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Member Profile: Larry Phillips

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BETI SPANGEL

As a graduate student at the University of Florida in 1981, Larry Phillips was working for a forest fertilizer co-op, doing research on moisture movement through soils to better understand nutrient uptake. Years later, he is applying that knowledge and much more towards the betterment of his own 30 acre tract in Schroon Lake.

"There was a nice little house on 30 acres of land that had a lawn around the house, and the rest was just high-graded forest," Phillips says of his property that he purchased in 2003 within the Adirondack Park. "It had been logged at least twice that I could see."

His goal is to develop the existing stand as a working woodlot. "I am basically doing a long-term timber stand improvement, where I'm im-

proving the stand composition and form through taking out the trees that are less desirable, that don't have a future, such as beech and, to a lesser degree, red maple," he says. "I would say the poorest formed trees will be gone in about another five years, being harvested for firewood."

Implementing forest best management practices, Phillips is looking to encourage hard maple, yellow birch, and black cherry growth. He is also cultivating a sugar bush for future maple syrup production.

When they first purchased the property, Phillips and his wife, Beti Spangel, a legal secretary and freelance writer, proceeded to clear three acres for her two horses, utilizing a chainsaw each and a 1950 Ford 8N tractor. "Forest does not become pasture without a fight," Spangel



Raspberries were a bumper crop this year at the 30 Acre Wood in Schroon Lake.

says. Today, in addition to ongoing pasture improvement, they cultivate several small gardens on the property. Primarily potato farmland in the beginning of the 20th century, their land has done well at producing raspberries, blue and red potatoes, onions, tomatoes, and basil. In addition to the horses, they also have a small flock of free-range chickens and two cats.

The Phillips' heat their home solely with firewood from their property, going through approximately 5 cords a year. They have also developed their own water pre-heating system utilizing a solar heating component on the roof of the house in the late spring, summer and early fall, and a heat exchanger system on the back of the woodstove for late fall, winter and early spring. Pre-heating their frigid well water before it goes into their electric water heater has made a significant difference in their electric bills.

Phillips graduated from Southern Illinois University with a degree in forest management, and University of Florida with a masters degree in soil science. While living in various southern states, he worked for International Paper Co. first as a research forester, then as a corporate environmental au-



Larry Phillips gets the hang of the successor to his 1950 Ford 8N tractor, a John Deere 790, which he will also use for skidding logs off his woodlot.

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Larry Phillips built this bridge to access additional areas of his property with the tractor without disturbing natural water flows on the land.

ditor and finally as an environmental engineer for 12 years in their Ticonderoga mill. In 2005, he took a position as staff forester with the Adirondack Park Agency (APA), evaluating soils for their appropriateness for septic systems, excavation work and site suitability. The call of manufacturing was too much, though, and in 2010 he took a position as environmental control manager with Finch Paper, Co. in Glens Falls.

“Forests are one of our competitive advantages, yet it seems that we don’t take advantage of them as much as we could, as far as serving as raw materials for New York State,” Phillips says of the current state of forestry. “What’s good about it is that it’s evolving. Best management practices

are being used more often from what I’ve seen, and training is becoming more common, both in safety and silvaculture.”

Phillips sees forestry within the Adirondack Park, however, as “a little unbalanced. Outside forces tend to want to see the park in preservation instead of conservation. I see preservation as a means to preserve special areas, but I think a lot of areas that are not unique or serving some special ecological purpose are being locked away as preserve. Land that is neither could be working forest.”

Phillips himself is a certified logger, having taken Game of Logging 1, 2 and 3 under New York Logger Training, Inc. “Safety is so important,” he says, “and I wish that everyone would

take Game of Logging just to really learn how to fell trees properly and learn how to be in control.” He is also a member of the Society of American Foresters and is preparing for tree farm certification.

In addition to his work with Finch Paper, Co., Phillips has also started his own business, *Adirondack Land Use! Planning*, which assists landowners with site plans, evaluation of soils for septic systems, preparation of subdivision applications, wetland boundaries and mapping, and tree farm and forest management plans. “The reason I started the business is that when I working with the APA, I learned about planning development around sensitive resources, taking natural resources into account when doing development, and it was a lot of fun. It’s a little more relaxed than manufacturing, so I think I’d like to get back into something a little more laid back and do that as a business.”

Overall, Phillips has made a diverse career out of the forestry industry, and looks forward to where it will take him next. 🌲

Beti Spangel is a freelance writer disguised as a legal secretary, as well as Larry Phillips’ wife and partner in crime. Follow their adventures in homesteading at www.weefarmgirl.blogspot.com. You can also email them at adklanduseplan@gmail.com



“The Girls,” free-ranging Plymouth Barred Rocks, strike a pose. Actually, they just didn’t want to step in the first snow of the year.

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