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WSU Extension Puget Sound Forest Stewardship E-Newsletter

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The WSU Extension Puget Sound Forest Stewardship E-Newsletter is sent out periodically as news and announcements become available. Please feel free to forward and share this information with others who may be interested.

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Forester's Notes

The calendar says February, but it sure feels more like April, doesn't it? We have already had a great start to the year. Both the Country Living Expo and the Family Forest Expo were huge successes, and I got to see many of you at those events and meet some new faces as well. I also enjoyed the wonderful turnout we had at the Forest Stewardship Social last month. Speaking of which, in case you didn't already get the message – **the social that was planned for tomorrow (2/23) has been cancelled.** The timing didn't work for most folks, so we're going to skip this one and hold out for the one in May. **Save the date for the next social on Wednesday May 5th.**

The next big event is Ties to the Land – see below for details. I need to order the class materials soon, so if you've been thinking about this, please register soon. This is a great opportunity to meet informally with estate planning attorneys, and the workshop will include a lot of practical, hands-on exercises. I hope you will consider attending – it is one of the best and most important workshops we offer.

In the meantime, there's lots to do out in the woods. We're well into planting season, and the annual Conservation District plant and tree sales are just around the corner. It's also a great time to think about other needs for your forest, such as vegetation control and forest health – read on for some helpful tips on all these subjects.

Kevin W. Zobrist
WSU Area Extension Educator
Serving King, Snohomish, and Skagit Counties

Ties to the Land

Planning the long-term future of your land is perhaps the single most important thing you can do as a land steward. However, **two out of three** landowners **never** discuss their plans for succession with anyone in their families. The Ties to the Land estate planning workshop is designed to help family forest owners broach this subject, covering everything from family communication to legal logistics.

This two-part class will be held Thursday March 11 and April 1 from 6 – 9:30 PM at Hadley Hall (Arlington Boys and Girls Club) in Arlington. It is never too early to develop an estate plan. Estate planning can be far from your mind when everyone is healthy and you are not facing an imminent death or serious illness in the family, but this is the best time to do it.

This award-winning class includes practical, hands-on exercises to help you get started and plan for a smooth process. The class also includes a Q&A discussion with panel of local estate planning attorneys. **This is a great opportunity to ask your burning questions while not paying hourly attorney fees!** Not only that, but after the workshop sessions you'll have a much better idea of what questions to ask.

Cost is \$75, which covers the whole family and includes materials. Partial scholarships are also available. For more information and registration visit <http://snohomish.wsu.edu/forestry/TTL2010.htm> or call 425-357-6017. **Registration deadline is March 3, 2010.**

Other Forestry Events of Interest (non-WSU)

Note: the events below are not WSU or WSU Extension events. Some WSU Extension newsletters provide links to external sites and events for the convenience of users. These external

sites and events are not managed by the WSU Extension. Furthermore, WSU Extension does not review, control or take responsibility for the content of these sites and events, nor do these sites and events implicitly or explicitly represent official positions and policies of WSU Extension.

- **Timber Tax Webinar** – Connect online for a **free** Timber Tax Webinar. Timber tax experts from the Forest Service and IRS will talk about tax filing tips for 2010, new tax forms, new tax incentives, and timber tax regulation changes. The webinar will be offered from 9 – 10:30 AM Pacific Time on two dates: Wed **Feb 24** and Wed **Mar 17**. No registration required – simply log in to <http://forestrywebinar.net>
- **Sustaining Our Northwest World: Climate, Forests and Future** – The University of Washington School of Forest Resources and College of the Environment will host this fascinating lecture from 7 – 8 PM on **March 11** in Kane Hall 120 on the UW Campus in Seattle. The lecture will feature Dr. Dave Peterson, Forest Service scientist, UW Professor and co-Nobel Prize winner. Many of you will recognize Dr. Peterson as one of our excellent Coached Planning instructors for soils and fire.

This lecture is free and open to the public, but advance registration is requested. You can register by calling UW Alumni Association at 206-543-0540 or toll free at online at 1-800-AUW-ALUM or online at

http://go.washington.edu/uwaa/events/2010coenv_cofs_lecture/details.tcl

- **Bobcats** - Join the Adopt-A-Stream Foundation and Snohomish County Parks & Recreation for a talk on Bobcats, their local habitats, feeding habits, and family structure. 1 – 3 PM Saturday **March 6** at the Northwest Stream Center right here at McCollum Park (600 128th St SE Everett). Tickets are \$7; call 425-316-8592 to register.

