

UI Extension programs give families skills to manage their forests

The Situation

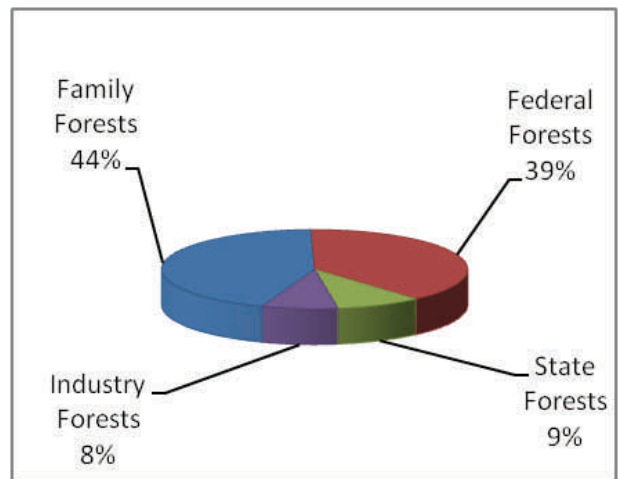
Roughly 44% of the forests in the Idaho Panhandle (Boundary, Bonner, Kootenai and Benewah counties) are held and managed by family forest owners (Also known as non-industrial private forest owners or "NIPF" owners.). The most recent national forest owner census showed that Idaho family forest owners have more than doubled in number, from 21,700 in 1978, to 47,400 owners in 1993.

Family forests provide timber, water, wildlife habitat, and many other values. Since 1987, the average annual timber harvest from these forests in the Idaho Panhandle has been over 178 million board feet, valued at \$107 million milled. By comparison, the average annual timber harvest on all of the Idaho Panhandle National Forest Ranger Districts combined over the same time period was 135 million board feet. Family forests have provided 28% of the timber harvest in the ten northern counties of Idaho since 1997. Without family forest owners, several more lumber mills in North Idaho would have closed down.

Family forest owners have varied goals for their property, ranging from timber income to simply "a place to get away from it all." With better management, family forests can provide much more than they have historically. With a better working knowledge of forest ecology, silviculture, and related forest management techniques, family forest owners can sustainably produce more wood fiber and simultaneously improve forest health, water quality, wildlife habitat, and other forest values.

Our Response

As part of the Idaho Forest Stewardship program, a cooperative effort with the Idaho Dept. of Lands and many other partners, UI Extension provides an an-



Idaho Panhandle Forest Ownership

nual series of workshops, field days and other educational activities titled *Strengthening Forest Stewardship Skills*. The activities are designed to strengthen forest owners' ability to implement practices that improve forest health and growth, and are offered in a variety of locations and times.

Woodland Notes, a forestry newsletter providing practical advice on forest management, is mailed out twice annually to over 4,000 Panhandle households. It is often the only consistent contact absentee forest owners have with professional forestry (one third of Panhandle forest owners receiving *Woodland Notes* reside out-of-state or south of Idaho County).

Forest owners can choose from over 140 forestry extension **publications** available through local UI Extension offices. UI Extension **videos** on water quality, "selective" logging, and forest tax management, provide additional resources to help forest owners learn on their own.

Program Outcomes

In FY 07-08, 524 owners of over 56,000 private forest acres attended UI Extension workshops and other educational activities in the Idaho panhandle. On average, less than a third of participants indicated previous involvement in various forestry education or assistance programs. Participants indicated knowledge increases ranging from 21% to 210%, with an un-weighted average of 87%. Based on evaluation results:

- 66 panhandle family forest owners will thin forest trees;
- 47 will manage to favor larch and pines;
- 42 will monitor for insect, disease, or animal damage;
- 40 will prune forest trees;
- 35 will attend additional forestry education programs;
- 34 will purchase a GPS receiver;
- 31 will use a GPS receiver for forest management;
- 29 will complete a forest management plan;
- 28 will use internet data sources to manage their forest;
- 23 will look into GIS to manage their forest;
- 21 will contact a forester for additional assistance;
- 21 will reduce vegetation competing with tree seedlings;
- 19 will pursue additional information on conservation easements;
- 18 will apply adaptive silviculture concepts;
- 13 will leave adequate amounts of coarse woody debris;
- 13 will avoid insect problems associated with slash; and
- 11 will measure coarse woody debris.

The improved management practices family forest owners implement as a result of knowledge and skills gained in UI Extension programs will ultimately increase wood available to local mills, maintain water quality, reduce catastrophic fire risk, improve forest growth and health, and enhance biological diversity.

Strengthening Forest Stewardship Skills will continue to be offered annually, along with new publications, videos, and other efforts to help Idaho Panhandle family forest owners manage their forests more effectively.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Chris Schnepf, Extension Educator
Boundary, Bonner, Kootenai, & Benewah Counties
University of Idaho Extension, Kootenai County
1808 North 3rd Street
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814-3407
Phone: 208.446.1680
Fax: 208.46.1690
E-mail: cschnepf@uidaho.edu
Web: www.cnr.uidaho.edu/extforest

20-09cschnepf-families.pub
8/09