

WCFFA Summer 2017 Tree Farm Tours - Vollmer-Stremmer Tours Summary

Thanks to all Whatcom members and Upper Puget Sound members who attended the two consecutively held tours this summer! There was a very nice turn out on a bright sunny day, and it was not too hot.

The morning tour was at the Alpine Meadows Christmas Tree Farm in the Nooksack South Fork Valley near VanZandt, with owner Ken Stremmer. Ken told us stories of the Christmas tree business and the history of the farm while we were seated inside the barn where the trees are sold. One story was of the significant response from buyers of his trees for people to have the option to order a live seedling tree from Ken, which they plant at their home. We then went outside to tour the trees and hear of the challenges of maintaining those trees all those years it takes to keep them looking like Christmas trees. Also, we looked at the different tree species, and heard about the ice storm last winter, and the early cold snap some years ago. The labor crew foreman, fortunately, lives right on the farm to keep track of things.

After a lunch break at the Alpine Meadows barn, everyone proceeded by car to Hollowarrow Farm, belonging to Jan and Dick Vollmer, just a couple miles east of the Alpine Meadows Farm. The cars parked all the way up at the landing where Dean Zender of Joe Zender and Sons is logging a 20 acre unit. The people gathered near the loader where the logs were being sorted and stacked into piles to be hauled: fir, cedar, alder, maple, and cull (firewood). Jan Vollmer spoke of the history of the unit and the decision to do a final harvest because of the heavy maple overstory on the cedar. Tom Westergreen led a discussion of the replanting species choices, fir and cedar; and the leave trees, required and optional. The required leave trees include both live and dead (snags). One cottonwood had already been girdled to make a snag. Optional leave trees include the unmarketable young cedar the Vollmers have asked Dean to save.

The cars then moved back down the road to view two 10 acre units harvested in 2002. One unit remains mature fir and cedar, with the mature alder having been selectively harvested by a feller buncher. On the other side of the road is the horse silvopasture, which was harvested and cleared for pasture. This unit then, unplanned, naturally regenerated with conifer. We walked farther on down the road and someone commented that maybe the mature alder should be selectively harvested out of the mature fir/cedar surrounding the barn and shop area before it developed heart rot making it unmarketable.

We stopped for refreshments at the barn and shop and to visit the horses. Hollowarrow Farm is 60 acres with 59 acres as Designated Forest Land including the pasture.