Conservation District Plant Sales

We are well into planting season now. A great place to get the native trees and shrubs you are looking for is the native annual plant sale hosted by your local conservation district. This is also a great opportunity to get to know some of the folks at your local conservation district and see what conservation districts are all about. Here are some upcoming plant sale dates in this area:

- **King County** – March 5th – 6th in Renton. For information contact Jacobus Saperstein at 425-282-1912 or visit http://www.kingcd.org/pro_native.htm.
- **Skagit County** – March 19th – 20th and April 10th in Bow. Pre-orders taken until February 26th. For information call 360-428-4313 or visit <http://www.skagitcd.org/>.

- **Snohomish County** (also serving Camano Island) – March 5th – 6th in Monroe. For information call Tammy at 425-335-5634, ext. 114 or visit <http://www.snohomishcd.org/plant-sale>.
- **Whatcom County** – March 20th in Bellingham. Pre-orders taken until March 5th. For information call 360-354-2035 ext. 3 or visit <http://www.whatcomcd.org/PlantSale/PlantSale.html>.
- **Whidbey Island** – February 24th in Greenbank. For information call 360-678-4708 or visit <http://whidbeyislandconservationdistrict.farming.officelive.com/plantsale.aspx>.

Also, DNR has lots of trees available this year at the **Webster nursery**. This is another great option for seedlings, especially if you need larger quantities. Rumor has it that western redcedar is in particularly good supply this year, so if cedar is on your list it may be worth checking out what deals are available from DNR. You can contact the Webster Nursery Customer Service Rep, Bill Taylor, at bill.taylor@dnr.wa.gov or toll-free at 1-877-890-2626.

2009 Forest Health Highlights

Below are some excerpts from the summary section of the 2009 Washington Forest Health Highlights, courtesy of Glenn Kohler, DNR Forest Entomologist. The full report is available online at

http://www.dnr.wa.gov/Publications/rp_fh_2009_forest_health_highlights.pdf

You can also look at maps of the annual aerial insect and disease survey at

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/nr/fid/as/quad09/index.shtml>

- Washington has nearly 22 million acres of forestland. In 2009, over 1.73 million acres of this land contained elevated levels of tree mortality, tree defoliation, or foliar diseases. This is an increase from the 1.36 million acres reported in 2008.
- Drought conditions and warm, dry spring weather tend to increase tree stress and insect success, driving acres of damage up. Wet spring weather tends to increase acres affected by foliage diseases. 2009 was an abnormally dry year for eastern Washington with moderate drought conditions in north central Washington. Areas with major wildfires are not surveyed the year after the event, tending to temporarily decrease acres of damage. 2009 was a below normal fire season in terms of acres burned.
- Almost 6.4 million trees were recorded as recently killed.
- Defoliation by the **Douglas-fir tussock moth** increased to more than 3,500 acres in 2009 from 300 acres in 2008. The outbreak covers numerous discrete areas east and west of Oroville in northern Okanogan County. A buildup of parasites

and virus in the tussock moth population may slow the expansion of defoliated acres in the Oroville area in 2010. Very light defoliation and egg masses have been observed in the Methow Valley.

