



WASHINGTON STATE
UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION



FOREST STEWARDSHIP AND HEALTH

Empowering family
forest landowners to
become experts of
their properties

BY THE NUMBERS

- 1,200 feet of the Dungeness River have been improved by in-stream habitat construction and stream-side vegetation plantings.
- More than 10,000 landowners have executed fire hazard risk-reduction practices. This equates to \$97 million in firefighting costs if the land were to burn.

2014

ISSUE

There are approximately 215,000 family forest landowners that control 5.8 million acres in Washington, making them the largest private land user group in the state. These forests contribute significantly to environmental, economic, and social well-being, but are at risk due to land-use conversion, shifting and diminishing commodity markets, landscape fragmentation, poor health, degraded habitat, and invasive species. This results in increased water pollution, stormwater management problems, elevated wildfire risk, species and biodiversity loss, destabilized hillsides and stream banks, economic losses to property owners, and degraded aesthetics and quality of life for property owners as well as the broader community.

Landowners face a lack of technical expertise to understand and implement best practices to improve land stewardship. Education and technical assistance are effective tools to empower landowners to implement best practices for accomplishing their management objectives. Education and assistance further help landowners to develop written stewardship plans to qualify for property tax reductions and other forms of financial assistance, helping landowners keep forests in use, and implement best management activities.

RESPONSE

WSU Extension Forestry aims to empower forest owners to become experts of their land. Our overall goal is for landowners and managers to understand their forest ecosystems and manage them in a positive way that avoids risks, so that forestlands will remain permanently productive sources of goods and benefits to the landowner and to society.

“Forest Stewardship Coached Planning” short courses are offered to landowners throughout the year in Washington State. These comprehensive, multi-week training programs teach landowners about best management practices and how to write their own management plans for decision-making, documentation, communicating with contractors and family, and to qualify for economic incentives. Three “Forest Owner Field Days” are offered in the summer. These all-day, out-in-the-woods events feature educational presentations on different aspects of planning and implementation of best practices for achieving personal objectives. Presenters utilize real examples to provide hands-on learning. Coached Planning classes and field days are augmented throughout the year with topical workshops, field tours, newsletters, websites, online modules, and other resources.



QUOTES

"WSU Extension Forestry has engaged forest landowners and resource professionals to learn and apply the best cultural practices that protect public resources, enhance their management objectives, improve economic status, and reduce forest health, wildfire, and financial risk."

"I thought the stewardship course was outstanding. It is the kind of program that makes a citizen proud of government and pleased to pay taxes to support it. Thank you!"

"I've taken quite a few different classes in my life, but this class was the best one by far. From the teachers, to the specialists that came in every week, they were informative, and kept my interest. It's made such a difference by having a plan, I'm focused and on schedule! Thanks again!"



IMPACTS

Through the nine-week Forest Stewardship Coached Planning course and summer field days, we provided leadership and training to more than 12,000 families representing 540,000 acres in Washington.

Evaluations demonstrate that Coached Planning participants show a significant increase in knowledge across 15 key topic areas. Within one year, 65% of participants completed a written forest stewardship plan, and 90% used course knowledge to implement stewardship practices such as wildlife habitat enhancement, invasive weed control, fire-risk reduction, forest health improvement, tree planting, and brush control.

Within three years:

- 57% of participants reported greater wildlife use of their land;
- 66% reported reduced invasive species cover on their land; and
- 45% generated income from timber and non-timber products (collectively totaling tens of millions of dollars).

100% of participants reported increased confidence in executing sound practices, and 97% reported greater quality of life due to knowledge gained and practices implemented because of the course. Participants shared course knowledge with an average of 11 other people per year.

Coached Planning has helped more than 500 families qualify for reduced property taxes, an annual financial savings of several thousand dollars per family. Over the course of one generation, this will save families hundreds of thousands of dollars.