

WSU Extension Puget Sound Forest Stewardship E-Newsletter

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Forester's Notes

I think all of us who own, work with, or live in wooded areas have been very sensitive to the news coming from fire lines across the west, as we feel a sort of kinship with other forest owners, no matter where they be. I just returned from a road trip that took me through Colorado, Utah, Nevada, and Idaho. It seemed like there was smoke on the horizon everywhere we went. At one point in Colorado, we came up over a hill and as the valley opened up below us, we counted no less than ten different fires burning in every direction on the horizon. There was no place we went that wasn't impacted by smoke and haze, and we passed close enough to a number of these fires to see the flames leaping skyward. With this on our minds, I am taking a quick break from our four-part series on carbon, and for this month's "Focus On" feature I will be talking about Firewise.

Also, don't forget that Twilight Tours are this week (Tuesday – Thursday), and we have three great tours lined up with perfect weather on tap. Sign up deadline is noon on the day of each tour—see below for details. Also, now is the time to sign up for fall workshops, as space is starting to fill and early registration deadlines are coming up. I hope to see you out in the woods this summer and in class this fall!

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

Summer Forest Tours – This Week

Last call for Twilight Tours! Registration deadline is noon on the day of each tour. Too sign-up, please visit <http://snohomish.wsu.edu/forestry/twilight2012.htm> or call 425-357-6017.

Our “twilight tours” don’t involve vampires, but rather long summer evenings touring local, family-owned forests. These free, family-friendly, out-in-the-woods events are a chance to share ideas, see what others are doing, and look at real examples of challenges and solutions. Each tour concludes with a potluck dessert.

Here is what we’ll see and talk about at each tour:

Tour #1: Tuesday July 10th in the Mount Vernon area

- Introduction and landowner story
- Ponds, newts, and ducks
- Riparian planting and native tree and shrub ID
- Pruning white pine
- Spruce tip weevil – causes and identification
- Creating a wildlife meadow
- Mountain beavers – damage and control options
- Growing cedar under alder
- Riparian buffers
- Bonsai and shade garden
- Pacific yew
- Christmas trees
- Digging a soil pit and examining your soil profile
- Dessert!

Tour #2: Wednesday July 11th in the Maple Valley area

- Controlling invasive holly
- Mast-producing hardwoods for wildlife
- Alder thinning – when to do it, and when it’s too late
- Laminated root rot – causes, identification, and treatment options
- Snags and wildlife
- Floral greenery
- Mature alder – harvest options and challenges
- Wetland habitat and buffers
- Commercial thinning – why, when, and how
- Cost share programs
- Dessert!

Tour #3: Thursday July 12th in the Camano Island area

- Introduction and landowner story
- Cabin in the woods
- Gardening in the woods
- Orchard in the woods
- White pine blister rust – identification and treatment
- Eric's Cedar Cathedral
- Wind damage from an adjacent clear-cut
- Thinning
- Assessing storm damage
- Cost share programs
- Dessert!

Fall Workshops

We have three great workshops coming up for you this fall.

Forestry and Wildlife Workshop

September 15th, Carnation

Join WA Department of Natural Resources Forest Stewardship Wildlife Biologist Jim Bottorff for an in-depth workshop on forestry and wildlife. Topics covered will include understanding forest wildlife habitat, protecting and enhancing habitat during forest management activities, providing supplemental habitat (e.g. nest boxes), and controlling wildlife damage to trees. Registration is open and space is limited. Details and registration information are available at <http://snohomish.wsu.edu/forestry/wildlife12.htm> or by calling 425-357-6017. **Early registration discount ends August 25th.**

Forest Health Workshop

October 6th, Everett

Join WA Department of Natural Resources forest health specialists for an in-depth workshop on forest health. Topics covered will include forest health concepts and issues, Western Washington forest insects, Western Washington forest diseases, and abiotic impacts (e.g. drought, pollution, storm damage). Registration is open and space is limited. Details and registration information are available at <http://snohomish.wsu.edu/forestry/foresthealth12.htm> or by calling 425-357-6017. **Early registration discount ends September 15th.**

Wind Damage Workshop

November 6th, Preston

Join us this fall as we get into our windy season to learn about how to properly care for your trees and your forest before (prevention) and after (clean-up) a windstorm. This is a reprise of

the popular workshop we did last year. Registration is open and space is limited. Details and registration information are available at <http://snohomish.wsu.edu/forestry/wind12.htm> or by calling 425-357-6017.

Forest Stewardship Coached Planning

Our flagship course teaches forest landowners how to prepare their own forest stewardship plan with guidance and "coaching" from natural resource professionals. A written stewardship plan may qualify you for property tax reductions and cost share assistance. You will also learn how to keep your forest healthy and productive, attract more wildlife, and achieve your specific ownership objectives.

