

IMPACT

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Idaho Master Forest Stewards Spread Better Forestry in 2013-2014

AT A GLANCE

Idaho Master Forest Stewards are volunteers trained and certified by UI Extension who provide educational assistance to forest owners and others interested in forestry.

The Situation

Over 2 million acres of Idaho forests (over 40% of the forests in many northern Idaho counties) are owned and managed by nearly 80,000 family forest owners. Family forests are critical to timber supply, water, wildlife, and many other shared values. The number of family forest owners is increasing due to timber companies selling forest lands and property splits. Unfortunately, there are fewer public and private foresters to help forest owners manage their forests.

Our Response

One way to increase the capacity to give more family forest owners more forestry knowledge and skills is through a master volunteer program.

Extension programs have long developed master gardeners, 4-H leaders, and other volunteers to help spread current, research-based knowledge. In 2008, UI Extension received a grant through the Idaho Department of Lands to develop the Idaho Master Forest Stewards (IMFS) program to improve the growth and health of Idaho forests through forestry education by trained and certified volunteers.

A steering committee of 16 forest owners provided the initial guidance to the program in two one-day retreats. The resulting program consists of 70 hours of training, including:

- Existing UI Extension programs such as "The Forestry Shortcourse" and field days on thinning



Idaho Master Forest Stewards learning about protecting forest streams at their 3rd core training session

& pruning, insects and disease, and forest measurement;

- four one-day IMFS "core" sessions, with content on native understory plants, invasive species, riparian ecology, and adult and extension education methods; and.
- a case study where trainees spend a day with a natural resource professional and write a 2-page case study of what they learn.

In return for their training, certified Idaho Master Forest Stewards provide at least 70 hours of volunteer service over 2 years.

Program Outcomes

Thirty-four people are certified in the IMFS program as of November 2014. In a 145 item IMFS pre- and post- knowledge and experience assessment, trainees have demonstrated percentage knowledge increases

of 5% to 50% over the course of the training.

In the last year, Idaho Master Forest Stewards provided over 1,400 hours of total volunteer service to over 1,300 forest owners and other adults and over 1,930 youth. In addition to interacting with individual peer forest owners, Idaho Master Forest Stewards have volunteered in a wide range of activities, including: hosting and teaching at forest owner field educational programs; writing articles for newspapers and magazines; teaching youth about forests and forestry; and serving in leadership positions in the Idaho Forest Owner Association, Idaho Tree Farm Program, and Conservation Districts.

The Idaho Master Forest Stewards program is built on a philosophy of shared leadership between the volunteers and University of Idaho Extension. Volunteers are guiding the IMFS program's continuing evolution. For example, in 2014 they met twice to discuss ongoing IMFS program development, share ongoing volunteer experiences, participate in field trips to learn about other master forest stewards' forest management practices, archeology related to the Nez Perce people; tribal fisheries management, and efforts to grow genetically improved ponderosa pine seed.

The Future

Idaho Master Forest Stewards will continue to help sustain Idaho's forests. They will also inform the forestry community about family forest owners' needs and help guide University of Idaho extension and research programs and technical assistance efforts of public and privately employed foresters.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

- Idaho Department of Lands



FOR MORE INFORMATION

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