

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

## *The Situation*

Loggers are a critical link in the management of forest land, particularly on forests whose owners 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. That is particularly critical, since increasing use of mechanized harvesting tools gives loggers more responsibility in the woods.

Also, since most loggers work on many forest properties in a year, they have contact with multiple forest owners. Loggers provide another vehicle to communicate with a larger number of private forest owners.

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

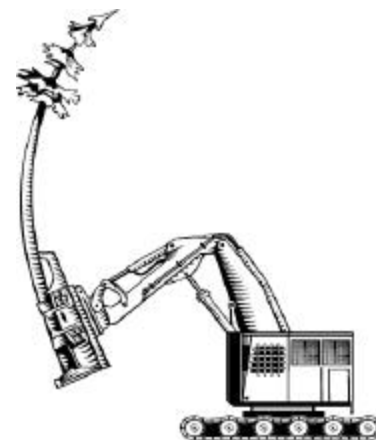
can simultaneously improve the demand for their services, and document their commitment to forest stewardship.

## *Our Response*

### *LEAP*

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 loggers. That changed with Logger Education to Advance Professionalism, a national Extension program piloted in Idaho and several other states.

The program features over 20 hours of training designed to increase loggers’ understanding and skills related to forest ecology, silviculture, and water quality. Program timing, format and emphasis has been guided by local logger steering committees.



The program is taught by University of Idaho faculty, with additional presentations from Idaho Department of Lands personnel on state forestry laws and insects and disease. Enrollment is limited to 30 loggers per session, for an effective learning environment.

### ***Other workshops***

With the increased emphasis on providing educational opportunities for loggers, Extension has worked to integrate logger education needs into other education programs as well.

### ***Videos and publications***

The effort to provide more educational opportunities for loggers requires publications and other educational materials tied to their needs. We recently developed two videos for that purpose, titled *Forest Water Quality* and *I Want to Log "Selectively"*. Both projects were developed with partial support from the Idaho Department of Lands, the U.S. Forest Service, and other partners. The latter video was developed with advice from loggers and thinning contractors who served on a "quality assurance committee" for the effort.

Publications are also being developed with loggers in mind. A recent example is a new Extension publication that can be used to help estimate timber removal costs under ecosystem management.

## ***Achievements***

Over 164 loggers have attended the six sessions offered in the Idaho Panhandle since 1994 (49 in 1998-99). On exit evaluations, nearly one-hundred percent of the participants indicated they would implement improved management practices as a result of attending the program. In 1998-99, nineteen loggers attended other Extension forestry programs, such as Small Scale Logging Technology, the Forest Insect and Disease Field Day, and Scaling and Marketing Private Timber.

## ***The Future***

Logger education is a hot topic in the forestry community. Two state logging associations in the Northwest have started some form of logger credential program.

Forest industry is also looking for ways to improve forestry operations on their own lands and properties they buy timber from. To this end, a number of larger Idaho forest products companies are participating in the "Sustainable Forestry Initiative," a national effort of the American Forest and Paper Association.

Partially stimulated by the initiative, a statewide logger education committee just developed a new Idaho "Accredited Logger" program. It is also referred to as the "pro-logger" program and is administered through the Associated Logging Contractors of Idaho. Among other things, the program requires participation in logger education and 32 credits of continuing education activity every two years.

In concert with these efforts, Extension will continue to provide logger education (six sessions in the Panhandle this year) and integrate logger education needs into other Extension videos, publications, field programs and workshops. Single-day field programs that address critical issues identified by loggers (such as slash treatments and compaction) will be a growing part of the mix.

## ***For More Information***

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