Usually we offer this series once or twice a year, but for 2012 we have a total of four classes on tap. The Whidbey Island class is complete, we're midway through the online class (which has been a huge success), and we've got two classes coming up in the fall in Bellevue and also on Vashon (rescheduled from this spring). **Registration is open** for both the Bellevue and Vashon classes

- **Vashon: October 3rd – November 28th.** After a several-year absence, we are happy to be returning to Vashon Island this fall. Classes will be on Wednesday evenings at the Vashon Land Trust Building, and there will be two Saturday field trips. Details and registration information are available at <http://snohomish.wsu.edu/forestry/CP12Vashon.htm> or by calling 425-357-6017.
- **Bellevue: October 4th – December 6th.** Our fall class will be on Thursday evenings in southeast Bellevue this year at the Lewis Creek Park Visitor Center. This is a smaller facility, so space is more limited this year than usual. Since we've always sold out in the past (with more space), be sure to reserve your spot early for this class. Also, special discounted rates are available for City of Bellevue residents. Details and registration information are available at <http://snohomish.wsu.edu/forestry/CP12Bellevue.htm> or by calling 425-357-6017.

And save the dates for 2013 Coached Planning classes:

- **Online** (for Western WA properties) – Wednesdays January 16 – February 27
- **Everett** – Thursdays February 28 – April 25

Focus on: Firewise

The power of a wildfire is hard to grasp until you see one in person. The breadth and height of the flames, the speed of movement, and the smoke, the unbelievable smoke that churns

until the sky is black for hundreds of miles and the sunlight turns a spooky orange color. A particularly sobering aspect of the fires that have impacted places like Colorado and Utah this year is that they were not limited to the hinterlands. The fires have burned suburban areas around Colorado Springs and south of Salt Lake City. Entire neighborhoods have vaporized, and the lives of residents and firefighters have been lost.

Could these scenarios happen here? In a word, yes. It's sort of like a major earthquake—it's not a question of if, but of when and exactly where. Wildfires burn in Western Washington every year, and recent locations have included Arlington, Granite Falls, Carnation, and other communities around us. The fires have not been of the magnitude that we are seeing in the inland west. Given the right combination of conditions (which could happen in any year), though, we could see some major fires. Historically, catastrophic fires have been a major force that have shaped the forested landscape of Western Washington. Add in decades of fire suppression, climate change, a huge increase in rural residences, and the myriad of possible ignition sources, and the potential for disaster certainly exists.

I do not want these observations to generate fear. Too many environmental stewardship messages these days leverage fear to manipulate a response. I don't think there is any reason to respond to fire risk with fear or to take drastic (and unwarranted) measures such as clear-cutting all the trees or denuding the understory of the forests around us. I do, however, think that engaging in careful, educated, and well-thought-out long-term planning and management around fire is entirely appropriate.

Too many people are lulled into a false sense of security by our recent wet springs and cool summers and think (incorrectly) that fire really is not an issue here in Western Washington and does not warrant planning or action. I think just the opposite—that the cool, wet years are the ideal time to think, plan, and act on being "Firewise." Firewise planning is a lot like estate planning—it is never too early, but often too late. I imagine that many if not most of the victims of this summer's wildfires never thought it would happen to them. "*Not in my neighborhood, and not this year.*" By the time it becomes apparent that a perfect storm of conditions for is developing, it may be too late to take meaningful action. Becoming Firewise is a long-term management process that takes years of small steps (taking advantage of cool, wet conditions).

There are some key areas to think about regarding Firewise:

1. Your family. Do you have an escape plan and an emergency preparedness kit that you can quickly and easily grab and go? Does your plan account for pets and livestock?
2. Your home and other structures. What kind of materials are your roof and siding composed of? Are your roof and gutters clean or full of tinder-dry debris? Are attic and crawl space vents properly screen to keep out flying embers? Could a fire truck easily access your home and be able to turn around? Is your address clearly marked on the road?

3. Defensible space. Is there at least 30 feet of ignition-resistant landscaping to provide a fire break around your home? Are there trees dangling branches over your home? Is firewood stacked up against the siding of the house? Note that defensible space does NOT mean a barren landscape—there are number of fire-resistant plants that provide a beautiful, vegetated landscape while also mitigating fire risk. It is all about picking the right vegetation.
4. Your forest. Is it kept properly thinned? Are trees pruned up to minimize ladder fuels? Is there excess debris? Note that this does not mean eliminating all the snags, downed logs, and understory vegetation that are critical for wildlife habitat and ecosystem function. Are there fire breaks and/or fire control access roads/trails?

The impact of a Firewise landscape is extraordinary. The wild, voracious, and seemingly unstoppable fires that I witnessed these last few weeks will literally bow down to a Firewise landscape, creeping along the ground in submission to years of careful planning and good forest management. For Firewise communities that have actually experienced fire, the results have been outstanding and the photographic comparisons of untreated areas are incredible.

