a casket. Others do not make the distinction.

Each of the caskets and coffins Sundberg creates are uniquely hand-crafted with expert precision and a commitment to quality woodwork. As the Latin name *Proprius*

indicates, his products have a proper and specific purpose and, above all, display excellence and respectability.



John Sundberg in his workshop.

Creating new markets for typically unused wood such as juniper or aspen is one of Sundberg’s other interests. He is constantly thinking of nontraditional uses for available wood and refining his designs. This summer Sundberg plans to finish a design for a new coffin called the *Prius* series that will be similar to the late Pope John Paul II’s coffin. For more information, contact John

Sundberg at (435) 783-5530 or visit his Web site at propriuscasket.com.



***Utah Forest News* wins Gold Award in Park City**

USU Forestry Extension was presented the Gold Award in the Newsletter category of the Educational Materials Awards competition hosted by the Association of Natural Resource Extension Professionals (ANREP). *Firewise Landscaping for Utah*, another USU Forestry Extension publication, won the Bronze Award in the Long Publication category.

The awards were presented at the ANREP biennial conference, held in May in Park City this year. The three-day conference was hosted by USU Forestry Extension and had more than 200 registrants participating from as far away as Maine and the Virgin Islands.

Personnel Changes at the Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands

Several personnel at the Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands have moved on or changed positions, including three Area Foresters who directly assist landowners in twelve Utah counties.

In the Bear River area, Blaine Hamp has been promoted from Area Forester to Area Manager. Hamp has been assisting northern Utah landowners for 14 years and will now assume a more managerial role in the area. Hamp replaces long-time Area Manager Craig Pettigrew, who retired from the Division and is now the Deputy Fire Chief in Cache County.



Blaine Hamp

In the Southwest area, Bill Zanotti has been promoted to Area Manager. Zanotti has served the Division as Area Forester for the last 14 years. Grand County Extension Agent Mike Johnson said, “Bill has earned a tremendous amount of respect from the people of Grand County over the years through his hard work and dedication to the job. I think he will do well in this position.” Zanotti replaces former Area Manager Gary Cornell, who



Bill Zanotti

recently retired to start his own consulting company that offers forestry and wildland fire expertise to Utah landowners and homeowners.

The Utah forestry community will perhaps gain from this series of moves, as all of the individuals mentioned will continue to apply their expertise to the considerable challenges associated with managing Utah forests and wildlands.

However, a clear loss to the forestry community is the resignation of Southeast Area Forester Clint Reese, who has chosen to pursue other opportunities. Several landowners from southern Utah have shared positive comments about the assistance they received from Reese, including landowner Erich Bretthauer who remarked, “I can’t say enough about all of the help that Clint has given me over the years. He has been patient and kind, and always available to come out and have a look at the things I am doing on my property”



Clint Reese

The Division is actively engaged in finding suitable replacements for the three Area Forester positions that have opened as a result of these changes.



Utah Forest Landowner Survey

Last year, USU Forestry Extension conducted a study among private forest landowners in Utah to learn more about their priorities and forestry assistance needs. A survey was mailed to 1,431 forest landowners in Wasatch, Carbon, and Iron counties during the winter of 2004-2005, and the following spring, 25 landowners were interviewed to learn more about their concerns and goals for their forested land.

With the information we gathered from these surveys and interviews, we learned a great deal about the issues private forest landowners are facing in Utah.

The survey revealed that for forest landowners in all three study counties, the most important aspects of land ownership were recreation, scenery, and privacy. Maintaining family traditions was also an important benefit of land ownership for many Utah forest landowners. One landowner explained, “You know, the more I experience it, the more my family goes up there, I think it’s a legacy I want to leave for my family. Building a nice cabin, a place we can congregate as a family, is something I think will hold the family together and add a lot of good experiences.” Because many landowners valued their property as a legacy for future generations, the long-term ecological health of their forests was often a priority. Another landowner commented: “We’re

interested in a stewardship that we owe Mother Nature, and our lives, and our family. A stewardship to keep that place nice and clean and decent and comfortable up there, and have our families go up there and enjoy life.”

