Loggers Learn More About Forest Ecology, Silviculture, and Water Quality

The Situation
Extension provides research-based education designed to improve the skills of non-industrial private forest (NIPF) owners and those who work with them. Loggers are a critical link in the management of NIPF land, particularly for forest owners who are less active in directly managing their property.

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 criteria, and loggers may not fully appreciate the reasons these regulations were created. If loggers understand the "spirit of the law" to forest practices act regulations, they can often modify their practices to reach forest management goals even more effectively.

Our Response
The more loggers know about forest management, the better they can communicate with forest owners, foresters, and others involved in managing private forest resources.

Many loggers are landowners, and have participated in Extension programs designed for forest owners. However, in the past, few Extension programs were targeted directly to logging operators. That changed with "LEAP" (Logger Education to Advance Professionalism), a national Extension program piloted in Idaho and several other states.

LEAP features over 20 hours worth of training designed to increase loggers’ understanding and skills related to forest ecology, silviculture, and water quality. LEAP program timing, format, and emphasis is adjusted in each location it is held, according to a local steering committee of loggers.

The program is instructed by University of Idaho faculty, with guest presentations from Idaho Dept. of Lands personnel on state forestry laws and insects and disease. Enrollment is usually limited to 25 loggers per session, for an effective learning environment.

In 1995, LEAP was offered as a three-day program in St. Maries Idaho.

Achievements
Fifteen loggers attended the LEAP session offered in St. Maries in March, 1995. One-hundred percent of the participants indicated they would
implement improved management practices as a result of attending the program.

Thus far, over 145 people have participated in LEAP in Idaho. In the panhandle area, LEAP sessions have been held in Sandpoint, Coeur d'Alene, and St. Maries.

The Future
LEAP will continue to be offered to Idaho loggers at various locations. In 1996, LEAP will be offered in Bonner County.

For More information
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