Forest Owners Improve Tree Planting Skills

The Situation

Over 83% of Boundary, Bonner, Kootenai and Benewah Counties is forested. Over 878,000 acres (44% of all forested land) is held by an estimated 28,000 Non-Industrial Private Forestland (NIPF) owners. The 1993 timber harvest from these lands was over 214 million board feet, with an estimated economic value of $86 million for mill-delivered logs, or $129 million milled.

Non-industrial private forest lands become even more important to Panhandle counties when timber supply from industrial and national forest lands declines. In 1993, NIPF lands produced 28% of Idaho’s timber harvest, even though they only comprise 12% of the state’s forest acreage. The portion of timber supply from Panhandle NIPF lands is likely even higher, since the ratio of NIPF land is higher.

Many forest owners want to keep their property fully stocked with trees, particularly after a harvest. However, unless forest owners carefully plan their plantings, tree seedling survival can be very low and require additional investments of time and money.

Our Response

As part of the Idaho Forest Stewardship program, a cooperative effort with the Idaho Dept. of Lands and many other partners, the UI Cooperative Extension System conducted a workshop in Sandpoint in March 1994, titled Successful Tree Planting.

The program featured 2 hours of discussion and 3 hours of hands-on field exercises, where participants experimented with bare-root and containerized seedlings, animal damage prevention tools, and different planting tools and techniques.
Achievements
Twenty-eight (28) people attended the session in Sandpoint. An estimated total of 28 NIPF owners and 1,110 NIPF acres were reached. One hundred percent of the participants indicated they would implement improved management practices as a result of attending the program.

Successful Tree Planting has been held annually since 1993. Over 134 people have participated in the program at 5 locations in Idaho.

The Future
Can the high level of timber supply from NIPF lands be sustained? Perhaps not at current levels, but NIPF lands can grow much more timber than they have traditionally. Increased prices bring incentives for more intensive management practices, such as tree planting. As a result, landowners are more interested than ever in programs which give them the skills to increase timber productivity on their property.

Successful Tree Planting is part of a comprehensive Extension education program for NIPF owners, titled Strengthening Forest Stewardship Skills. The series of programs features a diverse array of educational activities designed to strengthen NIPF owners’ ability to implement practices which improve forest health and growth. Programs are offered in a variety of locations and times and are announced in a yearly calendar distributed each fall. Other programs offered in this annual series cover thinning, insect and disease treatments, and many other topics.

Forest owners are likely to continue investing in tree planting to keep their forests healthy and productive. An intensive program on reforesting marginal farmlands will be offered in 1996, in Moscow. Additional Extension programs on tree planting will continue to be offered periodically in the future at other locations as well.

For More Information
Chris Schneepf
Extension Educator - Forestry, (Boundary, Bonner, Kootenai, and Benewah Counties)
University of Idaho
Kootenai County Cooperative Extension System
106 E. Dalton Ave.
Coeur d’Alene, Idaho 83814-9296
Voice Phone: 208-667-6426
Fax Phone: 208-664-4470

Ron Maloney
Extension Forester
University of Idaho
College of Forestry, Wildlife and Range Sciences
Forestry Bldg.
Moscow, Idaho 83844-1140
Voice Phone: 208-885-6356
Fax Phone: 208-885-6226

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