

impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

UI Extension empowers hundreds of families to manage forests in 2022-2023

AT A GLANCE

Family-owned forests are critical in northern Idaho counties. UI Extension provides education that helps these forest owners keep their forests healthy and productive.

The Situation

Roughly 44% of the forests in the Idaho Panhandle (Boundary, Bonner, Kootenai, Benewah and Shoshone counties) are held and managed by 23,796 family forest owners (owning five acres or more).

Family forests are critical to timber supply, water, wildlife and many other shared values. For example, family forests tend to be more concentrated near key locations for ecosystem functions (e.g., along lakes, streams and in increasingly rare low elevation wildlife habitats).

Since 1987, the average annual timber harvest from these forests in the Idaho Panhandle has been over 167 million board feet, valued at over \$100 million milled. Family forests have provided 28% of the timber harvest in 10 northern counties of Idaho since 1997.

Family forest owners usually have multiple goals for their property. With a better working knowledge of forest ecology, silviculture and related forest management techniques; family forest owners can sustainably produce more wood and biomass and simultaneously improve forest health, water quality, wildlife habitat and other forest values.



Family forest owners learning about forest insects and disease at a University of Idaho Extension program.

Our Response

As part of the Idaho Forest Stewardship program, a cooperative effort with the Idaho Department of Lands and many other partners, UI Extension provides an annual series of workshops, field days and other educational activities titled *Strengthening Forest Stewardship Skills*. The activities are designed to strengthen forest owners' ability to implement practices that improve forest health and growth. They are offered in a variety of locations and times.

Forest owners can also choose from over 140 forestry Extension publications available through local UI Extension offices. UI Extension videos on water quality, "selective" logging and forest tax management, provide additional learning resources. Finally, the UI

Extension Forestry website offers a large archive of short forestry publications on a variety of topics and a calendar of upcoming forestry education opportunities.

Program Outcomes

In 2022-2023, 628 owners of 33,594 family forest acres attended UI Extension workshops and other educational activities in the Idaho Panhandle. Participants indicated knowledge increases averaging 73%. They also indicated they would implement many improved forest management practices. For example:

- 312 will favor tree species that resist insects and disease;
- 278 forest owners will monitor for insect, disease or animal damage issues;
- 128 will identify Idaho trees;
- 124 will thin forest trees;
- 83 will attend additional forestry education programs;
- 78 will reduce fuels in home ignition zone;
- 77 will contact a forester or other natural resource professional for additional assistance;
- 77 will make houses easier for firefighters to identify and access;
- 68 will prune forest trees;
- 65 will monitor/manage weeds or other non-native invasive species;
- 63 will reduce unwanted vegetation;
- 59 will create biochar;
- 48 will complete a forest management plan;
- 44 will apply biochar in forests;
- 60 will apply biochar in a garden or landscape;
- 30 will purchase a compass; and
- 29 will use a compass to identify and record locations on their forest

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Chris Schnepf, Area Extension Educator, Panhandle Forestry • University of Idaho Extension • 208-292-1288 • cschnepf@uidaho.edu

46-23-cschnepf-family-forests • 10/23

In 2016, the University of Idaho Policy Analysis Group surveyed 2,869 Idaho forest owners. Compared to other forest owners, those who sought assistance from UI Extension had taken significantly more management actions on their forests and planned to do more activities in the next five years. Forest owners who had completed an 18-hour, six session UI Extension program titled “The Forestry Shortcourse” were significantly more likely to have completed 12 different forest management practices (e.g. thinning, planting) than respondents who had not. Shortcourse participants were also much more likely to have a written forest management plan for their property (73% of shortcourse participants had a written forest management plan, compared to 25% of forest owners had not completed the shortcourse). Complete results of that survey are available at uidaho.edu/cnr/policy-analysis-group.

The Future

The improved management practices family forest owners implement because of knowledge and skills gained in UI Extension programs will increase wood and biomass to fuel Idaho’s economy, maintain water quality, reduce catastrophic fire risk, improve forest growth and health, and enhance biological diversity.

Strengthening Forest Stewardship Skills will continue to be offered annually, along with new publications, internet content and other efforts to help Idaho Panhandle family forest owners manage their forests more effectively.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

- Idaho Department of Lands
- U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Districts
- Idaho Department of Fish and Game