

Transcript: ForestEd Podcast, Episode 1

Episode: <http://z.umn.edu/Camp8podcast>

Eli Sagor (00:07):

Welcome to the new Forest Ed podcast. I'm Eli Sagor, University of Minnesota extension specialist based at the Cloquet Forestry Center. The best part of my job by far is that I get to work with both faculty at a great university and the people who take care of Minnesota's forests, water and wildlife every day.

Eli Sagor (00:27):

Now, natural resource people are famous for their love of solitude deep in the woods, but I hope that this new podcast will help to bring their voices out of the woods from time to time and in so doing, bring us all a bit closer together.

Eli Sagor (00:39):

I'm glad you're along for the ride. We recorded this first episode in late March, 2020 in the midst of the Covid-19 Coronavirus pandemic. It's a bit of a scary time with schools, businesses, bars, restaurants, and just about everything else closed. And we're all doing our best to isolate and protect ourselves. Many people are working from home and I think a lot of us are struggling a bit to adapt to the new normal, both at home and at work. The good news is that at least for now, most natural resources work can continue, but the people working in the woods are dealing with changes too. I thought that for this first episode, it would be good to hear from some of them about how their work has changed during the pandemic. So here we go. I hope you enjoy it.

Stan G. (01:27):

Hi, my name is Stan Grossman. I own Itasca Woodland Services in Grand Rapids, Minnesota. It is March 30th so we are taking this Covid-19 thing real seriously. On March 16th we closed the doors to our office to any walk-in visitors. About a week later we implemented a one person per vehicle policy with our field forester so that they're not getting too close to each other.

Stan G. (01:55):

Our office administrator is working from home and she's able to field calls and email and do all that kind of stuff from home. So we feel pretty fortunate, really, and are grateful that we're able to continue working for the time being and practice social distancing really well. When it comes to stewardship plan field visits, the only thing that's really changed there is that if the landowner is available and wants to visit with us when we go to their property, that's fine. But it has to be outside and we have to keep a minimum of six feet from each other. So we are really taking this seriously. We do not want to be a vector or accidentally anybody else. So other than that, again, we're very grateful and fortunate and are open for business and don't see that changing in the near future. So thanks everybody. Stay safe and enjoy the woods.

[After this point, timestamps are off. Subtract about 3:30 from each timestamp for a more accurate estimate.]

Tom (07:38):

Hi, my name is Tom. I'm a private consultant forester. I live in the [Kingdom of the Hobo Witnesses 00:00:07:43] at the end of the rainbow on the rainy river. I have extensive experience in social isolation. My work hasn't changed a lot as far as the virus goes. I believe the virus shows the interconnectedness of everything and everyone. Change is a part of life. Life and death are not fair. Be thankful. Worrying is

unhealthy, so I choose to worry about burden dog food, enjoy nature, have fun, be supportive, share, be happy, don't excessively worry and be safe.

Marcella C. (08:27):

Hello, this is Marcella Windmuller-Campione, assistant professor in the department of Forest Resources at the University of Minnesota. It is March 31st and I have been working from home for about three weeks. I miss my office. I think I used to really cherish these days. I would get to work from home every once in a while, they would be a way I could focus, writing, data analysis, getting proposals ready, these really key pieces of uninterrupted time. And now I can't wait to get back to my office. Those days I would get to work from home before Covid-19 really allowed me that time. But it also highlighted now in this time how much I value being in a university, being in my office, being able to interact with my colleagues, researchers, graduate students, undergrads, be able to have those face to face communication and those informal lines of communications as much as Zoom, phone calls, all these text messages, emails, all these other pieces have allowed progress to [inaudible 00:09:56] and move forward there really hasn't been a replacement I feel for myself and those on that person to person contact.

Marcella C. (10:04):

So that's been a really big change and also a really big challenge to kind of be able to think creatively and move, move research forward, move new ideas forward. I think I also [inaudible 00:10:23] that a lot of what I did happened as these little bits and pieces, long meetings, but these quick communications that could happen from stopping in someone's office, adding little bits incrementally.

