

# IMPACT

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Extension

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## Over 800 panhandle loggers learn about forest ecology, silviculture, 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 even more effectively. That is particularly critical with increasing use of mechanized harvesting tools that give 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, UI 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.



Loggers participating in LEAP field exercises.

### Our Response

*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.

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 LEAP and 16 credits of continuing education annually. As of 2007, 923 loggers were enrolled in the Idaho Pro-Logger program.

With growing enrollment in the Idaho Pro-Logger program, more loggers are looking for ways to meet

credit requirements. Based on logger recommendations, we developed *LEAP Update*, an annual 2-day program where loggers can get updated on current forestry issues.

UI Extension has integrated logger education needs into other education programs as well. Sixty-seven loggers attended other 2007-2008 UI Extension forestry programs on topics such as GPS and forest insects & disease. In total, UI Extension provided 2,300 contact hours of continuing education for Panhandle loggers in 2007-2008.

### **Program Outcomes**

Training in programs offered by UI Extension helps loggers apply better land stewardship. One-hundred fifty-four loggers attended three LEAP Update sessions held in the Idaho Panhandle in 2008. As a result of these sessions, loggers increased their knowledge of: biomass fuels potential by 54%; pre-commercial thinning and pruning by 50%; white pine silviculture by 41%; FPA stream alterations by 34%; and fire safety precautions by 25%. 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.

Eight hundred and twenty-eight loggers have attended the 36 LEAP sessions offered in the Idaho Panhandle since 1994. UI Extension logger education efforts 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 will continue to be guided by Idaho loggers.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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