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WSU Extension Puget Sound Forest Stewardship E-Newsletter

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Forester's Notes

The trillium is up, the Indian plum is blooming, fiddleheads are ready to unfurl from the ferns, and the salmonberry is already beginning to put out those bright pink blossoms. The birds and frogs compete to be heard, and that woodpecker is back banging on my gutter trying to attract the ladies. The forest has woken up from its **winter slumber. I've been fortunate to visit several of your forests on spring site visits** these past couple weeks, and these visits have been marvelous in both sun and pouring down rain. Being out in the woods in any weather beats anything I might do in the office.

I hope you have been able to carve out some time to enjoy spring in your woods. I've talked to many of you who have been busy putting trees in the ground as planting season draws to a close. Now it's time to protect those seedlings. Keep a watch on the

brush as it hits its annual growth spurt and make sure your seedlings don't get overtopped. This is also a good time to monitor for any invasive weed problems and to watch for animal damage as hungry bears and deer become more active.

It is also a great time to learn new concepts and ideas and sharpen your forestry skills. We have you covered in this department, with several upcoming educational opportunities. Our spring social is coming up next month on May 13th, featuring a talk on beavers by Jake Jacobson, and of course time to share a meal, reconnect, and meet some new faces. Sign-ups are now open, so please RSVP and plan to join us in May (see details below).

Even more exciting for me is that our flagship program, Forest Stewardship Coached Planning, starts next week on April 12th. I continue to be amazed not only at the program itself, but by people's **response to it. I remember the first Coached Planning** that I facilitated back in 2007. The class went well and participants seemed happy, but I **didn't realize how participants had been affected until the last night when one by one** they shared what they had learned, what they had accomplished, and what it meant to them.

I was astounded by the obviously profound impact that the class had. These people left changed. They were different forest owners than they were before, viewing and experiencing the forest with new eyes. Having done a number of these classes now, I have learned to recognize some of this metamorphosis as it happens, watching as light bulbs go on, ideas are kindled, and concepts come together for people. Even so, I am still amazed by what I hear on the last night of every class. The comments are always the same: **"Why didn't I take this sooner?" "Everyone who owns forest should take this class." "I didn't know what I didn't know." "I just wanted a tax plan but I got so much more." "I wasn't sure about committing to 9 weeks, but it was so worth it."**

I don't think I'll ever get tired of doing this class. If you have not yet experienced this program, I invite you to come and see for yourself what the big deal is. It's not too late to get into the spring class—I still have a few spots left.

I hope to see you in class, as well as out in the woods.

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

Forest Stewardship Coached Planning

Our flagship and most popular and powerful program starts in just over a week. This 10-session practical, hands-on course will guide you through the development of your own **stewardship plan with "coaching" from the top natural resource professionals in the** state. In the process of creating a forest plan unique to your property and objectives,

you'll go in depth with us both in the classroom and in the field covering a wide range of forestry topics. Things we'll cover in detail include ecology, silvics, soils, wildlife, forest health, fire, applied silviculture, water resources, aesthetics, regulations, special forest products, working with contractors, and more. The class includes nine evening classroom sessions, a Saturday field trip, a personal site visit to your property from a professional forester and/or wildlife biologist, and a forest stewardship notebook packed with information.

Your completed forest stewardship plan may qualify you for significant property tax reductions, as well as qualify you for a whole range of cost share and other assistance programs. It will also provide you with a road map for maximizing your enjoyment of your land and minimizing the costs of ownership.

As usual we have a great set of speakers lined up who are eager to share their expertise with you. For this class we will also be rolling out our brand new forest stewardship notebooks, with lots of updates and new goodies. The class is open to all, regardless of how many acres you own or what your ownership objectives are. Space is limited, but we still have a few spots left.

For details, including the full syllabus and registration information, visit <http://snohomish.wsu.edu/forestry/CP11Everett.htm> or call 425-357-6017. Persons with a disability requiring special accommodations while participating in this program should call WSU Extension at 425-357-6017 to request accommodation in advance.