Livestock was also an important issue for many forest landowners in the state. The majority of

landowners in all three study counties reported that livestock had grazed on their property in the past year (Wasatch = 57%, Carbon = 71%, Iron = 57%). Interviews revealed that for many landowners, keeping the land in Greenbelt tax status was an important motivation for grazing their forested property, as

was maintaining a link to family traditions. One landowner commented, “I like to have the livestock, just because I grew up with it. Plus, it keeps it in the Greenbelt for tax purposes, which is a tremendous item in this country.”

Limited amounts of forest management were reported in Wasatch, Carbon, and Iron counties. In Wasatch County, planting trees and establishing trails for hunting or recreation were the most frequent forest management activities, while in



Many Utah landowners value their property as a legacy for their families: “My children were raised in this country, and I’m hoping to get them to understand the responsibility of ownership and stewardship of the land.”

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Carbon and Iron counties, thinning forests and fencing forests to exclude livestock and wildlife were the most common activities. Although small percentages of Utah landowners were engaged in forest management, these efforts were rarely part of a holistic plan for an owner's forested property.

The majority of surveyed landowners reported that they had never harvested timber from their land (Wasatch = 86%, Carbon = 75%, Iron = 81%). Among landowners who had not harvested timber, concerns about a reduction in scenic or land value were the most important factors in their decision not to do so. One landowner explained, "I don't want my trees coming out in there either, if I can help it. It takes too long to regrow them. I'll never see them regrown in my lifetime. When they're gone, they're gone." However, many forest landowners who had observed timber harvests taking place around them were impressed with the results and had a more positive attitude about the impacts of cutting trees. After seeing a timber harvest take place on his neighbor's property, one landowner commented, "Boy, the saplings came back up. The springs started running better. You cut trees out, those springs really turn on, don't they?"

Among the landowners who had harvested timber on their property, the most important factors in their decision to do so were improved forest health and the salvage of disease or insect-damaged trees. One landowner explained that he had thinned his forest because of concerns about insect activity in nearby forest land: "The encroachment of those beetles is just so terrible, and it's advancing so quickly, that they just better go in and harvest the good timber now, because it's going to be beetle-killed and practically worthless."

Relatively high percentages of landowners in all three study counties reported that they had never

received information about forest management (Wasatch = 41%, Carbon = 46%, Iron = 46%). Interviews revealed that many landowners seemed to believe that forest management wasn't important unless a crisis was imminent on their land. One landowner commented: "You know, I probably need somebody to look in here and say, 'Well, these are your issues, and these are your problems, and here's some alternatives.' But I don't have that expertise, and at this point in time, it doesn't seem like it's a critical issue that I need to address. So the result is nothing at this point in time."

Among landowners who did get information about forest management, friends and relatives were the most frequently used source. Many landowners seemed to prefer getting information from someone they knew rather than consulting a professional



Bert Webster (retired USDA Forest Service) has a laugh while landowner Burke Roney makes light of his considerable loss of timber to Douglas-fir beetle and fir engraver beetle on his property in Wasatch County. Many surveyed Utah landowners felt more comfortable getting forestry advice from a friend as opposed to hiring a professional consultant they had not met before.

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forester. One landowner explained, “Right now, I would probably turn towards my engineer or forestry friends or associates for doing forest management. Simply because I know those people.” Extension brochures and booklets were the second most frequently used source of information about forest management.

In addition to these general findings, this research also revealed important regional differences in the three study counties. Wasatch County’s proximity to the Wasatch Front means that private forest land there is increasingly being purchased by individuals and families from urban areas. Survey respondents from Wasatch County were less likely to have acquired their land from a family member than landowners in the other two study counties, and they were more likely to have spent the majority of their youth in an urban area. Additionally, they were more likely than landowners from the other two counties to reside in a different county than their forest land, and they had more concerns with cutting trees on their property. Carbon County landowners, in contrast, were more likely to have rural backgrounds, and more likely to have livestock grazing on their forest land. Although they valued the amenities of land ownership, they placed more emphasis on income-generating activities than did respondents from the other two counties. Iron County, in many respects, seemed to represent a middle point between the extremes of Wasatch and Carbon Counties. Landowners there were the most likely to live in the same county as their wooded land, and the most likely to have inherited their land from a family member. However, increasing numbers of newcomers purchasing private forest land in the area meant that the survey and interview data from Iron County tended to be split into two fairly distinct audiences: absentee landowners and those who resided within the county.

