

## Woods Forum Programs: *Informing Landowner Decisions through Peer Learning*



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## What do we want from landowners?

*(a.k.a What makes a "good" landowner)*

- Work with a professional forester
- Develop a written management plan
- Implement the recommendations in the plan
- Stay involved & renew their plan



## What do landowners want from their land?

### *Top 5 Reasons for owning land (North)*

- To enjoy beauty or scenery
- Part of home or vacation home
- Privacy
- To protect nature and biological diversity
- To pass land on to children or other heirs



## How do we currently reach landowners?

- |   |                        |
|---|------------------------|
| ■ FSP   | ■ WHIP                 |
| ■ Tree Farm   | ■ LIP                  |
| ■ Current Use (Mandatory<br>mgt. plan & harvesting) | ■ EQUIP                |
| ■ FSC/SFI   | ■ FLEP                 |
| ■ SIP   | ■ Educational Programs |
| ■ FIP   | ■ Others????           |



## Management Plans !

## How is it working?

*(North Region)*

- 4% of landowners have a management plan (NWOS).
- Almost 2% “Do not remember” if they have a management plan (NWOS).
- 1.3% of landowners owning 4-6% of NIPF lands are enrolled in the Forest Stewardship Program (FSP).
- 34% of landowners that have harvested “received professional consultation” regarding their last harvest (NWOS).
- Forest Landowner Outreach Programs (FLOP).

## Why????

# Comparing Goals

## Foresters

- Work with a professional
- Plan their future management
- Implement their plan
- Stay involved & renew plan

Do landowners need a management plan or active management to reach these goals?

## Landowners

- To enjoy beauty or scenery
- Part of home or vacation home
- Privacy
- To protect nature and biological diversity
- To pass land on to children or other heirs

# Comparing Timelines

## Foresters

- Long-term (years/decades)
- MAI/PAI
- Overstory removals
- Timber markets
- Stand development



## Landowners

- Short-term
- What is for dinner tonight?
- What do you want to do this weekend?
- When is school vacation?

January	February	March
April	May	June
July	August	September
October	November	December

**Are we making the progress we want?**

**What will happen if  
we keep doing the same thing?**

**Will we reach our goals  
given the current trajectory?**

## **Common Outreach Assumptions**

**False**

- Professionals know what landowners need to learn to be “good” stewards
- Professionals are the most credible source of information

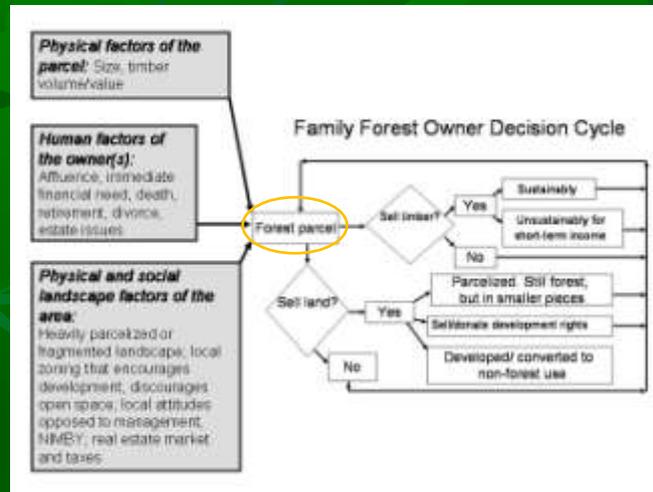
**We need to get  
out of our rut!**



**A different perspective on  
landowners and their decisions**

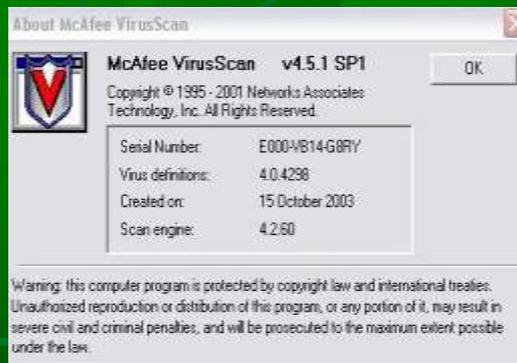
## Decision Cycle

- Day-to-day, most landowners simply enjoy their land



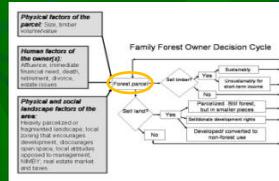
Kittredge, D.B. 2004. Extension/outreach implications for America's Family Forest owners. *Journal of Forestry* 102(7): 15-18.

