

 UI Extension Forestry Information Series

Forest Stewardship: What is the Right Thing to Do?

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What is Stewardship? The term is now shorthand for a new assistance and incentive program for forest landowners. But stewardship had a meaning long before this program came about.

Most of us have at least some idea of what stewardship means. Wilford Brimley, the Idaho native whose “grandfatherly presence” graces movies and television, might tell us forest stewardship is simply “the right thing to do”. Of course, what that means on the ground may vary considerably with the eye of the beholder. Usually, the ultimate definition of forest stewardship resides with the landowner.

What does forest stewardship mean to you? Why do you own your property? What are your goals? How do you want to leave your land to future generations? You may find it helpful to consider how the experiences of others resonate with your own understanding of stewardship. One way to do this is by interacting with other forest owners at association meetings or educational programs. Another way is by reading.

Two individuals have done a great deal to lay the foundations for forest stewardship in the United States. Gifford Pinchot is the father of American forestry. He was instrumental in the origin of professional forestry, our national forest system, and the USDA Forest Service. Aldo Leopold was a forester who later did for wildlife management what Pinchot did for forestry (ex: started our country’s first college program in wildlife management). The following books written by Pinchot and Leopold are consistently cited by forest landowners, foresters, and other natural resource professionals as having helped them form and enrich their personal “land ethic”. They are available in local

libraries or can be ordered through bookstores.

- *Breaking New Ground*, by Gifford Pinchot, Conservation Classics Series, Island Press, Washington, D.C.
- *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There*, by Aldo Leopold, Oxford University Press, New York.
- *Round River and Other Essays*, by Aldo Leopold, Oxford University Press, New York.

As you decide on how to steward your forest land, you may need more specific information. Be sure to look into the many Extension publications and take advantage of professional assistance from the Idaho Department of Lands, consulting foresters, and the Soil Conservation Service, to help you translate your stewardship vision into action.

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