

Educating Absentee Forest Landowners in Washington State

2009-2012



prepared by

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Project Summary

Issue/Situation/Needs

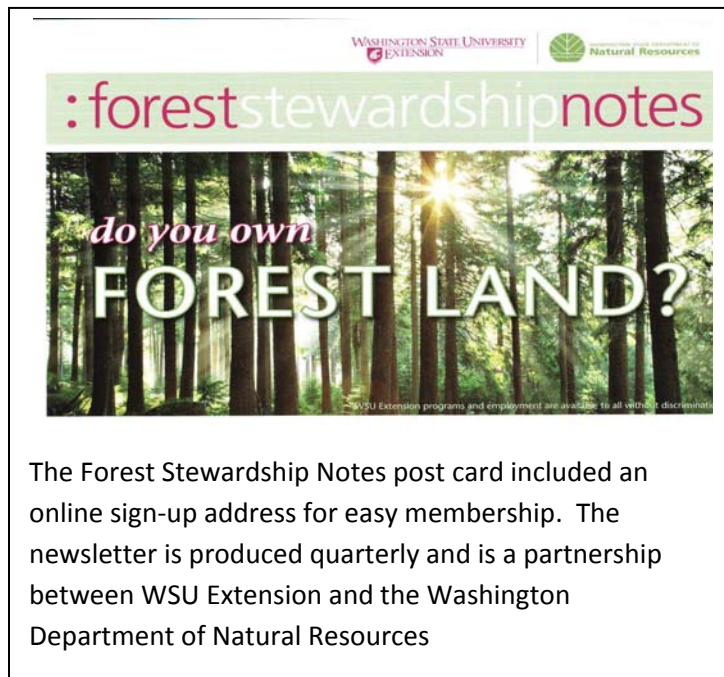
Over 215,000 families and individuals control 5.5 million acres of forestland in Washington, making this group the largest rural private land user group in the state. The northeast region of the state contains the greatest concentration of family forest lands, 75% of which are owned by absentee landowners primarily residing in the Puget Sound - Metro region. This is a challenge for engaging absentee owners in educational programs, who live far from their forest ownerships. Due to historical settlement patterns, family forests are typically located in the lower elevation watersheds, adjacent to streams and rivers and often in the rural-urban interface. These forest lands make critical contributions to public amenities and commodity values – they are essential for clean air and water, wildlife habitat, for the economic vitality of rural communities, family livelihoods, quality of life, ecosystem viability, and aesthetic beauty. This project provided a surround-sound approach of traditional and innovative information delivery, which engaged absentee owners in one-on-one, group, and online learning -- stimulating best practice planning and implementation behaviors and improved forest health, productivity, reduced wildfire risk, and created a more desirable future condition.



Families young and old engage in forest stewardship education at one of the Forest Owners Field Days

Inputs/Outputs

A color postcard was created and mailed to 75,000 forest landowners (those with 10+ acres) alerting them to a new online newsletter "Forest Stewardship Notes". This was the broadest direct outreach to forest landowners in Washington State history. To date, 8,113 people receive the publication.



In 2009 and again in 2011, two Family Forest Expo's were held in Auburn (western Washington) and Spokane (eastern Washington), and attended by 375 people.



Five Forest Owners Field Day events were attended by 1,370 families, held in eastern and western Washington, as well as in Idaho as a joint-state project. Twenty-two online learning modules have been launched by 2012.



Impacts

Self-administered email questionnaire distributed to 100% of all program participants that provided an address (n=1,744). Acres impacted were self reported; UW research indicates that treated acres for reducing wildfire hazard risk is a minimum of \$1500/ acre. This value was used to estimate the dollars saved by individuals/communities/agencies by applying the learned concepts - primarily thinning, pruning, and slash abatement. As a direct result of this project, dollars saved by execution of learned practices is valued at over \$9 million. Sixty-five families

have been able to participate remotely in Forest Stewardship Management Plan writing classes, who otherwise would not have had the opportunity to attend. 100% of the on-line participants have implemented at least two new practices as a direct result of this outreach; sixty-one percent reported preparing a DNR-approved Forest Stewardship Plan.

FOREST STEWARDSHIP UNIVERSITY

Online Learning Opportunities for Washington Forest Owners

Many of WSU Extension's most popular forest stewardship workshops are now available as self-directed online classes. There are over two dozen available classes taught by the state's top experts. Classes are available on demand at any time and from anywhere. You can register for classes individually to fully customize your learning experience, or sign up for discounted packages of classes around similar topics.

*Learn what you want, when you want.
Save time, money, and gas!*

<http://extension.wsu.edu/forestry/FSU/>

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EXTENSION

WSU Extension programs and programs are available to all without discrimination.

Forest owners continue to engage in online learning as a result of the creation of these web-based products, made possible by the CIG program

Summary

Risks to Washington's family-owned forests have been decreased as a result of the CIG program. Disease infections, epidemic bark beetle outbreaks, and stand-replacing wildfires due to high woody fuel accumulations have been abated. The northeast region of the state has benefited the most, as it contains the greatest concentration of family forestlands, of which over 75% are owned by absentee landowners residing primarily in the Puget Sound region. This project perfectly addressed the National Natural Resource Concerns for Forest Health.

Through the bulk mailing of the post cards to 75,000 landowners, we communicated educational, technical, and financial assistance opportunities for producers – through these organized educational events, the on-line Forest Stewardship Notes, and the on-line Forest Stewardship Plan writing trainings. This multifaceted approach to stimulate on-the-ground forest health and productivity practice behaviors has proven successful in similar past endeavors, and this projects again reinforces the transferability potential of this educational approach.