## Land “runs” in the background



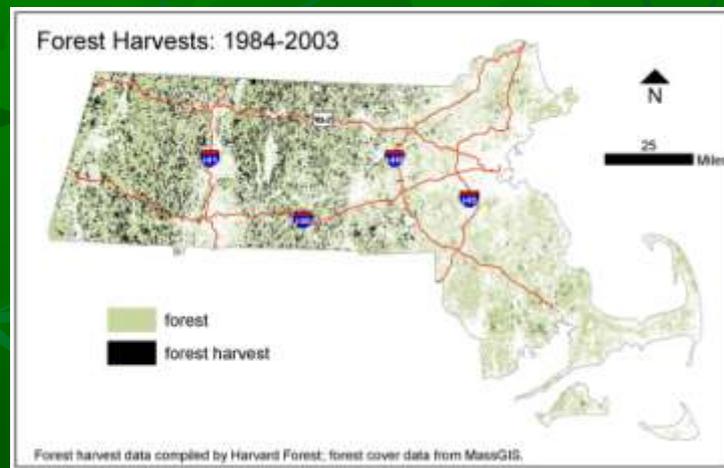
The image shows the State Farm Insurance website navigation bar. On the left is the State Farm logo with 'INSURANCE' written below it. To the right of the logo is the slogan 'Like a good neighbor, State Farm is there.®'. Below the slogan are several navigation buttons: 'WELCOME', 'MY ACCOUNT', 'INSURANCE', 'BANKING', and 'MUTUAL FUNDS'. Underneath these buttons are links for 'login', 'register', 'getting started', 'sitemap', and 'contact us'.

## Land contributes valuable personal and public benefits during these “do nothing” periods....



so they're meeting their needs AND being "GOOD" landowners

## Despite reasons for owning land, guess what happens....



# It is critical to be there when decisions are being made!

**Physical factors of the parcel:** Size, timber volume, value

**Human factors of the owner(s):** Affluence, inheritance, financial need, death, retirement, divorce, estate issues

**Physical and social landscape factors of the area:** Heavily parcelized or fragmented landscape, local zoning that encourages development, discourages open space, local policies supportive of management, NIMBY, real estate market, land uses

**Family Forest Owner Decision Cycle:**

- Forest parcel?
  - Yes
    - Sell land?
      - Yes: Uncertainty for what term source
      - No: Parcelized still forest, but in smaller pieces
    - Sell timber?
      - Yes: Uncertainty for what term source
      - No: Development converted to non-forest use
  - No: Development converted to non-forest use

# These decisions are shaping our landscapes!

# Don't try to convince them when they are simply enjoying their land!

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**So how do we inform the  
decisions shaping our landscape?**

**When decisions do arise,  
landowners often turn to friends  
and neighbors.**



**Not management plans**

## Why Friends and Neighbors?

- Trusted, shared values
- Unbiased
- First Hand Experience
- Know Local Information
- Available for time sensitive decisions



## Peer Learning

- Using the people that landowners naturally turn to for information.
- Developing community networks of information sources.



## What is peer learning?

- Spreads information through formal or informal social networks;
- Involves two-way (or more) communication;
- Recognizes that every participant can be a teacher and a learner;
- Is community- and participant-driven; and
- Can occur through either an ongoing forum or one-time exchange.

## What Peer Learning is NOT

- Lectures or traditional expert-driven workshops;
- Fee for service; or
- One-way communication through fact sheets, publications, or websites.

There are many people in a community that can help landowners make an informed decision.



When decisions aren't being made...  
build trust and the conservation network!!!



## Connecting Landowners can take place...

- Informally, such as neighbors talking over the fence: *Dump, Post Office, General Store*
- Through Internet-based tools, such as discussion boards
- **Formally, through facilitated events**

## Professionals are Important Too!

- Learn information
- Get options
- Expert opinion



**“I need the information AND a friend to talk to about it”**



**Conservation is about people,  
NOT programs**

## **What is a Woods Forum**

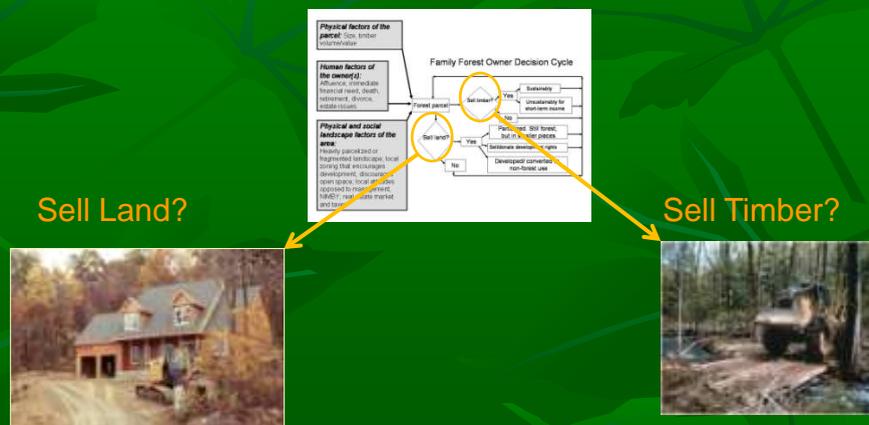
*“Create the Space”*

- Facilitated program where landowners can share their knowledge and experiences with each other
- Self-directed
- Opportunity to meet local foresters and land trusts who can help them with their decisions.
- Help build a local network of conservation aware people
- Attract the other “96%”

