



3C Consultants' Corner

ACF Consulting Forester Gifts NWOA Memberships to Key Clients

Mild mannered, prompt, professional and polite Stephen Whitfield may just be known as the quiet neighbor in his hometown, but he has achieved something of rock-star status at National Woodland Owners Association this Spring. As a registered forestry consultant and member of the Association of Consulting Foresters (ACF), his duty to his cli-

entele extends beyond their woodlands straight to the minds of owners of the land and trees he tends. As the expression goes, Whitfield believes that "An educated owner is my best customer!" What better way to make that adage come to life than with deliberate action — the gift of knowledge and education through a full NWOA membership for his key clients.



Stephen Whitfield, forestry consultant and ACF member, works with private landowners daily. One way he supports his clients is giving them free NWOA memberships.

With forestry supply chain disruptions and pandemic affected timber market reactions, the big challenges stay the same for a forestry consultant: Many owners don't know the value of their woodlands nor the appropriate management actions to create, sustain or ensure their working lands deliver all the amenities they desire.

It is Stephen's hope to inspire owners to the right actions to protect and profit from their managed woodlands by learning about woodland management through NWOA's magazine *National Woodlands* and the multitude of other educational products and insurance offered its members. Whitfield sees education as that key step to increase awareness, understanding and appropriate action by this generation of owners, and by example, inspire the next generation toward sound woodland management.

So how and when did Stephen get to this innovative approach? Whitfield has been an advocate of education for forest and woodland owners most of his life. As a youth he followed his father across North Carolina to spread forest health and productivity messages to Christmas tree and woodland owners. Later when his father retired, he learned the consulting business at his dad's side.

Stephen graduated from NC State University in forestry then went to Clemson University for his Master's degree. Always with an eye on assisting landowners, he took on special projects to stimulate Association of Consulting Foresters chapters and did a stint with Forest Landowners Association and even helped form NCWoodlands, a grassroots landowner group. NCWoodlands and Stephen advocated and co-hosted several successful Forestry Summits across the state. As an independent, his dedication to education- like the many Women Owning Woodlands training he did- were voluntary and took time away from his business that impacted his bottom line. That's why when he made a bulk purchase of memberships for twenty of his clients this past month his friends were a little concerned.

“It’s a vivid reminder of what their woodland resource has meant to my livelihood but more importantly what a precious resource they have stewarded for family, neighbors, community, and the greater public. It’s a small way of showing and sharing my gratitude.”

— S. Whitfield

Stephen explained it this way. “In the past I have volunteered a lot of time for the education cause to my profession and the owners they serve. Now that I have been busy with my work and have enjoyed a strong sales season, I opted to share the resources to thank my clients for the pleasure of serving them.”

We thank Stephen for his unique approach to spreading the woodland management message to a great audience and hope that by example his approach may motivate other resource professionals to share the “word” and many free resources that NWOA has to offer.

Thanks Stephen!

Congratulations, forest landowner! Your interest in educating yourself on woodland ownership and management, evidenced by reading *National Woodlands* magazine, is a significant step to benefit your land. One of the most important next steps you can take is to find a consulting forester to advance your forestland ownership goals. Members of the Association of Consulting Foresters of America Inc. (ACF) are professionals who manage forests and market forest products for private woodland owners. Membership in ACF is a badge that represents expertise, ethical behavior and loyalty to landowners and their land.

ACF members must adhere to the organization's strict ethical standards, cannot buy timber and must always work in the landowners best interest, ensuring you receive expert advice and options while securing the best price for your trees. Additionally, ACF foresters are required to have a college degree in forestry or a natural resources related field, and five years of practical forestry experience. They must also meet continuing educational requirements to stay current on issues that affect their clients' ownership and enjoyment of the land. For these reasons, ACF members are the gold standard of consulting forestry professionals.

In addition to helping you plan to achieve your vision, ACF's independent professionals provide keen insight to explore your land's potential in economically viable ways, benefiting your land by enhancing property values, optimizing timber growth through sustainable harvests, enhancing wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities, and establishing and protecting your family's forest legacy.

I encourage you to use ACF's Find a Forester resource to take this next important step for your land. Visit www.acf-foresters.org and click the Find a Forester tab to locate an ACF member near you.

Shannon M. McCabe, CAE, ACF Executive Director