Here are some resources for detailed information on the Firewise program and how you and your neighborhood can get involved:

- King County Firewise (through King County DNRP): <http://www.kingcounty.gov/environment/waterandland/forestry/forestfire.aspx> or contact Kristi McClelland at 206-296-7820.
- Snohomish County and Camano Island Firewise (through the Snohomish Conservation District): <http://snohomishcd.org/firewise> or contact Leif Fixen at 425-335-5634 ext. 110.
- Skagit County Firewise (through the Skagit Conservation District): <http://www.skagitcd.org/firewise> or contact Jenny Hinderman at 360-428-4313.

All three of the sites above have different brochures, tips, and information that are broadly applicable to all counties, so it is worth visiting all three sites regardless of where you live. WSU Extension also has several great publications available. These publications are available for purchase and/or download online or by calling WSU Publications at 1-800-723-1763.

- Fire-Resistant Plants for Home Landscapes (PNW 590) - <https://pubs.wsu.edu/ItemDetail.aspx?ProductID=14993>
- Reducing Fire Risk on your Forest Property (PNW 618) - <https://pubs.wsu.edu/ItemDetail.aspx?ProductID=15404>

One final thought is that a large majority of the wildfires in Washington are the result of debris burning that got out of control. If you are planning to burn debris on your property,

make sure you are extremely careful and consult with the proper authorities (DNR and/or local fire district) to make sure that it is safe and legal burn and that you have the proper permits. If you think being the victim of a wildfire is bad, just imagine being the cause...

Tidbits

- Registration is open for the annual Western Washington Forest Owners Field Day, which will be Saturday August 18th near Olympia. For details and registration, please visit <http://extension.wsu.edu/forestry/Documents/WWAFOFD12.pdf> or call 509-667-6540.
- WSU Extension has a great new fact sheet available on climate change. I encourage everyone to read this to get a clear, concise overview of the state of the science. You can download this fact sheet at <http://cru.cahe.wsu.edu/CEPublications/FS069E/FS069E.pdf>
- A draft update to the Puget Sound Action Agenda is available. Private forests make tremendous contributions to the health of Puget Sound, and maintaining our woodlands is essential for the recovery and vitality of Puget Sound and the watersheds around it. Book 1 is a 48-page executive summary of what is going on currently, and Book 2 is the entire 654-page draft updated agenda. Both can be accessed at http://www.psp.wa.gov/action_agenda_2011_update_home.php, and I think that Book 1 is worth skimming through as it provides some important context for your forestland.
- Join the Extension Forestry Team:

Washington State University (WSU) is currently seeking to fill an Extension Regional Forestry Specialist, E-2 (equivalent to Assistant Professor), Northeast Washington Forest Stewardship. This position is a full-time, non-tenure track faculty position contingent on continuation of funding located in Spokane, Washington.

Responsible to provide leadership for forestry education and technical assistance programs for non-industrial forest landowners and natural resource professionals in the region. Required: Earned Master's Degree in forestry, natural resource management or other closely related field. Preferred: Demonstrated working knowledge of forest management, forest health, and wildfire science. Experience delivering natural resources programs and technical assistance to the public. Demonstrated ability to communicate proficiently using verbal, written, and listening skills with a wide variety of audiences. Demonstrated ability to identify a need, lead development of a program, and accomplish appropriate measured outcomes. Demonstrated familiarity with forest management tools, such as GIS and tree measurement devices. Experience and ability to deliver long-term educational programs and short-term projects using a variety of methodologies. Demonstrated competency in the use of personal computers and

software, including word processing, spreadsheet, database management, and email, digital slide presentations, and web page content. Capacity and willingness to engage diverse constituents in education programs. (Examples of diversity include gender, culture, age, sexual orientation, education level, and income). Demonstrated understanding of the needs and issues facing small forest landowners. Demonstrated ability to use distance bridging technologies to expand learning opportunities. Demonstrated ability to work independently and as part of a team member on interdisciplinary and multi-organizational teams.

Closing date: July 22, 2012. To apply visit: <https://www.wsujobs.com>. For questions about the position contact Lisa Clyde, EEO Coordinator, 509-335-2822, eeocoord@wsu.edu EEO/AA/ADA.

Subscription and Contact Info:

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Kevin W. Zobrist
Area Extension Educator, Forest Stewardship
Washington State University
600 128th St SE
Everett, WA 98208-6353
425-357-6017
kzobrist@wsu.edu
<http://snohomish.wsu.edu/forestry/>
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Extension programs and employment are available to all without discrimination. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local Extension office. Persons with a disability requiring special accommodations while participating in any of the programs described above should call WSU Extension at 425-357-6017 to request accommodation at least 21 days in advance.