

New Member Spotlight—the Johnson Family

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On a nice mid-April morning, I had the opportunity to visit with Mike Johnson and most of the family at their Eagle Fern Park area woodland. As I was driving down the long access road, I was afforded the opportunity to see the lay of the land, some of the various species of trees, and where work was in progress. One could see where work on invasive species removal had been conducted as well as, a re-planted clear-cut that needed some further attention.

Mike and Elizabeth purchased this property two years ago from a longtime Eagle Creek resident and negotiated a purchase of 40 acres from the Longview Fiber Company that was logged and replanted. That acquisition made for a more workable piece of property which now totals 106 acres.

The original property had been logged about 25 years ago and if it was re-planted did not have a good survival rate. There are a large spacing of trees, many open meadow areas, and mixed ages. The latter, regarding mixed ages, pretty much spells out the overview of the land. This included mixed age, mixed species, and not much planning for the work that had been done, prior to the Johnson family's involvement.

I met with Mike in the combination cabin/barn, which had nice open mill-work beam construction. We looked at the plot plan and aerial photos of their property. The land has three-level topography: a South facing slope with the clear-cut, the plateau where most of the land lays, and the land along Eagle Creek on the Southside of the property. The family refers to the land along Eagle Creek as the lower 20.

For now, the family has no plans to improve or change the lower 20. It will, for the most part remain a natural area. Mike allows fishermen to move along the streamside above the high water mark and will continue to do so until he begins to have problems.

With the portion along Eagle Creek looking out for itself, their efforts at reclaiming the land for forests had been focused on the plateau. As we drove through the property, Mike pointed out where they made inroads on the removal of the Scotch broom and blackberry specie, and where they had put access trails allowing them to move about doing their work. I asked if they had a rough plan for improvement of the property and was informed that they didn't.

About a year ago, Mike decided that they were running from one work site to another without a focused effort. He decided to contact the Clackamas County OSU Extension Forestry office for some guidance. Master Woodland Manager Loren Bowman was dispatched and, after determining what the Johnson family goals were for the property, he pointed out some areas where they could start making coordinated improvements. He also recommended that they develop a minimal management plan and attend a class on planning at Tree School. Mike and his daughter Camille took the plan development class at Tree School this year. The job ahead seems less daunting now.

They do have some water issues to deal with, mainly on the plateau area. There is a nice spring fed pond and outfall, a year-round stream flowing through the harvested area and across the plateau on its way to Eagle Creek, and a marshy area. I hesitate to call the marshy area a wetland. They may require some further outside assistance to help them deal with issues.

We took a quick look at the harvested area and the results, or lack thereof, of the re-seed effort. It appears that some further re-planting may be required to get the fullest benefit of the land. Some ideas were discussed on how to measure the success of the current planting effort.

We also discussed some basic species that could be used for reforestation in various areas of the property and some possible alternatives for spanning the stream in the harvest area. Mike was



thinking a railcar bridge, but was open to ideas such as a large diameter culvert in a vented ford style installation. He has lots of river rock on-site to make that happen. It looks like they are headed in the right direction and all they need to do is find the time.

Finding the time for Mike is a problem due to his profession. Mike is a Project Director for Jacobs, a large engineering management company. He is on the road for much of the time and for long periods of time, providing operational oversight on projects ranging from small community hospitals to very large industrial plants. While he likes to fish and spend time outdoors, his current free time is spent on the property.

Elizabeth is a reading specialist at Thomas Edison High School on the Jesuit campus. She enjoys knitting, reading, and is a serious walker. She can do that on their woodland trails and roads.

Mike and Elizabeth have three children and one granddaughter. Son Zac is a chef and kitchen manager for a downtown Portland specialty restaurant and enjoys working outside. Daughter Kate, whom I didn't get to meet, is in retail sales and has a two-year old daughter, Cambria. The second daughter, Camille, works as a nanny and also enjoys working outdoors.

In talking with the family members that I met, It was easy to see that they all were keyed to the outdoors and have taken an interest in the family forest land.

We welcome the Johnsons to our CCFFA family and when the opportunity arises, make it a point to say hello and offer any assistance you can.