

# Extension 'Cord

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## Connecting People, Resources, & Knowledge

*"Welcome to the Extension 'Cord, a monthly briefing paper from WSU Snohomish County Extension. Even though we have existed for over 100 years, we have realized that too many people are unaware of the diversity and impact of our programs. Each issue will highlight the purpose, activities and results of one particular program. The 'Cord will showcase the work of our 1,000 volunteers and 25 staff. Please do not hesitate to contact any of our staff for more information."*

*Curt Moulton, Extension Director*



## Stewards of the Forest

**F**orestry is the number one land use in Snohomish County. Two thirds of Snohomish County are forested. Federal lands compose the higher elevation forests, followed by state and industrial forest lands. The lowland forests are predominantly small-acreage ownerships (typically one to one hundred acres), often family owned. Snohomish County has the highest number of small forest land owners of any county in the state, with approximately 23,000 owners managing over 118,000 acres.

These lowland "family forests" play a critical role in the health of local watersheds and the Puget Sound by filtering and retaining water and providing key habitat structures for salmon and other wildlife. Forests also mitigate climate change by their ability to capture and store carbon from the atmosphere, and their aesthetics and recreation opportunities contribute to overall quality of life for all citizens of Snohomish County.

Most small forest land owners do not own land primarily for timber or income, but rather for privacy, rural lifestyle, aesthetic enjoyment, wildlife, and ecosystem values. However, by nature of their lowland location in a rapidly developing county, there is tremendous pressure for conversion (replacing forests with development) and fragmentation.

WSU Extension's Forest Stewardship Program helps small forest land owners maintain their forestland and manage it sustainably for health, resilience, and diversity. The program is designed to help landowners identify and achieve their personal ownership objectives, such as aesthetic improvement, wildlife habitat enhancement, wildfire risk reduction, and even income generation from timber or specialty forest products. Partnership and support for this program is provided by Snohomish County Surface Water Management, the Snohomish Conservation District, and the USDA Forest Service.



### Program Offerings

The Forest Stewardship Program offers classes, workshops, field days, and individual assistance throughout the year. The flagship of the program is a nine-week short course called Forest Stewardship Coached Planning. The course provides forest owners with a comprehensive training on forest stewardship, including ecology, native plants,

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<http://snohomish.wsu.edu/calendar.htm>



silviculture, forest health, wildlife, soils, and more. The course “coaches” forest owners in the development of their own written stewardship plans, which not only help owners to manage more effectively, but can help them qualify for cost share programs, certification as a sustainable forest, and significant property tax reductions. These benefits in turn help forest owners to restore and enhance their woodlands and to maintain their land as forest instead of converting to development.

Forest Stewardship classes and workshops are offered on evenings, weekends, and even online to fit with a wide variety of schedules. Technical manuals and online learning modules are available for participants to pursue additional learning on their own. The Forest Stewardship Program also works with local schools and community groups, providing opportunities for youth and adults to learn more about the natural world.

### Impacts

The WSU Extension Forest Stewardship Program is highly successful. Hundreds of forest owners participate each year, as well as many school children and community members. Over 80 percent of participants in classes and field days implement new stewardship practices within one year, voluntarily enhancing and restoring hundreds of acres each year. The most common practices implemented are tree planting, invasive species removal, and wildlife habitat enhancement. Over three quarters of participants report a greater likelihood of maintaining their land as forest for the long term, which is consistent with national research demonstrating the effectiveness of education at reducing forest land conversion.

### Get Involved

The WSU Extension Forest Stewardship Program is open to all, whether you have one acre, hundreds of acres, or no acres but are just interested in forestry. We invite you to visit our website at <http://snohomish.wsu.edu/forestry> to sign up for our free email newsletter to receive announcements about upcoming classes and events. We also have free, informal potluck socials three times per year. These are great opportunities to meet other forest owners and forestry professionals and enjoy a short education program.

### WSU Extension Mission Statement

Washington State University Extension engages people, organizations, and communities to advance economic wellbeing and quality of life by connecting them to the knowledge base of the university and by fostering inquiry, learning, and the application of research.

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