

## UI Extension Provides Local Opportunities for Forestry Professional Development in the Idaho Panhandle

### *The Situation*

Forests are vital to the economy and quality of life in the Inland Northwest. They provide timber, wildlife habitat, scenic quality, recreational opportunities and many other values.

Foresters and other natural resource professionals must continually sharpen their skills and stay current with emerging scientific and technological developments to sustainably produce more wood fiber and simultaneously improve forest biodiversity, health, genetics and fertility. To that end, the forestry community has established new credentials to document foresters' efforts (e.g., The Society of American Foresters "certified forester" program).

Continuing education for foresters is available through a number of sources. However, these programs do not always fit the needs of individual foresters due to budget limitations, time and travel constraints or other factors. Extension is uniquely situated to provide *local* continuing education

opportunities for field foresters.

Teachers must also stay updated, and are always looking for local opportunities to sharpen their skills. They also value objective sources of forestry education to integrate into their classrooms.

### *Our Response*

Extension provides continuing education for foresters, teachers and other professionals in many ways. Some programs are developed directly for these audiences. Other efforts involve adjusting programs developed for forest owners and other groups to meet foresters' and teachers' needs as well.

### *NIPF Forester's Workshop*

Unique skills are required of foresters who help non-industrial private forest owners manage their property. In the past, little training was available that directly addressed their specific professional



development needs.

Since 1993, the Extension Systems of the University of Idaho and Washington State University have cooperated to hold an annual forum for consulting foresters, state-employed service foresters, and other natural resource professionals working with forest owners.

The program, titled the *NIPF Foresters Workshop*, updates participants on emerging technology and knowledge applicable to non-industrial private forestry. It alternates between northern Idaho and eastern Washington locations.

### ***Workshops, Evening Programs & Field Days***

*Strengthening Forest Stewardship Skills* is an annual series of programs focused primarily on increasing private forest owners' forest management skills. But in offering these programs, we learned something – graduate foresters were coming too! Because of this and because of some landowners' increasing skill levels from attending previous Extension programs, we have sharpened the focus of selected forest stewardship programs to meet the continuing education needs of graduate foresters as well.

For example, in 1998-99 Society of American Foresters' "continuing forestry education" credit was provided for programs such as *Current Topics in Forest Health* and *Small Scale Logging Technology*.

In response to requests from K-12 teachers, we also offer University of Idaho credit for applicable Extension programs, such as the *Forest Management Shortcourse*. This allows teachers to get credit for programs that help them integrate knowledge of local forests into their classroom.

### ***Publications, Videos***

Extension develops a wide variety of written and video resources. An increasing number of resources

are developed with field foresters and advanced private forest owners in mind.

For example, a new series of publications on ecosystem management helps foresters better manage for wildlife and other forest values. A new selective logging video is being used as a practical tool to help train timber markers and is shown in high school classrooms as well.

### ***Achievements***

Over 90 foresters attended Extension forestry programs in the Panhandle in 1998-99, for a total of 670 contact hours. In the *NIPF Forester's Workshop*, 99% of the participants indicated they would be able to work more effectively with NIPF owners as a result of the program.

Four Idaho Panhandle teachers took the forest management shortcourse for credit in 1998-99. Two teachers have used the shortcourse to develop innovative high school forestry classes. County assessor office personnel also attended Extension forestry programs, to help them better interpret forest property tax regulations.

### ***The Future***

Future Extension programming in this area will evolve to reflect emerging technologies and professional education needs in the Idaho Panhandle related to forestry.

### ***For More Information***

Chris Schnepf, Area Extension Educator  
University of Idaho, Forestry, (Boundary, Bonner,  
Kootenai, and Benewah Counties)

Kootenai County Cooperative Extension  
106 E. Dalton Ave.

Coeur d'Alene, ID 83815-7333

Phone: 208-667-6426

Fax: 208-664-4470

E-mail: [cschnepf@uidaho.edu](mailto:cschnepf@uidaho.edu)

Extension forestry web site:

[www.ets.uidaho.edu/extforest](http://www.ets.uidaho.edu/extforest)

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