

Conservation Showcase

The road less traveled:

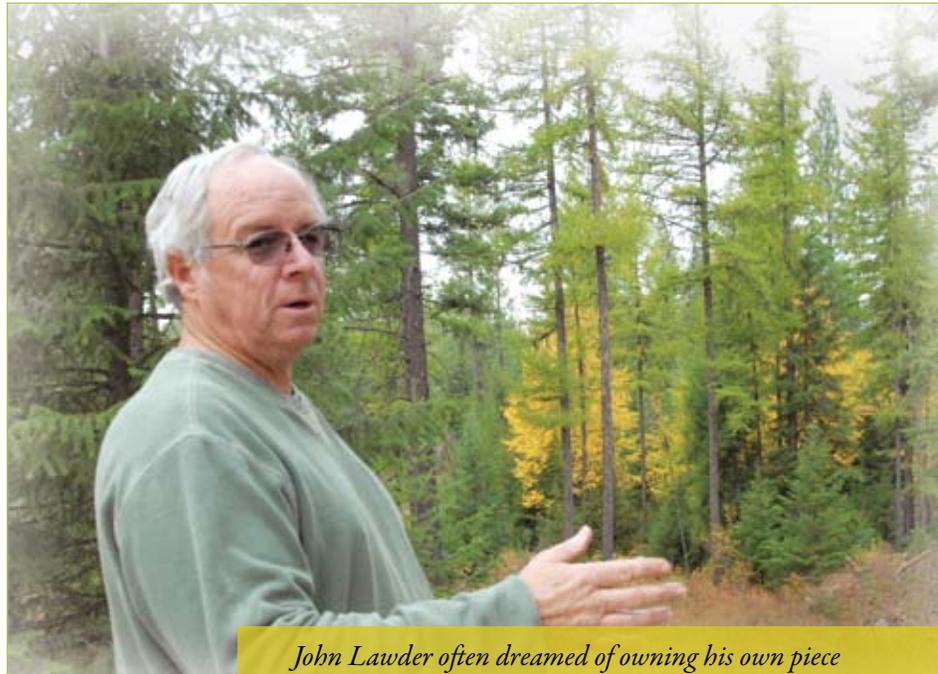
Conservation assistance provides a path to a healthy forest

All his life he fought the traffic. Day after day, hour-after-hour, John Lawder grew increasingly frustrated with his life in the city. As a photographer in southern California, he loved his profession, but hated the hassle of city living.

While trapped behind the wheel of his automobile in bumper-to-bumper traffic, or while negotiating the seemingly endless corridors of concrete on-ramps, off-ramps and highways, Mr. Lawder often dreamed of owning his own piece of tranquility – surrounded by trees and nature – far from the noise, congestion and traffic of city life.

Over twenty years ago, he and his wife, Nancy, began working toward that dream, eventually investing in 170 acres of forest land in eastern Washington. Three years ago they began building their

dream home amid the trees they both adored and so desperately wanted to live among. And after four years of hard work, in June 2007, their house was complete – their dream realized.



John Lawder often dreamed of owning his own piece of tranquility-surrounded by trees and nature.

The Lawder's home, their beautiful land, and their peaceful seclusion provided not only a get-away from the distractions of city life, but also a creative escape to pursue their shared love for photography and art.

“ I go through 15 chain saws a year.
The work is real, but so are the rewards... ”
- John Lawder, landowner

But, Mr. Lawder soon came to realize that owning a forest, and managing a healthy forest – were two distinctly different things. If the Lawders were to maintain their piece of utopia, where healthy plant and animal communities could thrive, he realized, they'd have to learn about forest



(NRCS forester Misty Seaboldt, left, and John Lawder) “I’m learning new things about forest management every day,” Mr. Lawder says.

management, and invest a whole lot of hard work in cultivating a healthy forest.

“I’m learning new things about forest management every day,” Mr. Lawder says. You can’t learn everything from a book, you just have to do it, and learn along the way.”

Fortunately, Natural Resources Conservation’s (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives program (EQIP), has been instrumental in his learning process and in the implementation of his forest management activities, along with help from private forest consultant Sheldon Magnuson.

“EQIP has been a resource of knowledge and a way for me to learn how to take care of the forest I own,” Mr. Lawder says. “I would recommend EQIP to anyone.”

Through the program, the Lawders have implemented a number of conservation practices including slash treatment, thinning and planting activities that help reduce fire and infestation hazards.

“John has been great to work with,” says NRCS forester Misty Seabolt. “He already had goals and knew what he wanted to accomplish. We just evaluated the condition of his forest, made some suggestions, marked areas, and then worked with John to get him the support and funding he needed to get the job done,” she says.

But getting the job done, Mr. Lawder says, can be labor-intensive. “I go through 15 chain saws a year. The work is real, but so are the rewards,” he says.

Looking back on the progress he’s made as a result of his management efforts, Mr. Lawder realizes his conservation practices and the help he’s received through EQIP to implement those practices are making a positive difference in the health of the forest. “We do everything we can to help make our forest a better place,” Mr. Lawder says. “And I’m proud of the work we’ve done.”

Thanks to all of those efforts, he and his wife’s “dream home” will remain surrounded by a “dream forest” for years to come.

*Written and photographed by:
SuzAnne DeMaine, NRCS*