

Landowner Profile: Lee Stover of Waldo, Maine

Roger Monthey, U.S. Forest Service; Andy Shultz, Maine Forest Service; Lee Stover, Woodland Owner
All photos by Roger Monthey

Woodland owner Lee Stover lives in a balsam fir log cabin his father built in 1954 in Waldo, Maine (photo 1). His strong attachment to the land comes from being a third-generation landowner and from working and improving the land. One of Stover's early memories of the land is as a 9-year-old helping his father peel the balsam fir poles to build the cabin.

Much of Stover's property was originally a coastal Maine farm dating back to the early 1900s, but farming stopped in the 1940s. Since then an even-aged, 75-year-old forest dominated by white pine has developed on these old farm fields. Stover currently owns and manages the 105-acre property as Cold Spring Farm Tree Farm (photo 2) with 94 forested acres that include 74 acres in softwood, 10 acres in hardwood, and 10 acres in mixed wood. There is a spring on the Tree Farm that is still used for water today.

According to his Forest Stewardship Plan, Stover's main objective is "to harvest timber for commercial purposes, improve the forest stands, establish and enhance natural regeneration, and protect all the other forest attributes during his ownership and management." He has a small sawmill and harvesting equipment to harvest and saw the logs into saleable material. Stover is a licensed forester and scaler, and previously worked for 25 years with international forest products company Georgia Pacific.



Photo 1. Lee Stover and his 1954 balsam fir log cabin.



Photo 2. Lee Stover's Cold Spring Farm Tree Farm sign. Lee wears his orange vest during the Maine hunting seasons.

Stover likes to educate other landowners and natural resource professionals about his forest stewardship and utilization work on his property. For example, in October 2014, Stover's land was the site for a workshop of the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association Low Impact Forestry (LIF) Program (see text box for more information). Lee showcased silviculture and other stewardship activities on his property as well as how he uses his sawmill to process timber.

The following paragraph is from the [Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association Low Impact Forestry Web site](#).

The Low Impact Forestry (LIF) Project at [the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association] is a group of loggers, foresters, landowners, farmers, and interested persons educating about, practicing, and advocating for ecologically based and economically sound forest practices. We practice and endorse forestry that seeks to reduce the known harmful impacts of logging, and promote the social and ecological benefits. The LIF Project hosts workshops year-round covering all sorts of forestry related topics from logging with draft animals to home firewood production. The LIF staff also participates in collaborative logging projects that explore creative forest management and contracts that benefit both landowner and logger.

On October 9, 2014, we visited Lee Stover's land to learn about and photograph some of his stewardship activities. These include:

- 1) **Using gravel resources for forest management.** Lee has used some of the glacially deposited gravel beds on the property for his access roads and landings. These gravel beds are smoothed after development and allowed to reforest. Photo 3 shows the forest opening cleared for development of a gravel quarry; photo 4 is the access road that was recently improved with gravel from Stover's land.



Photo 3. Forest opening recently cleared for extracting gravel.

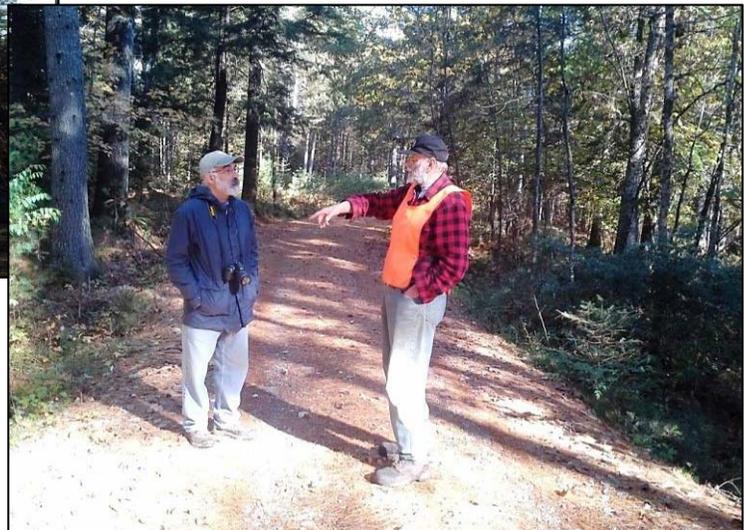


Photo 4. Recently improved forest access road using gravel from Stover's property. Andy Shultz, forest stewardship coordinator with the Maine Forest Service, is on the left.

2) **Thinning forest stands.** Using the philosophy of removing the worst and leaving the best, Lee has conducted thinning operations in his stands and is considering additional harvests to improve the health of his stands (photo 5). Stover has used loggers but also has done much of his own timber felling in the past; he has a small tractor with a rear-mounted winch to help move the logs to his sawmill (photo 6).

Over the years, his thinning work has produced some excellent natural regeneration. Stover has removed some of his mature white pine to create openings that have regenerated successfully with white pine seedlings (photo 7). Following the ice storm in 2000, Stover removed many of the damaged trees and processed them for wood products. For example, some of the damaged white cedars were processed and sold as fence posts. Stover used Federal ice storm recovery funds to help remove these ice-damaged trees.



Photo 5. Contemplating a possible future timber harvest.



Photo 6. Stover's tractor has a rear-mounted winch that can move logs out of the woods.



Photo 7. White Pine regeneration following thinning operations on the Stover property.

- 3) **Retaining wildlife trees.** These trees are important to many wildlife species and add interesting, unique, and often aesthetic character to a woodlot (photos 8 and 9).



