Mike Fifield’s North Anson, Maine Woodlot

Mike Fifield bought his 70-acre woodlot in North Anson, Maine in 1990. It is a former homestead, although the house burned many years ago. Sheep once grazed the farm, but the only livestock Mike keeps now are honey bees, which have their own house to better protect them through the long Maine winters.

The property was previously an orchard, and several old apple trees remain on the property. Mike says that there is at least one Wolf River, a cold hardy and disease resistant tree notable for its exceptionally large fruits. Mike maintains a field on the property, and has planted other heritage varieties of apples, not for production, but for historical restoration.

Mike has a camp, a shed and the honeybee building on the property. Although he lives mainly in Vermont, he says, “I get back to the property as often as I can, but not as often as I’d like.” One of the features Mike most likes about the Maine property are the tremendous stone walls along its perimeter. The walls had long ago been covered by vegetation, but Mike wanted them exposed. He also wanted to thin the vegetation to improve the forest stand to promote a timber resource for his children to inherit, to establish a trail around the perimeter of the property, and to do some clearing of brush and woods that had grown up where fields used to be.

Mike brought in the Sappi Forestry team to help him meet these objectives. He first worked with Bryan Savoy, and then with Julie Davenport to develop a harvest plan. Julie oversaw a harvest in the Fall of 2018. “They did a great job, and did exactly what I wanted,” Mike says. “Julie was right on top of the loggers. She was here almost every time I was.”

“Maine is blessed with a diverse, productive forest, thanks to a moderate climate with ample and evenly distributed rainfall during the growing season, and good growing soils,” Mike says. “My job is to manage this renewable resource by matching logging contractors with the needs of the landowner. I am really excited to be doing this as part of the Sappi team!”

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- Mike Fifield, woodlot owner
Emerald Ash Borer Found in York County

Maine Forestry Service Proposes Quaranantine

In late February the Maine Forest Service found live emerald ash borer (EAB) larvae on two ash trees, one each from the towns of Acton and Berwick in York County. Although these trees still appear completely healthy, they are infested with EAB. These were the first EAB found within trees in York County, although adult EAB had previously been found in Acton and Lebanon, having flown into traps. Given this and the previous trapping survey, the Maine Forest Service knows that EAB is established, at least sporadically, within 3 miles of the New Hampshire border for at least 17 miles between Acton and Berwick. However, it is almost certain that they have spread further than this area.

EAB is native to Asia. It has been introduced to Europe and North America. In North America, EAB has been found in 34 states and 4 Canadian provinces since it was first discovered in Michigan in 2002. It was first found in Maine in 2018, in the northern border town of Madawaska, and later in the nearby towns of Frenchville and Grand Isle. EAB is one of the most serious invasive species threatening our ash resources and forests. All species of ash trees that grow in Maine are susceptible to injury and death by EAB. Adult ash borers lay eggs in the inner bark of ash trees, and the resulting larvae burrow into the sapwood of the tree. In areas further from a known infestation they advise not to cut immature ash that would not already be targeted for removal. Management practices that completely eliminate ash could be a greater threat to ash than EAB itself.

Infested areas and surrounding locations will be quarantined to slow the spread of EAB. An emerald ash borer generally moves only about one half-mile on its own in a year but can move hundreds of miles in a single day inside a piece of infested firewood. Within the quarantined area movement of ash trees, logs, pulpwood, and other raw-wood products will be restricted. The movement of untreated hardwood firewood to areas outside the quarantine will be prohibited.

The quarantine in northern Aroostook County will encompass an area including Eagle Lake, Fort Kent, Madawaska and Van Buren. In York County the quarantine will extend from Kittery along the New Hampshire border to Parsonsfield, then east to Old Orchard Beach and back along the coast to Kittery. For more information check the Maine Forest Service website: www.maine.gov/eab, or contact your Sappi forester.

Ash trees comprise 4 percent of Maine's hardwood forest. There are no practical means to control EAB in forested areas, though pesticide treatments can protect individual trees. The Maine Forest Service recommends that landowners within 10 miles of a known infestation work with a licensed consulting forester now to salvage ash in their woodlot. In areas further from a known infestation they advise not to cut immature ash that would not already be targeted for removal. Management practices that completely eliminate ash could be a greater threat to ash than EAB itself.

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Featured Maine Mill: Sebasticook Lumber

Troy Chipman, operations manager for Sebasticook Lumber, shows up to work at 5:00 each morning. “If my people are here, I am here, and Eddie Carmichael, my maintenance guy, shows up at 5:30,” he explains. Troy’s respect for his employees shows, and they return that respect by displaying a teamwork approach to their jobs of sawing, grading, stacking and loading quality hardwood lumber.

In May 2016 Peter Gerrity, owner of Gerrity Company, purchased the mill which was founded in 1982. The mills goal is to saw 7.5 million board feet per year of green hardwood for resale to cabinet and stair casing manufacturers, flooring companies, pallet fabricators, and railroads. Most of the lumber is sold in the northeastern U.S. and Canada, but it is also shipped as far as China.

In May 2018 Gerrity named Dennis Keyser as general manager. Keyser also runs Gerrity’s pallet mill in Leeds, Maine. Troy Chipman was promoted to operations manager at the same time.

“I’ve never seen a mill where the employees work so well together,” Dennis says. “Everyone is cross-trained so there is no shutdown at break—the staff just shifts. The attitude is great. Our mechanic [Eddie Carmichael] and scaler [Justin Connell] will jump in stacking boards if that is what needs to be done. Former employees are coming back because they want to work for Troy. That says something to me.”

Dennis and Troy not only treat their employees like family, but several family members work at the mill including Dennis’ brother and Troy’s son-in-law. Troy’s son is about to come on. Key to the success of the mill is Troy’s wife, Shannon, who works for Dennis and runs the front office. Dennis says that Shannon “is the background glue. She jumps in the loader, stacks lumber, and does whatever needs to be done.”

The mill has been increasing their production, sawing 30,000 board feet/day in January 2019. They saw a variety of hardwood species, including soft and hard maple, cherry, yellow birch, ash and oak. Log availability is currently an issue. “That is where you come in, you’re a big asset to us” Dennis tells Forest Weston, wood sales manager for Sappi’s northeast region “Sappi is doing a heck of a job supporting this mill.” Dennis adds.

Sebasticook Lumber accepts the highest quality raw materials so the mill can produce the highest quality lumber. Troy notes that the mill has not had one complaint about the quality of their products since last May. He and his team intend to keep it that way.

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Schedule your free, no obligation walk with a Sappi forester today!