## A Woods Forum is NOT

- A workshop where landowners are “students”, there to be “taught”
- NOT meant to increase management plans!!!!

## Focus on Decision Points



## Who is at a Woods Forum

- Landowners (all types)
- Local Service forester
- Local Consulting foresters
- Local Land trust



## Format

- 15 – 20 minutes of presentation
- Presentation: timber harvesting and land conservation case studies
- ~ 60 minutes - Q & A – **What's on your mind?**
- 10 minutes of closing slides, primarily resources
- Need some content, but focus on discussion
- Example presentation on [www.MassWoods.net](http://www.MassWoods.net)

## Woods Forum Presentation

### Collective Wisdom

*We all have a part of the answer*

- Resource professionals know facts
- Each landowner has a unique set of circumstances (e.g., values, financial, family)
- Each landowner has a unique set of knowledge, experience, and relationships.





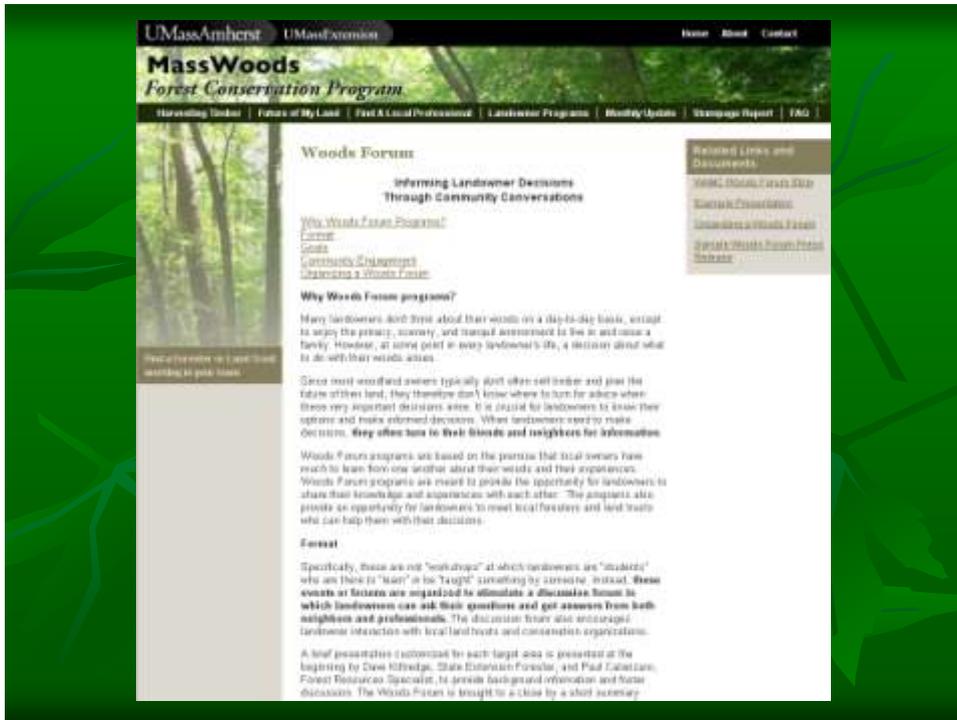
## Research to Evaluate Success

- One year after the program, participants (68) from four WF programs were mailed a survey. 58 responded.
- Avg. rating 4 of 5 (5 being very useful)
- 72% were correctly able to identify a service forester
- 81% were able to correctly identify a land trust
- All but one had passed on information or would to a fellow landowner

## Selected Survey Quotes

- “Excellent program: low-key, unpressured, very effective. I appreciated meeting local people interested in the same thing.”
- “Excellent method of information transfer. Keep it casual! Landowners feel more comfortable and it is easier to participate.”
- “The information presented was easy to understand. The tone of the meeting was inviting. Encouraging audience participation was key.”

# www.MassWoods.net



## More Models Needed!

- This is just what we developed, you are welcome to use it, but....
- We need to develop more methods that rely on science and experience....we need to get out of the rut!
- How can YOU take the information and use it?
- Share the information!!!