Photo 8. A white pine wildlife tree resembling an “elephant.”



Photo 9. A very large white pine “wolf” tree.

- 4) **Appreciating interesting ecological areas.** A mature stand of hardwoods grows in a moist swale on Stover’s property (photo 10). Many of the trees have an epiphytic lichen called lungwort (*Lobaria pulmonaria*) growing on their trunk (photo 11). This lichen is considered an indicator of a mature successional community. In addition, the entire property has abundant plant growth and plant diversity, especially in the moister areas. Mushrooms are commonly found on the property as well. They add great beauty and are an important part of the overall diversity of our woodlands. Some grow in close association with tree rootlets and provide additional nutrient and water uptake to trees. These are the “mycorrhizal” mushrooms. Others are saprophytes and live on dead organic matter, and are very important in decomposing woody debris (photo 12).

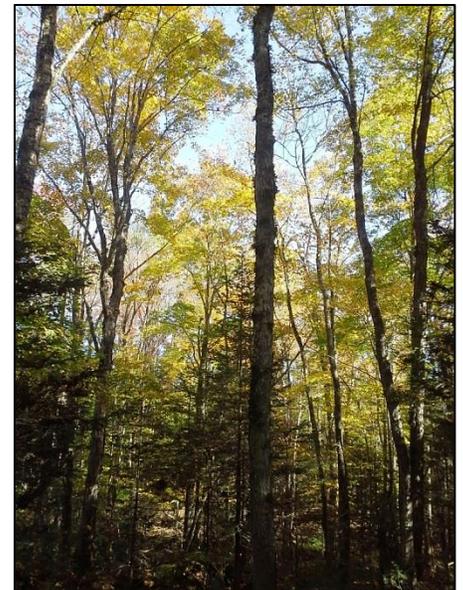


Photo 10. Mature hardwood stand in a moist swale.



Photo 11. Lungwort (*Lobaria pulmonaria*) in a mature hardwood stand.



Photo 12. Mushrooms add great beauty to a woodland setting. This is a saprophyte in the genus *Gymnopilus*.

- 5) **Appreciating and retaining interesting archaeological sites.** The Belfast and Moosehead Lake Railroad passes through the Stover property (photo 13). This railroad was built in the 1860s and is currently used by tourists who enjoy taking train rides through the woods and fields of coastal Maine (including leaf “peepers” and fairgoers attending the Common Ground Fair in Unity, ME). A stone culvert is located at the base of the very steep railroad bed (photo 14). There are also stone walls and a stone cellar on the property. These types of cultural resources are very meaningful to Lee and to many other woodland owners who appreciate and are proud of the historical significance of their land.



Photo 13. The Belfast and Moosehead Lake Railroad passes through Stover's property.

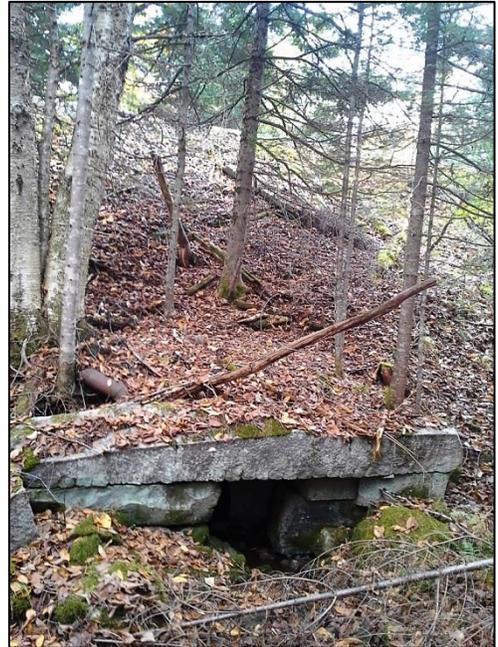


Photo 14. Stone culvert constructed in the late 1860s beneath the railroad bed of the Belfast and Moosehead Lake Railroad.

- 6) **Treating invasive plants.** Stover has treated some of the invasive plants on his property, including the girdling of a Norway maple (photo 15). A problem for Stover is the bush honeysuckles that are competing with tree regeneration in portions of his woodlot.
- 7) **Processing timber in the sawmill.** Stover's tractor has a front bucket with tines that allows him to load the logs onto his sawmill carriage (photo 16). Lee speaks enthusiastically and with obvious pride as he relates to others (photo 17) the technical “know how” that is required to successfully process his logs into useful products (photo 18).



Photo 15. Girdled Norway maple.



Photo 16. Stover's tractor has a front bucket with tines that loads logs onto his sawmill carriage.



Photo 17. The Stover sawmill.



Photo 18. Log beams produced from the sawmill. Stover sometimes uses logs for lumber that would never be accepted at a commercial sawmill.

- 8) **Producing firewood for the home fires.** Stover harvests firewood from his property to heat his log cabin (photos 19 and 20).



Photo 19. Firewood and sawtimber on the landing.



Photo 20. Firewood in the crib.

In conclusion, it is a wonderful experience to have the opportunity to witness first hand the sound, thoughtful, and steady stewardship that Lee Stover, and others like him, practice in their woodlands. Lee's family heritage is obviously very important in how he looks at his land today. Lee talks about his grandmother who raised two sons while managing the farm in the early days, his father visiting and enjoying the land on vacations from his job in the Boston area, and of course his early memories of the land when he was a young boy. These are the connections that matter, and have resulted in his deep appreciation and care for the land.