

## Stewardship Down Home on the Farm

### The Challenge

Jim Walizer and his wife Libby live in the Nittany Valley in north-central Pennsylvania. They own properties in the valley that contain oak, tulip poplar, white ash, white pine, and black cherry timber stands. Because white-tailed deer are a problem, the Walizers were concerned about regeneration. They also realized that grapevines, ferns, and shade affect regeneration and need to be controlled. One of the properties is a working farm with a stream flowing near the barn and house. The Walizers recognized the need to protect water quality from livestock damage. In general, they wanted to ensure that there would be valuable timber resources in the future for their children and grandchildren.

### The Solution

The Walizers have long- and short-term timber income and wildlife habitat objectives. To accomplish them, they need to control the deer and grapevines as well as open the stands to sunlight. Jim amassed information from Penn State Forest Extension and the Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry, and in 1984, the Walizers took an important step toward becoming land stewards when they sought the advice of a professional forester. When the Forest Stewardship Program began in the early 1990s, it didn't take much to convince them that this was the program to assist them in accomplishing their objectives. They worked with their forester to develop a Forest Stewardship Plan that would help them reach their goals and also allow the land to recover from poor harvesting practices in the past. A key component to their success was USDA Forest Service funding that offsets planning costs for private landowners.

### Resulting Benefits

The Walizers implemented many of the recommendations in their Forest Stewardship Plan, resulting in cost-share reimbursement for improving poor timber quality that resulted from previous poor harvesting practices. Jim enlisted the assistance of his sons to cut grapevines, and

*The Walizers have a genuine desire to improve their property for future generations.*



*Jim Walizer conducts a tour of his property.*

after persistent control for a number of years, the grapevines died out. The Walizers also established riparian buffers on the stream and developed cattle crossings for their livestock. Jim assisted with the layout and design of the riparian buffers and secured cost-share funds. Black walnut seedlings have now reestablished themselves within the buffers.

Jim had hoped to avoid the expense of a deer fence but after a shelterwood harvest in 1998, he determined that the damage to the regeneration was too great. He fenced the most valuable timber stands with a seven-strand high tensile wire charged with 2,000 volts. The fence keeps most of the deer away.

### Sharing Success

- The Walizers were honored with the 2001 Pennsylvania Tree Farmer of the Year Award. The Walizers proudly conduct tours of their woodlots to share their experience and management objectives with others.
- Jim is also growing American chestnuts and seeking advice on how to protect the seedlings from deer damage. He is experimenting with tree shelters of his own design.
- The Walizers' forestry objectives mirror those of many private woodland owners: balance short- and long-term timber outcome with valuable wildlife habitat improvements.



USDA Forest Service  
**Northeastern Area**  
 State and Private Forestry

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