Marcella C. (10:41):

The other big thing that's on my mind is field season and I guess field season both in the terms of keeping students, researchers, undergrads, safe and what does that look like as well as what does it feel to them look like the summer of 2020 and how do these projects continue? How do they evolve? What are, I think most projects have plan A through E or F right now depending on how the situation continues. So, it just seems like there's just so many plans and backup plans and backup plans from that. But I guess I am hopeful as temperatures start to warm up, we've got lots of seedlings coming in this year and I guess the great thing with planting seedlings is that definitely maintains social distance. So I think there'll be a good boost for people in my lab to put green living things in the ground. And think about these tree seedlings as a longterm future in a long term ... Getting back to that.

Adam S. (12:01):

Hello, my name is Adam Sutherland, I'm a Forester for UPM Blandin Paper located in Grand Rapids, Minnesota. And I've been asked to give a couple of minutes on how my work life has changed in light of the Coronavirus pandemic that the world is currently dealing with. We're currently under a shelter in place, safer at home order, whatever you want to call it. We're basically all hunkered down and trying to keep ourselves and our families as safe as we can. Unless you fall into the essential category, which the paper mill here does, I should say the forest products industry I think as a whole does. And so the paper mill that I work for has been operating as we normally do. Everybody is still seemingly healthy and enabled to do their jobs and we're all thankful for that. In our forestry department, life has changed quite a bit in that we're no longer reporting to an office.

Adam S. (13:14):

We all are currently working from home and really have been for probably the last couple of weeks. And so this idea of socially distancing, at least speaking for myself and maybe for most foresters comes quite naturally. You know, we're used to being on our own, out in the woods doing our thing. And so the ironic thing is that this shelter in place that we're working under has kind of been nice for a lot of us in some ways we were able to go out and do the parts of our jobs that we really enjoy doing, spending good quality field

time assessing timber sales, putting in property lines, cruising volumes for potential purchase and that sort of thing. So that's actually been quite nice. There's many downsides to it as well. There's the paperwork side of it that's been a little harder to do from home and just adjusting to that whole new schedule has been a challenge.

Adam S. ([14:28](#)):

One of the other things that we're now doing that we haven't done before is staff our scale house in the wood yard. Our scale has been unattended or unmanned, if you will, for the last a few years, probably four or five years now. So the truck drivers, when they bring a load of wood in, they would enter their data into the computer, weigh their truck, radio the crane operator and reverse the process on the way out. And so everybody was touching the same doorknobs and the same key pads and so forth. So we decided to, in order to keep wood flowing, keep our business functioning as much as we can and keep the loggers paid as well. We decided to staff our scale. So I'm currently sitting in our scale right now as I speak. I'm the one that's communicating with the trucks by CB.

Adam S. ([15:26](#)):

So we're doing everything over a radio so there's no interaction between people, entering their information, scale ticket data, looking at wood quality and then I send them onto the appropriate spot in the yard. And so we just started that this week and that'll probably continue. It looks like for the next few weeks, probably through the end of April, based off of what the authorities are telling us as far as this shelter in place and safer at home idea. And so we're trying to continue on business as usual. Sorry about that. That was the scale radio, trying to keep our business going as we usually do, keep our families safe and ourselves safe and looking forward to the other side of this pandemic where we can all sit back and think about what went well, what didn't go well and make it a learning experience.

Eli Sagor ([16:40](#)):

This concludes episode one of the Forrest Ed podcast. I want to thank our contributors in order, Stan, Kirsten, Tom, Adam, and Marcella, and my assistant Evelyn for some help with that joke. This podcast is supported by the University of Minnesota College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resources Sciences, the University of Minnesota Extension and the Cloquet Forestry Center. Thanks for tuning in. Stay safe and keep in touch.