

# Virginia Forest Landowner Update

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**2006 Virginia Outstanding Tree Farmers of the Year Named: John and Bernice Hoffman**

**By: John Matel, Virginia Tree Farm Committee Communications Director**

*“ For 25 years, ATFS has honored those members who show an outstanding commitment to responsible forest management through the National Outstanding Tree Farmers of the Year award. These awardees are recognized for their remarkable efforts to enhance and sustain their forests, and for spreading the practice of sustainable forestry.*

*The detailed process begins with inspecting foresters nominating Tree Farmers whose conservation efforts, outreach efforts in the community, and advocacy for sustainable forest management exceed expectations. ATFS State Committee’s select a state honoree to compete on the regional level. Regional judges select four regional winners who attend the annual National Tree Farmer Convention where they detail their sustainable forestry work during a panel discussion. At the convention, a national panel of judges selects the National Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year. Stihl, Inc. is the exclusive sponsor for this award and the sole lightweight outdoor power equipment provider for ATFS.” (From the American Tree Farm System website: [www.treefarmssystem.org](http://www.treefarmssystem.org)).*

John and Bernice Hoffman, winners of the 2006 Virginia Tree Farmer of the Year award, bought their first land in Shenandoah County in 1950 and eventually acquired nearly 800 acres near Star Tannery west of Strasburg. The Hoffmans manage for timber, conservation, hunting and recreation.

Local land cost only a \$2 an acre when John bought his first 447-acre tract with bonus money from the Navy. The hillsides were mostly bare. Hoffman planted loblolly pine, encouraged native hardwood regeneration and worked to re-establish the American chestnut. He worked with many consulting foresters. Frank Sherwood, the most recent, nominated him for the tree farm honor. John has followed a written management plan for more than three decades and his property has been a certified tree farm for 23 years.



State Forester Carl Garrison (left) and Shenandoah County Forester Joe Lehnan (right) present the Hoffmans (center) with a sign dedicating 650 acres of their property as the Devil’s Backbone State Forest.

Hoffman’s Virginia roots reach back to the middle 1700’s when his ancestors arrived from Pennsylvania along a wagon road that became Route 11 and then Interstate 81. He is looking to the future. In 1995, John and Bernice began to grant land to the State of Virginia as state forest. Approximately 650 acres will become the Devil’s Backbone State Forest.

One piece of land that will stay in the family is 53 acres with a little spring and pool overlooking the new state forest. The pool feeds Cedar Creek and then the Shenandoah River.



John Hoffman examines chestnuts on his American chestnut research plot, which was established with the Virginia Department of Forestry.

John has been a good steward of all his land. Forest owners, hikers, nature lovers and just plain folks can learn from his example.

Please visit the Virginia Tree farm Committee website at : [www.vaforestry.org/virginia\\_tree\\_farm.htm](http://www.vaforestry.org/virginia_tree_farm.htm)

**For more on the Hoffmans, please see the Summer 2006 issue of the Virginia Forests Magazine (go to [www.vaforestry.org](http://www.vaforestry.org))**

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