Spring Potluck Social

Another favorite program is coming up this spring. Join us from 6:30 – 9:00 PM on Friday May 13th (a lucky day!) at our usual location at the Snohomish County Extension building in south Everett. Come and enjoy great food, see old friends, meet new friends, and enjoy an after-dinner education program. Our featured speaker will be local beaver expert Jake Jacobson who will be talking all about beavers and their role on the landscape. **We'll also have a "virtual tree farm tour" from a local forest owner.** RSVP now at <http://snohomish.wsu.edu/forestry/social2011May.htm> or by calling 425-357-6017. Persons with a disability requiring special accommodations while participating in this program should call WSU Extension at 425-357-6017 to request accommodation in advance.

On the Horizon

We have a number of educational events planned through the rest of the year. Here is **what's coming up:**

- Spring Coached Planning, Everett, April 12th – June 7th (Registration is open)
- Spring Social, Everett, May 13th (Registration is open)

- Native tree and plant ID, Whidbey Island, late spring (Details TBA)
- Firewise: Protecting your home and woods from wildfire, Arlington area, early summer (Details TBA)
- Summer Twilight Tour, Monroe, July 14th (save the date)
- Summer Twilight Tour, Camano Island, July (details TBA)
- Summer Twilight Tour, Carnation, July (details TBA)
- Summer Twilight Tour, Sedro Woolley, July (details TBA)
- Kids and Families Natural Resources Field Day, Everett, July 27th (save the date)
- Whidbey Forest Field Day, Coupeville, September 10th (save the date)
- Trail Building Workshop, Arlington, Fall (details TBA)
- Special Forest Products: Fall edibles, Mount Vernon, Fall (details TBA)
- Dealing with wind damage in your forest, Whidbey Island, October (details TBA)
- Fall Coached Planning, Preston, September 20th – November 8th (Save the date)
- Fall Social, Everett, October 28th (Save the date)
- Special Forest Products: Holiday greens, Mount Vernon, Late Fall (details TBA)

Market Update

This is a new short feature on current log prices in the Puget Sound area based on DNR's monthly Timber Sale Query reports.

With the exception of alder, which declined slightly, log prices for all species were up significantly in March, achieving their highest levels since before January 2010 (which is the earliest available online data). The average price in March for Douglas-fir was close to \$600, with hemlock and other whitewoods approaching \$500. Redcedar was over \$1,100. Alder checked in at \$436, though higher grades will still fetch up to \$600.

For an updated price graph, please visit

<http://snohomish.wsu.edu/forestry/documents/LogPrices.pdf>

Forestry in the News

- *The Daily Herald* in Everett featured a wonderful article about local forest owners and Coached Planning graduates who went on to receive the statewide outstanding tree farm of the year award in 2010:
<http://www.heraldnet.com/article/20110323/NEWS01/703239833>
- *The Daily Herald* also makes note of another family of local forest owners who have been nominated for Outstanding Tree Farm of the Year in 2011:
<http://www.heraldnet.com/article/20110330/NEWS01/703309887>

- *The Seattle Times* reports on efforts to move past decades of gridlock over national forest management:
http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/localnews/2014613625_aporfederalforestfuture1stdwritethru.html
- *The Seattle Times* reports on hoopla over using biomass for energy, which would **have important implications for our state's forests**:
http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/localnews/2014572972_biomass23m.html
(Note: two editions from now, the "Focus On" feature will be on biomass as I will attempt to unpack some of the issues and separate fact from fiction)
- Finally, we have a short mention in *The Seattle Times* **about DNR's efforts to combat illegal dumping in state forests**, a problem that many of you are unfortunately all too familiar with on your own land (but now you may have a new use for your critter cam!):
http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/localnews/2014456574_apwaillegaltrashdumping.html

