

# IMPACT

University of Idaho  
Extension

Kootenai County, 1808 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814-3407; 208-446-1680; Fax: 208-446-1690

## Over 800 Idaho Panhandle Loggers Learn About Forest Ecology, Silviculture, and Water Quality

### *The Situation*

Loggers are a critical link in forest management, particularly on lands whose owners are less active in directly managing their property. Since most loggers work on many forest properties in a year, they also provide another vehicle to communicate with a larger number of family forest owners.

Unfortunately, if communication between landowners, loggers, or foresters is inadequate, the resulting timber harvests may not meet expectations. State forest practice laws remedy this somewhat, but they are designed to provide minimum standards. If loggers understand the “spirit of the law” in forest practice act regulations, they can often modify their activities to reach forest management goals more effectively. That is particularly critical with increasing use of mechanized harvesting tools giving loggers more responsibility in the woods.

The more loggers know about forest management, the better they can communicate with forest owners, foresters, and others involved in managing forests. Participating in education programs can simultaneously improve the demand for their services and document their commitment to forest stewardship.

A growing number of forest products retailers want to sell forest products that can be certified as harvested from sustainably managed forests. The Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI), the forest certification program that most Idaho mills participate in, requires loggers who are trained in

forestry best management practices. To the extent forest certification programs require trained loggers, Extension logger training efforts are vital to helping Idaho forest product companies maintain or increase Idaho’s share of global markets for certified wood products.



### *Our Response*

#### **LEAP**

*Logger Education to Advance Professionalism* (“LEAP”) is a national Extension program piloted in Idaho and several other states. LEAP features over 20 hours of training designed to increase loggers’ understanding and skills related to forest ecology, silviculture, and water quality.

*LEAP* is instructed by University of Idaho Extension faculty, with additional presentations from Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) personnel on state forestry laws, insects, and disease.

### **Idaho Pro-Logger**

Partially stimulated by SFI, the Idaho logger education committee developed the “Idaho Pro-Logger” program, administered through the Associated Logging Contractors of Idaho (ALC). The Idaho Pro-Logger credential requires completion of *LEAP* and 16 credits of continuing education annually. As of 2007, 923 loggers were enrolled in the Idaho Pro-Logger program statewide.

### **LEAP Update**

With growing enrollment in the Idaho Pro-logger program, more loggers are looking for ways to meet credit requirements. Based on recommendations from local logger steering committees, we developed *LEAP Update*, an annual 2-day program in which *LEAP* graduates can build on their professional development with training on a variety of forestry topics identified each year by loggers.

### **Other Workshops**

Extension has integrated logger education needs into other education programs as well. Sixty-three loggers attended other UI Extension forestry programs in 2006-2007, such as *Using your GPS*, and the *Insect & Disease Field Day*. In total, UI Extension provided 1,954 contact hours of continuing education for Panhandle loggers in 2006-2007.

## ***Program Outcomes***

Training in programs offered by UI Extension helps loggers apply better land stewardship. Eight hundred and three loggers have attended the 35 *LEAP* sessions offered in the Idaho Panhandle since 1994.

One hundred sixty-four Idaho Panhandle loggers attended the 2007 *LEAP Update* sessions. Based on exit surveys from this training, 117 loggers increased their understanding of variable retention harvesting; 159 loggers will work more safely around power lines; 131 loggers will identify and respond to spruce budworm; 149 loggers will use a GPS unit more effectively; and 145 loggers increased their understanding of basic forest measurements.

Through communication from these loggers, this knowledge will reach landowners, who will ultimately increase wood available to local mills, while maintaining water quality, improving forest health, and enhancing biological diversity.

UI Extension logger education efforts also appear to be helping loggers comply with Idaho laws designed to protect forest water quality. In 2004, only 5.4% of Idaho logging jobs received an “unsatisfactory” rating on Idaho Forest Practice Act inspections - the lowest since the IDL started compiling data on these inspections.

UI Extension will continue to provide *LEAP* and other educational opportunities for loggers. These programs are being guided by two steering committees composed entirely of loggers—one for Bonner and Boundary counties and one for Benewah and Kootenai Counties.

## ***For More Information***

Chris Schnepf, Area Extension Educator—Forestry (Boundary, Bonner, Kootenai, and Benewah Counties)

University of Idaho Extension—Kootenai County  
1808 North 3<sup>rd</sup> Street  
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814-3407  
208-446-1680

Email: [cschnepf@uidaho.edu](mailto:cschnepf@uidaho.edu)  
[www.cnr.uidaho.edu/extforest](http://www.cnr.uidaho.edu/extforest)

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