Economic base theory holds that local enterprises that sell goods and services to individuals or firms outside the local community form an important economic “base” for the local community. Selling goods and services outside the local community imports new money into the local economy, increasing prosperity. The timber and forest products economy in Clearwater County is a good example of this, where logs or lumber products are sold to buyers outside the community (export) which imports new money. Tourist and recreation services while maybe not as obvious a base as forest products, also imports new money into the local economy from those who reside outside the community.

The concept is often illustrated by the “rain barrel” analogy where exports that bring in outside money fill up the barrel, while the opposite process—local entities that purchase and import products from outside the community and thereby export money out of the local economy—are thought of as “leaks” that drain water out of the barrel.

Finding ways to increase exports that bring in money to the community, as well as plugging “leaks” (called import substitution) by providing products locally that were formerly purchased outside the community, are fundamental ways that the local economy can be improved. The primary goal then is to increase exports of goods and services that import new money, while...
The “Basics” of Rural Economic Development

Continued from page 1 reducing the import of goods and services that export money from the local economy.

An idea that is gaining popularity in rural development circles is based on this model of reducing the export of money from local communities by encouraging local investment. The goal is to keep local money on “main street” rather than sending it to Wall Street. A workshop on this topic is scheduled for February 18 in Moscow at the 1912 Center. The workshop is co-sponsored by U of I Extension and features the speaker Michael Shuman who has published the book: Local Dollars, Local Sense: How to Move Your Money From Wall Street to Main Street and Achieve Real Prosperity.

To register go to www.ruralroots.org. There are scholarships available for students and small businesses. For more information contact Colette DePheps at cdephelps@uidaho.edu or 208-301-4668.


Variable Density Thinning: A New Approach to Timber Harvest for Ecological & Economic Objectives

by Bill Warren

Variable density thinning is a silvicultural system developed as part of “ecological forestry” practices. It describes an approach that seeks to mimic the effects of natural disturbance in a forest stand creating greater forest complexity and habitat heterogeneity. Increasing the complexity and structural heterogeneity of a stand can create aesthetic benefits for forest owners as well as increasing wildlife and native plant diversity.

The basic approach is to create a matrix of standard thinning that is coupled with the creation of “gaps” — sites where all or most trees have been removed — and “skips” where no thinning occurs. To be most effective, and responsive to landowner’s goals, the various treatments — various degrees of thinning, gaps, and skips — can be located based on site characteristics.

For example, gaps can be created where root disease is a problem in grand fir or Douglas fir, and the site can be replanted with shade intolerant species such as pine and larch that are more resistant to root disease. Likewise, skips can be employed near wetlands, other sensitive sites, or areas that are difficult to access for harvest.

The degree of thinning employed can be determined by such things as aesthetics, the intent to graze the understory (so thinning is greater to get more sunlight to the forest floor for grass production), or help reduce shrub encroachment (where thinning is less to provide more shade discouraging shrub development). Thinned stands can seek to leave both older trees to create biological legacies that will be retained on site, as well as younger age classes to create a multi-layered stand and provide for future snag recruitment for wildlife and soil organic material.

Ultimately how you manage your forest depends on your goals. Variable density thinning is one option for creating both an economic return from your forest while at the same time improving forest health and species composition, increasing tree growth rates, while at the same time producing much of the ecological complexity created by natural disturbance in an unmanaged stand.


Contact Us!

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A Sampling of Current Log Prices from Local Mills—January 2015

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Sign up for the Clearwater County Extension Newsletter by emailing: clearwater@uidaho.edu or contact our office at 208-476-4434

Calendar of Events

February
2: Groundhog Day
10, 17, 24: Small Farms & Community Food Systems Series
14: Valentine’s Day
16: Office Closed for President’s Day
18: Pesticide Applicator Licensing Exam

March
Rural Land Purchasing 101 Series
17—18: LEAP Update
17: St. Patrick’s Day

April
Conducting Your Own Timber Sale Series
5: Easter
15: Tax Day
22: Administrative Professionals Day