Tidbits

- Save the dates for the 2011 statewide Forest Owners Field Days this summer:
 - Western Washington: August 20th near Chimacum (Jefferson County)
 - Eastern Washington: June 18th near White Salmon (Klickitat County)
- **This year's sign-up** deadline for the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is August 13, 2011.
- Concerned about the condition of your western redcedars? It is not unusual for redcedar to look a little shabby at the end of winter. According to the forest health experts at WA DNR, winter rains leach the nutrients from the foliage, leaving them discolored. Cold winds can also dry the foliage out and cause "bronzing." **The trees should fully recover in the spring, though, and they are probably already well on their way to perking back up.**
- Check out these YouTube videos:
 - Brush saw demonstration from last summer, featuring Kristi McClelland:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sxQ9zyXWiag>
 - DNR Webster Nursery video:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mqla7Cj3I4M>
 - **And finally, just for fun, a video of my very own "small scale sawmill**:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ye-IOL0PzQQ>
- Help wanted: I am looking for a few photo opportunities. If you have a grand fir or pacific yew on your property, and at some point this year you see cones at the top of the grand fir or flowers or arils on the pacific yew, please let me know.

- The Marysville-Pilchuck High School FFA's annual Mother's Day Plant Sale fundraiser will be on April 30th and May 7th at the MPHS green house (5611 108th St. NE Marysville), featuring Martha Washington geraniums, fuchsias, tomatoes, and more. For more information call 360-657-6082 for more information.

Focus On: Forest Stewardship Plans

Written forest stewardship plans are strongly encouraged by WSU Extension, the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR), other federal, state, and local agencies, and private forestry organizations. Stewardship plans are the focal point of **WSU Extension and DNR's Forest Stewardship Coached Planning** education program. It is not always well understood what a forest stewardship plan is and why it is important. In this article we will explore what goes into a plan, the benefits of having a plan, and how to get a plan.

What is a forest stewardship plan?

A forest stewardship plan is a written document that establishes the landowner's intentions for the property and provides specific management guidelines for achieving the landowner's objectives. The most basic elements of a plan include a description of the landowner's specific ownership objectives, the resources present on the property and their current condition, and steps to achieve the landowner's objectives given current conditions. A forest stewardship plan may also be referred to as a forest or timber management plan, depending on the context. WSU Extension uses the term stewardship plan, as the plans we teach go well beyond timber resources, and the concept of stewardship fits well with the ecological values and multiple ownership objectives of Washington's **small forest landowners**.

It is important to understand that a forest stewardship plan is not a contract. It is a personal tool for you as the landowner, and it is free to be changed and updated as your knowledge, objectives, or circumstances change. You may choose to use the plan to participate in a certain program that may have some general management requirements, but the plan itself is not a binding document and should not be viewed as something restrictive.

What goes into a forest stewardship plan?

There are different types of forest stewardship plans with different types of required elements, depending on the intended use of the plan (e.g. to enroll the property in a specific program). The stewardship plan format recognized by the DNR and taught in the Coached Planning program is comprehensive and includes all of the required elements for the most common plan uses in Washington.

Specific elements that should be included in a forest stewardship plan include:

1. **A description of the landowner's** specific ownership objectives. These objectives may include maintenance of forest health, provision of wildlife habitat, aesthetic enjoyment, privacy, periodic income, or any combination of these or other objectives of interest to the landowner.
2. A general description of the property, including location, acreage, geographic features, history, surrounding land uses, etc.
3. An assessment of specific resources on the property, including forest health, timber, wildlife, water, soils, threatened and endangered species, cultural resources or special sites, aesthetics, and recreation opportunities.
4. **Management recommendations relative to meeting the landowner's objectives** and protecting the resources on the property.
5. A timeline for specific stewardship activities identified in the management recommendations.
6. Property maps.
7. Space for periodic updates and adaptive management considerations.

Benefits of a Forest Stewardship Plan

1. A management tool

The most basic function of a forest stewardship plan is as a management tool for you as a landowner. A plan helps you solidify your objectives and set the direction you want to go with your property. It provides a road map for achieving your goals and maximizing your enjoyment of your forest. It helps you monitor your progress and stay on track, and it provides a clear outline of what should be done when and where, which can reduce the stress and anxiety that sometimes comes with owning a complex piece of property.

