The Trail Blazer

The Appalachian Society of American Foresters Winter 2018-19

APSAF Web site: www.APSAF.org **NEW** National SAF Web site: www.eforester.org

Farewell, Thanks, and Prepare for Change

by **Tom Davidson,** CF, *2018 APSAF Chair*

***"The two best days in a man's life are when they are born and when they find out why."* ~ Mark Twain**

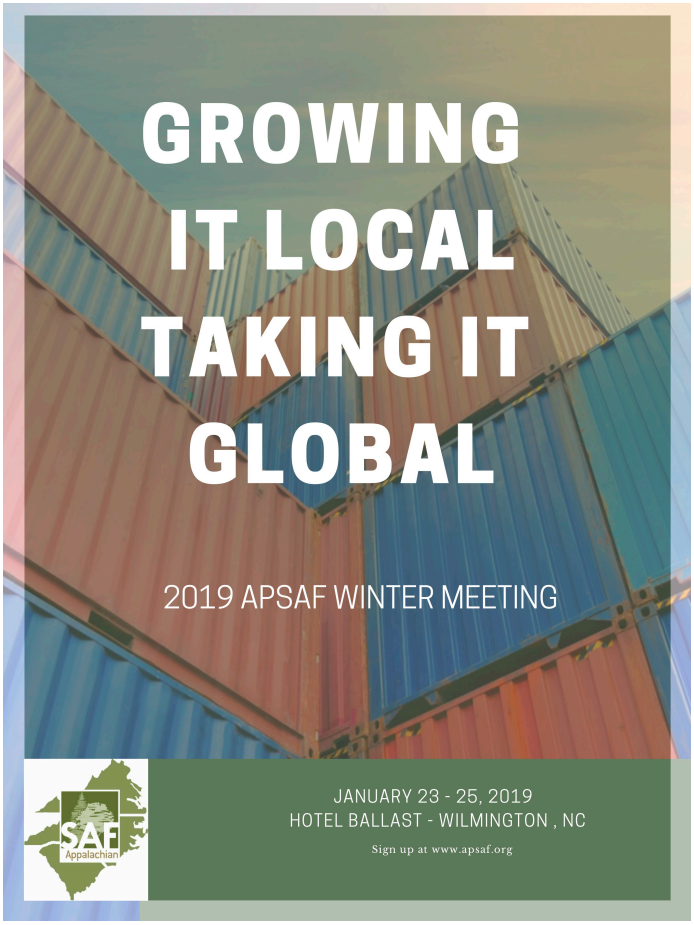
Organizations have life cycles, too. They are born; they grow; and they change. Ultimately, like people and organisms, we have only three choices: adapt, migrate or die.

Your leadership team, current and on-going, is committed to adaptation rather than the other two options, but this is a daunting task. It will take some time, work and willingness on everyone's part to succeed. Like other metaphors, the adaptation starts with accepting that we have a problem, and while addressing it begins with leadership, it will ultimately end up in everyone's hands.

APSAF is approaching an inflection point in our life cycle, and one could argue that we're somewhere past it. Not unlike other State Societies within SAF (or most other associations of our kind), we're an aging bunch, and the understory of our association comes from a smaller and very different talent pool. There are fewer people joining, staying and engaging; and this is not going to change if we don't adapt ourselves, not just a little, bit but a lot, and over time.

Therefore, a new Membership Committee, led by Tres Hyman, took a serious dive into our conundrum in late November, and while it was no panacea and has no magic wand, it was a great and needed reboot to this conversation and the adaptations to come.

You'll see a list of priorities and other ideas that came from this meeting on page 5, but like a root mat, all these ideas are interwoven and grafted to one another. So, it will be impossible to affect one part of the solution without affecting another. Also, it's a new beginning on a systems challenge, so I (and we) cannot paint for you a



methodical, accurate or satisfying picture of what we will do exactly, or in what order. Neither will we be able to predict success with one aspect of change or another. It will have to be adaptive in nature, where we try things here and there, step back, learn, and try again.

While I don't leave you with a "rosy" picture, I think it's an honest one, and I want it to be an optimistic one if you'll join me in thinking of it that way. We have a chance to change, and not all organizations (or organisms) have that chance. I personally think that everything is on the table: our offers of value, our structure, our meetings, our dues, our partnerships, and even our composition of members.

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