This study suggested that forest health was important to most landowners in Utah. However, very few landowners were engaged in forest management, and many landowners had not received any information about managing their forests. Also, many landowners were hesitant to manage their forests if it meant cutting trees, although landowners who had seen successful thinning operations were more likely to view cutting trees positively. This study suggests that forestry outreach efforts in the state should continue to emphasize the positive impacts of active management in maintaining the aspects of forest ownership that Utah landowners value, particularly forest health, scenic beauty, and maintaining the land for future generations.

by Olivia Salmon, Extension Forestry Assistant

This research was funded by the Utah Forest Landowner Education Program, USDA Forest Service State and Private Forestry, and the Utah Agricultural Experiment Station.



Editor’s Note: Olivia Salmon completed the research presented above as part of her master’s degree in the Department of Environment and Society at Utah State University. She now joins the USU Forestry Extension office and

will be assisting in the production of Utah Forest News. She can be reached by phone at 435-797-8116 or by email at ols@cc.usu.edu.

New Wood Shaving Operation in Escalante

Skyline Forest Resources in Escalante has been awarded a federal grant of \$235,800 to build a wood shaving operation that will produce animal bedding. Skyline is one of 18 small enterprises across the West to receive a portion of the \$4.2 million grant that has been awarded as an incentive to rural economies to invest in woody biomass utilization to reduce wildfire risk. Grant recipients must match the federal portion by at least 20 percent.

Skyline owner Stephen Steed said, "I thought it was a long-shot, but lots of people encouraged me to proceed and put work into preparing the grant application." Part of the preparation was a trip to Texas to see a similar operation. Steed then sent sample loads of material to the Texas plant and tracked the yields each sample produced, allowing him to see the potential of this process.

Part of Steed's decision for pursuing funding was that he already had some of the tools in place, including a fuel dryer which dries the sawdust used to fuel the drying kiln. That piece of equipment is currently underworked, he said.



Stephen Steed

Skyline has a small shavings operation that has been in place since 1995, and this places them in a position to know their market, which is generally in the southwestern United States. Steed already supplies shavings to the general animal market, but sees even greater potential in clean aspen shavings, which go for a premium for laboratory animal bedding.

More of the material that typically goes to waste in the landing of a timber sale will soon be brought into the mill to produce shavings. This could mean the mill will eventually purchase what has traditionally been considered sub-merchantable material, an important benefit to surrounding forest landowners. The facility will add five additional positions and perhaps indirectly lead to a dozen contractor positions in the Escalante area. It should be fully operational by next winter.

For more information regarding any of the information presented in this newsletter, please call Darren McAvoy at Utah State University, 435-797-0560, write to him at 5230 Old Main Hill, Logan, UT 84322-5230, or email darren.mcavoy@usu.edu.

The Utah State University Forestry Extension Web site, found at www.extension.usu.edu/forestry/, is an excellent source of technical forestry information for woodland owners. Check the "What's New" section periodically for new postings.

State of Utah Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands (DFF&SL) service foresters for your area can be contacted by calling 801-538-5555.

Ideas and written contributions to this newsletter are encouraged. Send your contributions or comments to the return address above or call 435-797-0560, or email darren.mcavoy@usu.edu.

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COMING EVENTS

Nevada Woody Biomass Workshop. June 27-28:
Reno, NV. Contact Tom Baker at 775-355-5308 for
more information.

Managing Forest Organic Debris. July 21, 2006:
Priest River, ID. Contact Chris Schnepf at
208-448-1793 for more information.

Inland Empire Dry Kiln Workshop. October 2-5,
2006: Moscow, ID. For more information, contact Jan
Pitkin at 208-885-6226.

**National Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Education
Conference: Backyards and Beyond.** November 2-4,
2006: Denver, CO. Visit <http://www.firewise.org> for
more information.



Young Douglas-Fir cones offer a surprising splash of color this spring near Strawberry Reservoir