- In western Washington, there were almost 33,000 acres with **Douglas-fir beetle**-killed trees in 2009. This is the highest number of acres that has been recorded in western Washington in three decades of aerial survey data collection. Douglas-fir beetle breeding in large amounts of windthrown Douglas-fir trees from recent windstorms is likely contributing to their increased population. Statewide, there were 80,000 acres with Douglas-fir beetle caused mortality.
- The area affected by **western spruce budworm** defoliation in 2009 decreased only slightly to 412,000 acres from 451,000 acres in 2008. Defoliation continues to be widespread along the eastern slopes of the North Cascades in western Kittitas County, Chelan County, and Okanogan County. As predicted by an increase in pheromone trap catches, the area of defoliation has expanded in northeastern Washington (eastern Okanogan County and western Ferry County). A previous outbreak in the Mt. Adams area and northwestern Yakima County has almost completely subsided.
- **Pine bark beetle** activity continues across eastern Washington where almost 420,000 acres of forest lands were observed with some current beetle-kill. Elevated levels of mortality were observed east of North Cascades National Park extending into the Loomis State Forest, on mountain ranges east and west of Lake Chelan, in mountainous areas of Ferry, Stevens, and Pend Oreille Counties, in the upper Yakama Indian Reservation, and in the Naches River watershed area. Smaller areas of pine bark beetle activity are scattered across Spokane County and the lower tree line forests of Klickitat County.
- Approximately 2,400 acres with new **wind damage** was recorded statewide in 2009. This is less than one tenth the amount of wind damage observed in 2008 caused by the severe winter storm of 2007.

What's Ailing My Trees?

Forest health is a very popular topic. In fact, in a survey I did three years ago of North Puget Sound forest owners, it was the number one topic of interest (out of thirty!). Forest health also gets a lot of media attention. I frequently get questions from folks wondering what's ailing their trees. I am always glad to at least try to answer these questions.

Because of all the media attention, it is often assumed that bark beetles are the guilty culprits when it comes to forest health problems. In Eastern Washington, this may well be the case. In the summary above, you can see that pine bark beetles a growing problem east of the mountains.

Here in the Puget Sound area, though, bark beetles are rarely an issue. An exception might be the Douglas-fir Beetle. Even this insect will only be a problem under certain

isolated conditions. Douglas-fir beetles usually attack trees that are already dead/down. If there is significant storm damage with a large amount of blow-down that is not dealt with, Douglas-fir beetles may breed and elevate such that they begin to attack the surrounding live trees. This does happen (note above that 33,000 acres were affected by this in 2009), but it is not common (33,000 out of 22 million really isn't much!) and shouldn't be a problem unless you leave huge amounts of blow-down on the ground for a couple years.

So what are some more likely culprits? Oftentimes, it isn't insects or diseases at all, but animal damage. If you have a chance to look at the online insect and disease aerial survey maps (see link above), you'll notice that around the North Puget Sound area, one of the most common causes of mortality is bear damage (those of you who have this problem know this all too well).

I also frequently get calls from people who have perfect 3/8-inch holes drilled all over their trees (almost looks like machine-gun fire). Bark beetles is a good guess, but the culprit here is actually a bird – a sapsucker who may have decided that one of your trees is its preferred “café.”

Another very common forest health issue here in the Puget Sound area is root rot. The three most common root rots are Laminated Root Rot, Armillaria, and Annosus. Root rot occurs in “pockets,” with dead trees in the middle surrounded by trees in various stages of decline. The disease spreads slowly outward through underground root contact.

Is root rot a problem? Not necessarily. Root rot is a natural part of our forest ecosystems. It plays an important ecological role of mixing up species and providing structure and habitat. However, this may not fit with your objectives, especially if you are growing trees for timber production or if the diseased trees are near your home such that they are a hazard.

So what do you do about things like root rot? The bad news is that there is no cure – if a tree is infected, it will ultimately die (though how long that takes varies widely). The good news is that root rot only affects certain species. True firs, hemlocks, and Douglas-fir are particularly susceptible. Western redcedar, western white pine, and hardwoods like red alder are resistant or immune (depending on the type of rot). Replacing susceptible species with resistant species (cedar is usually a good choice) is a good long-term management strategy.

Another frequent cause of tree ailments is the weather – too hot, too cold, too wet, or perhaps most common – too dry. Drought is often a problem throughout Washington. Your best defense against these types of problems is to make sure you plant trees that are appropriate for your site (e.g. Douglas-fir for drier sites, cedar for wetter sites). A good resource to learn about what trees are appropriate for what types of sites is a WSU Extension Bulletin called “Trees of Washington.” You can find this online at <https://cru84.cahe.wsu.edu/ItemDetail.aspx?ProductID=13321> or you can call WSU Publications at 509-335-2857 or toll-free at 1-800-723-1763.