2. Better communication

A forest stewardship plan facilitates communication of your objectives, intentions, and management activities. This can help you engage with family and neighbors about what you are accomplishing on your property. It can also be an invaluable guide for heirs who will someday take ownership of the property. You may also find a written plan useful when working with a natural resource agency or forestry professionals, as it will help them to better understand your goals, your values, and the unique aspects of your property.

3. Lower property taxes

One of the most common purposes for creating a plan is to meet the requirements for enrolling in a current use taxation program with the local county. Current use taxation allows forestland to be taxed for forestry use rather than highest and best use. This can reduce property taxes on forestland by up to 98%. A written plan is required. Counties usually refer to a plan in this context as a timber management plan, as these tax designations are for land used for growing and harvesting timber. See the July/August 2010 issue of this newsletter for more information on these tax programs and whether they are right for your property.

4. Third party recognition

Outside recognition of your stewardship efforts is enjoyable and rewarding. A DNR-approved forest **stewardship plan will allow you to display the coveted “Stewardship Forest” sign. A management plan can also make you eligible to be a certified forest**, either through the American Tree Farm System (ATFS), the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), or both. This gives you the opportunity to display more recognition signs on your property and in some cases may allow you to sell your wood for a premium price.

5. Cost share eligibility

You may find that some of your goals for your property are prohibitively expensive, such as replacing an undersized culvert, restoring an area that is suffering from invasive weeds or poor past management, dealing with a forest health issue, improving water quality, or reducing wildfire risk. There are several federal and state cost share programs available to help with the expense of stewardship and conservation activities, such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Depending on the program, a stewardship plan may either be either required or greatly facilitate the application and approval process.

6. Better stewardship

A written document is not required to be a good forest steward, and there are many outstanding landowners who have never created a formal plan. A written document is also not going to improve your stewardship in and of itself. However, the *process* of *creating* a written plan can significantly enhance the way you steward your property. Writing is a powerful activity that organizes, synthesizes, and cements concepts in your mind in a unique way. The process of writing a forest stewardship plan allows you to bring together all that you know about your forest and look at it in a new and integrated way that considers the forest in the context of both space (the landscape) and time. Even the most seasoned forest owner can learn (or re-learn) something important in this process and gain a fresh perspective that sharpens skills and leads to improved stewardship.

How to get a forest stewardship plan

You can get a forest stewardship plan a couple of ways. You can hire a professional forestry consultant to evaluate your property and write a plan for you. The cost of this service will depend on the size and complexity of the property. This may be a good option if you need a document quickly, such as for property tax purposes or for the sale or purchase of a forest property.

You can also write your own plan. This has a number of benefits, including a personal investment in and an intimate understanding of the plan, which can be invaluable in the implementation of the plan. Writing your own plan also offers the learning benefits of writing described above. Writing a plan is not difficult per se, but professional guidance is highly recommended to gather key technical information, do a proper assessment of your property, and develop an appropriate management strategy for meeting your goals.

The Forest Stewardship Coached Planning program offered by WSU Extension and the WA DNR is the best way to develop your own forest stewardship plan. This multi-week class allows you to **write your own plan with “coaching” from natural resource professionals** who will help you gather the information you need and identify **appropriate management strategies to meet your specific objectives. Your “coaches” will** visit your property with you, guide you in identifying problems and solutions, review and give feedback on your plan, and be an ongoing resource to answer your questions and provide assistance.

In addition to providing personal assistance with writing your plan, the Coached Planning program also provides 8–9 weeks of top quality education on ecology, forest health, wildlife, soils, silviculture, water quality, special forest products, and more. This education is integrated with the writing of your plan so that you will be able to understand the issues on your property and the science and rationale behind management solutions.

In the next issue we will focus on: Forests and Carbon.

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