Forest Owners Learn Forest Management Basics

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.

NIPF lands become even more important to Idaho 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 11% of the state’s forest acreage. The percentage of timber supply from Panhandle NIPF lands was likely even higher, since the ratio of NIPF land is higher.

Can this 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 and thinning. As a result, landowners are more interested than ever in programs which give them the skills to increase the timber productivity of their properties and simultaneously manage for wildlife habitat, livestock forage, scenic qualities, other values.

Focus group research conducted in 1992 revealed that NIPF owners desire a better basic understanding of forest ecology, soils, silviculture, forest health, wildlife, goal setting, and other forest management topics, to better manage their forest property for their goals. Focus group results also indicated that forest owners were interested in attending multi-session education programs to help them towards this goal.
Our Response
As part of the Idaho Forest Stewardship program, the UI Cooperative Extension System conducted a seven session program, titled the Forest Management Short course, in Coeur d'Alene (Fall 1994) and Bonners Ferry (Winter 1995).

The program was designed to enrich landowners' basic forest management skills and help them develop a forest management plan for their property. UI Cooperative Extension faculty taught the sessions, with guest presentations from Idaho Department of Lands, Idaho Fish & Game, and Soil Conservation Service personnel. All participants received a large notebook of resource materials which supported the training.

Achievements
Fifty-two (52) people attended the sessions. An estimated total of 52 NIPF owners and 4,656 NIPF acres were reached. One-hundred percent of the participants believed they would implement improved management practices as a result of attending the program.

This was the third year the Forest Management Short course has been held in Idaho. Over 190 NIPF owners have participated in the program at 8 Idaho locations thus far. Most shortcourse participants also attended other, more specific programs in the Strengthening Forest Stewardship Skills series.

Several of the participants in the shortcourse have been teachers. One teacher who attended the program has adapted the materials used in the shortcourse to develop an innovative new high school forestry class in Coeur d'Alene.

The Future
The Forest Management Short course 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 tree planting, thinning, insect and disease treatments, and many other topics.

The Forest Management Shortcourse will continue to be offered, at varied locations, with more emphasis on helping participants share what they have learned with other forest owners.

For more information
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