

MARKING TIMBER TAKES ONE INTO THE OLD ADIRONDACKS

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Those of us who work far from the environs of man know an Adirondacks few visitors know exists.

Foresters, loggers and rangers all share to some degree that unpleasantness that comes with the beauty of our surroundings. I had two days of it last week and now that I am hard on the heels of 70, it's more difficult to take.

I was marking timber a mile and a half east of the Lewis-Herkimer County line on property bordering the Independence River.

The area is far from any influence of the fly control that much of the traveled corridors of the Adirondacks enjoys. It harks back to the days when the black fly tempered all outdoor activities.

The hot weather and deer flies teamed up with the black flies to make the work twice as demanding. I dealt with the situation as I have for years.

I cover as much of my body with clothing as possible and the rest with fly dope. The heat and exertion of the work causes perspiration to dilute the repellent and it has to be renewed periodically. The flies let you know when it's time.

They are relentless in their attacks, but with proper protection, their bites can be avoided; their harassment cannot. It's impossible to keep them out of your eyes, ears or mouth. They work their way up under your hat brim and crawl around on the back of your glasses - all hard to contend with when your hands are full of tools.

The terrain is never easy timber, there can be no detours. Every potential merchantable tree has to be inspected from all aspects. A diameter measurement is taken at four and a half feet from the base of the tree on the uphill side. No mean feat when it stands on steep slope, surrounded by witch hobble, briars, blow-down or thick spruce.

Species, diameter and merchantable height are recorded in the tally book. A slash of paint at eye level and stump base completes the field work. It's hard, arduous work, but necessary if the volume and value of the timber stand before harvest can be estimated.

The final step is completed and all of the above hardships. Field data is compiled and advertised in a sale proposal.

The sale is shown to prospective buyers and sold to the highest bidder. After it all comes together it leaves one with a sense of satisfaction that's hard to duplicate.

James Dubauar, legendary Ranger School director, placed foresters in two categories. You were either a "dirt forester" or an "armchair forester" Guess which one you are likely to find doing the work I have just described!

One last thing: When working under the adverse conditions I have outlined, plan carefully. To make a long, story short, stay home if you feel there is any chance of coming down with the back door trots.