

IMPACT

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UI Extension sharpens skills of foresters & other professionals in Idaho panhandle

The Situation

Forests are vital to the economy and quality of life in the Inland Northwest. Foresters and other natural resource professionals must continually sharpen their skills and stay current with emerging scientific and technological developments to sustainably produce more wood fiber and simultaneously improve forest biodiversity and health. To that end, the forestry community has established new credentials to document foresters' continuing education efforts (e.g., The Society of American Foresters "Certified Forester" program).

Many continuing education venues do not fit the needs of individual foresters due to budget limitations, time and travel constraints, or other factors. UI Extension is uniquely situated to provide *local* continuing education opportunities for field foresters.

K-12 teachers must also stay updated and are continually looking for local opportunities to hone their skills. They also value research-based sources of forestry education to integrate into their classrooms.

Our Response

UI Extension provides continuing education for foresters, teachers, and other professionals in many ways. Some programs are developed specifically for particular audiences. Other efforts involve adjusting programs developed for forest owners or other groups to simultaneously meet foresters' or teachers' needs as well.

University of Idaho Extension and Washington State University Extension cooperate to hold an annual forum for consulting foresters, state-employed service foresters, and other natural resource professionals working with family forest owners. The program, titled *The Family Foresters Workshop*, updates par-



Foresters learning about managing forest biomass.

ticipants on emerging technology and knowledge applicable to private forests.

In 2007, University of Idaho Extension and Washington State University Extension cooperated to hold the *Inland Northwest Land, Water, & Fire Conference*, designed to give rural policy makers, land use professionals, local agency staff, contractors, realtors, foresters, and rural residents an opportunity to learn about current research and experience and apply it to policies and activities in rural areas and near-rural areas.

In offering programs for family forest owners, we learned something – graduate foresters were coming too! Because of this and some landowners' increasing skill levels from attending previous Extension programs, we have sharpened the focus of selected Extension programs to simultaneously meet the continuing education needs of both experienced forest owners and graduate foresters.

For example, in 2007-2008, Society of American Foresters' "Continuing Forestry Education" credit was provided for UI Extension programs on forest health, conservation easements, adaptive silviculture, restoring white pine, forest insects and disease, and global positioning systems. We also offer University of Idaho credit for applicable UI Extension programs, such as the Forestry Shortcourse. This allows teachers to obtain university credit for programs that help them integrate forest science into their classrooms.

Program Outcomes

Over 240 foresters attended UI Extension forestry programs in the Idaho Panhandle in 2007-2008, for 1,429 contact hours.

Participants in the 2008 Family Forester's Workshop, indicated percentage knowledge increases ranging from 30-53% on: web soil survey, spatial analysis, carbon footprints in forestry, hunting to manage wildlife, forest owner transition planning, climate change and forests, and family forest economics/policy.

Participants in the 2007 Inland Northwest Land, Water, and Fire Conference indicated percentage knowledge increases ranging from 11-45% on: marketing aquatic ecosystem services; alternative fire responses; conserving industrial forests; storm-water education programs; water adjudication processes; GPS; Indian reservation land ownership; subsurface sewage and water quality; groundwater issues; evaluating multiple well use; green development standards; living with resort communities; land use planning process reform; alternative energy technologies; and managing people, wildfire, and smoke.

Five Panhandle teachers took the Forestry Shortcourse for credit in 2007-2008. Some teachers have used the shortcourse to develop innovative high school forestry classes.

Future UI Extension programming in this area will evolve to reflect emerging technologies and professional education needs in the Idaho Panhandle related to forestry.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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