Want to learn more about root rots, Douglas-fir beetles, or other forest health issues? We have lots of resources on our website. Take a look in particular at:

- <http://snohomish.wsu.edu/forestry/resources.htm#disease>
- <http://snohomish.wsu.edu/forestry/resources.htm#insect>

Vegetation Management

I often get asked what the best way to take care of young seedlings is. Fertilizer? It probably won't hurt and you may get a growth boost and some rich green foliage, but it probably isn't necessary unless you've actually tested your soil and found some sort of deficiency. Watering? Again, it probably won't hurt and if things get really dry for the first summer it may help while the new trees are getting used to the site. But here as well it probably isn't necessary if you've planted properly, planted at the right time of year, and planted a site-appropriate species.

Rather, I think vegetation management is the most important factor for ensuring the success of your reforestation project. Too often people plant trees and walk away, only to come back a few years later to find their young trees overcome by weeds and brush. The weeds and brush compete for critical resources, such as water, nutrients, and ultimately sunlight. Weeds can form an impenetrable thatch that block water from getting to your tree roots. Weeds can also harbor rodents such as mice and voles that kill young trees.

This month's DNR-SFLO newsletter features an excellent article on vegetation management. You can read this online at http://www.dnr.wa.gov/Publications/fp_sflo_newsletter_201002.pdf you can also request a copy from the SFLO or sign up to receive their newsletter directly by emailing SFLO@dnr.wa.gov or calling 360-902-1400.

Coached Planning in 2010

Many of you are interested in Forest Stewardship Coached Planning, our flagship course on forest stewardship and management plans. We will not be having our typical winter and spring classes this year, as this time will be used to develop a new online version of the course that will be able to be offered more often and to many more participants. Our regular Coached Planning class will return in the fall somewhere in northeast King County.

Tidbits

Here are some other items of interest:

- A new guide on the **USDA Farm Bill** is available to woodland owners. The Farm Bill greatly expanded opportunities for woodland owners to participate in USDA programs. This guide will assist woodland owners in understanding the maze of technical and financial assistance programs. The guide is available at http://nacdnet.org/news/publications/forestrynotes/reports/farm_bill_for_woodland_owners.pdf
- State and federal agencies are predicting **drought conditions** in Washington this year. Winter temperatures have been above average and precipitation has been below average, resulting in snow pack levels far below normal.
- The Forest Service has developed an online short course called "**Adapting to Climate Change: A Short Course for Land Managers.**" This is an opportunity for anyone to get science-based information on climate change. The course is freely available online at <http://www.fs.fed.us/ccrc/hjar/>, or you can order a DVD version by calling 503-261-1211 and requesting PNW-GTR-789.
- **Don't feed coyotes** – here is an excerpt from WDFW's "Crossing Paths" newsletter:

"Coyotes, which live throughout the state in both rural and urban areas, breed in late winter and by early spring are feeding pups. You may see coyotes almost anywhere in Washington, including in suburban and even urban areas.

Enjoy watching them, but don't feed coyotes, either intentionally or by allowing them access to food such as garbage and pet food.

Earlier this year, WDFW officials had to euthanize a coyote that had become aggressive toward people in Seattle's Discovery Park and the nearby Magnolia neighborhood. The animal's bold behavior indicated it had learned to associate humans with food.

Normally, coyotes avoid people but they may become habituated to humans- and abnormally bold-if they are intentionally fed or find food near human residences. While most people don't directly feed coyotes, many unwittingly leave food that draws these opportunistic omnivores.

Unsecured garbage or compost piles can be a food source for coyotes or for smaller animals that are prey for coyotes. Secure garbage and compost bins with tight fitting covers. Don't let spilled seed pile up under bird feeders. Don't leave pet food outside.

Protect cats and small dogs by keeping them indoors, especially from dusk to dawn. Coyote conflicts with off-leash dogs can increase in early spring when coyotes are more territorial, and may have their pups in tow.

Although coyote sightings and attacks on pets occur periodically throughout the state, attacks on humans are extremely rare. Only two such attacks have been documented in Washington-in 2006 a coyote bit two young children in Bellevue and was later euthanized.”

- A great new publication is available called “Tree Protection on Construction and Development Sites.” You can download this from DNR at http://www.dnr.wa.gov/Publications/rp_urban_treeprtctnguidbk.pdf

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