



Colorado State Forest Service
5060 Campus Delivery
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO 80523-5060
970.491.6303; FAX 970.491.7736
<http://csfs.colostate.edu/>

NEWS

Media Advisory

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Contact for Reporters: Ryan Lockwood

970.491.8970

ryan.lockwood@colostate.edu

Bayfield Landowners to Receive Tree Farmer of the Year Award

Note to editors: The Colorado State Forest Service will recognize Bill and Patti Szilva with the 2013 Colorado Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year Award at **11:00 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 3**, at the recipients' property at 48447 Hwy. 160, 6 miles northeast of Bayfield, on the north side of Hwy 160. The award ceremony will include a tour of the tree farm starting at 8:30 a.m.; attendees are asked to RSVP by July 26 to 970-247-5250 or csfs_durango@mail.colostate.edu. State Sen. Ellen Roberts (R-Durango), Rep. Mike McLachlan (D-Durango) and La Plata County commissioners have been invited.

BAYFIELD, Colo. – The Colorado State Forest Service will recognize a La Plata County couple on Aug. 3 with the 2013 Colorado Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year Award. Bill and Patti Szilva are receiving the award for exceptional multiple-objective management of their forested property, located six miles northeast of Bayfield.

A tree farm is any tract of privately owned land voluntarily dedicated to growing renewable resources, while protecting environmental benefits and increasing public understanding of sustainable forestry. The state's Tree Farm Committee initiated an award system in 1980 to annually recognize forest landowners certified in the American Tree Farm System® who have done an exceptional job of forest management.

The Aug. 3 recognition event will open with brief presentations by the CSFS, Firewise of Southwest Colorado and the La Plata Conservation District, followed by a tour of the Szilva's property. Ray Herrmann, Larimer County Tree Farmer and chair of the Colorado Tree Farm Committee, will then present the award to the Szilvas. State Sen. Ellen Roberts (R-Durango), Rep. Mike McLachlan (D-Durango) and La Plata County commissioners have been invited, and Tree Farmers from around the state will be in attendance.

"This recognition provides an opportunity to focus public attention on the Tree Farmer as a symbol of good forestry, and encourage other landowners to manage their lands by showing what Tree Farmers can accomplish," said Dan Wand, assistant district forester for the CSFS Durango District.

Under a long-term management plan, the Szilvas are managing the property using forest stewardship practices, with specific emphasis on wildfire mitigation, sustainable wood harvesting, utilization of forest products and community activism. Wand says the Szilvas have transformed 40 acres of dense, stagnated ponderosa pine and Gambel oak woodland into an attractive and productive forest more resilient to insects, disease and wildfire. The Szilvas' property became certified in the American Tree Farm

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System®, which is a program of the American Forest Foundation, in 2005.

“As a private forest landowner, there is an opportunity to improve the health and safety of our forest for us and our neighbors, but it can be an overwhelming task,” said Bill Szilva. “The Tree Farm Program provides professional support, interaction from other local Tree Farmers and a structured management plan to achieve our goals efficiently.”

All forest management activities on the property are handled by the Szilvas, from thinning trees and mowing brush to grass seeding and weed control. The property also produces merchantable lumber, with trees of sufficient diameter destined for a portable chainsaw mill and non-merchantable wood and milling scraps fed to a wood boiler system, which is used to heat the home.

For more information about the Tree Farm Program, contact the CSFS Durango District at 970-247-5250 or go to www.treefarmssystem.org.

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