

Initiative: Forest Conservation

Project Leader: Paul Catanzaro

Project Overview

There are over 47,000 family forest owners who own 10 or more acres of land, living in 351 communities across Massachusetts. I am charged with increasing forest conservation by informing the decisions of these 47,000 landowners across the state who collectively own 70% of our forests. I have a 9-month appointment with a **50% extension allocation**. That translates into .4 FTE dedicated to reaching the family forest owners deciding the future of our landscapes. In order to effectively inform these decisions in my limited time, I focus on research-based outreach strategies that can amplify my efforts and am strategic on the critical issues I address. Below are descriptions of my main extension initiatives.

2017 Environmental Service Award

Dave Kittredge and I were awarded the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions' (MACC) 2017 Environmental Service Award in recognition of over 25 years of work in training community leaders through our Keystone Project (see description below). I accepted the award at the MACC annual environmental conference in March.

Initiative One: Conservation-based Estate Planning Outreach for Landowners

Background: Impact through critical issues

Over 70% of the forests of Massachusetts are family forests. 73% of forested parcels in Massachusetts are owned by people over 55 years old. We are in the midst of the largest transfer of land that we have ever seen. It is at these times of land transfer that forests stand the greatest chance of being converted to other uses (e.g., houses) or parcelized into smaller properties. The decisions these landowners make about the future of their land will shape our landscapes and the benefits they provide (or don't provide!) in the future. This is the critical issue of our time. Therefore, I have developed a tightly integrated research/extension program to help landowners understand their conservation-based estate planning options. The work of this initiative is done in collaboration with the Franklin Land Trust and Mount Grace Land Conservancy and is funded by the MA Department of Conservation and Recreation. This year I also was funded through the USDA Renewable Resources Extension Act's Focus Grant Funding to develop resources for states across the eastern U.S. This work also provides fertile ground for the development of a robust research program investigating how families make decisions about their land. The work of this initiative is having national impact as other states use my work as a model for the development of their programs, as described in the activities and outcomes below.

In my role as the Project leader, or P.I., I am the lead author on print and web based outreach material and the content expert for programs. I also organize partners, and liaison with the funder at such events, provide research based input on best practices for reaching landowners, conduct project evaluation, and monitor budgeting and reporting.

Initiative 2: Keystone Project – www.MassKeystone.net

Background: Using influential community opinion leaders to inform landowner decisions

Respected friends and neighbors are often cited by landowners in research as the most important source of information about their forest conservation decisions. Peer-to-peer learning is therefore an effective way to amplify my outreach efforts by providing the information people need in the hands of those they naturally turn to for information. The Keystone Project invests education and reference materials in important, **keystone people**, such as large landowners, members of municipal board members, watershed associations, and land trusts. See attached list of those trained this year. There is a competitive application process (60-80 applications a year for 20-25 spots) that allows us to choose those people with the highest likelihood of informing decisions, such as those who are involved in multiple organizations and a history of community activism.

In exchange for the training and take-home resources, graduates of the program, called **Cooperators**, agree to return to their communities and volunteer at least 30-hours of their time towards projects that promote forest and wildlife conservation. Cooperators have an intimate knowledge of the local interests, issues and the people within the community and therefore are in the best position to move conservation forward. Cooperators also become a part of a statewide network, available to help each other and acting as a local contact for setting up and marketing UMass outreach programs and resources. This model has evolved over the 27 years of its existence and, based on most recent evaluation results below, has shown itself to be a very effective initiative.

Activities:

- Organize the entire 3 ½ day training, including reserving the location and hiring a caterer
- Attract funding (Harvard Forest, Mount Grace, MA DCR) & manage the budget
- Purchase 25 sets of resources materials (15-20 publications per participant)
- Solicit applications and choose the invited participants from 60-80 applications
- Provide 4 presentations & facilitate the entire weekend
- Identify sites for field tours & lead walks
- Evaluate the training
- Develop final reports to funders

Outcomes:

2017 Keystone Project Training Evaluation: Note: the full evaluation is attached.

Participant evaluation of my four presentations on a 10-point scale:

- Forest ecology: **10**
- Elements of timber management: **9.7**
- Restoring old-growth characteristics: **9.8**
- Increasing forest resiliency: **9.8**

Participant evaluation of the overall program (10-point scale): **9.4**

Overall Keystone Project Evaluation:

Every other year, I evaluate the program's effectiveness through a mail survey to approximately 500 Keystone Cooperators using the Dillman Total Survey Design Method (approximately 20 hours of time). The survey seeks to quantify the total impact that Cooperators made in the previous 12-month period. Below are some of the key results from the 2016 evaluation I conducted this past spring to help describe the impacts of Keystone.

- Keystone Cooperators contributed **24,759 hours** to conservation-related activities, **56% of which were volunteer hours**.
- Keystone Cooperator activity is equivalent to **>12 full-time** conservation positions, of which **7 positions were volunteer**.
- Keystone Cooperators own or are involved with the management decisions on **170,725 total acres** of land.
- Keystone Cooperators made contact with **17,391** people about forest conservation.
- Keystone Cooperators made **12,919** referrals to conservation information resources. Referrals to land trusts, government programs, private foresters, and public foresters were most common.

This survey demonstrates the power of working with well-connected, influential Keystone people. The acres impacted and people reached are far beyond what I can do alone with my .4 FTE of extension!

Initiative 3: Forest Resiliency

Background: Addressing Critical Issues

We are now facing an uncertain future, in which our forests will encounter many challenges, including land conversion, invasive plants, insects, and diseases, heavy deer browse, and climate change. Though our forests are resilient, they also have characteristics that make them vulnerable to these stressors to varying degrees. While there is uncertainty as to how our forests will react to these stressors, we can be confident that our forests *will* change. It is possible to increase the resiliency of forests to current and future stressors by increasing the characteristics not currently a part of your forest that will make them more resilient.

- Lead author on a New England wide publication and poster about evaluating and increasing forest resiliency which was reviewed by eight regional experts
- Distributed 3,000 copies in less than one year. Currently in the process of reprinting the publication.
- Delivered presentations on forest resiliency to:
 - MA Land Conservation Conference
 - MA Association of Conservation Commissions Fall Conference
 - Clark University – Sustainability Course
- Delivered two webinars on forest resiliency:
 - Mass Audubon
 - Cornell Cooperative Extension webinar series
- Wrote articles on forest resiliency for the following:
 - USFS Forest Matters newsletter distributed to 20 states in the Northeastern Area (NA)
 - New England Society of American Foresters quarterly newsletter
 - MACC winter newsletter

Initiative 4: www.Masswoods.net

Background: Amplifying my impact through internet resources

Surveys confirm that landowners often turn to the internet for information about their land. It is an efficient tool that allows landowners to find information at their convenience, when they need to make a decision. The internet also offers the opportunity to develop tools to help landowner find people and information they need and therefore helps me, in my limited capacity, amplify my efforts.

Launched in 2005, MassWoods.net is a dynamic website which strives to inform landowner decisions. In addition to serving as a resource, the site features a contact database listing land trusts, professional foresters, and estate planning professionals working in every town in the states and also includes on-line calculators that help landowners determine their property taxes under the state's current use tax

program. The site also features case studies highlighting landowners conserving their land as a way to further use peer learning. The website is enhanced by a ‘Constant Contact’ e-newsletter and Facebook page that help market the site.

Activity:

- Generated new content for the site.
- Sent out four Constant Contact four constant contact e-newsletters to over 1,500 landowners, land trusts, community leaders, and natural resource professionals each time, to help drive visits to MassWoods.
- Worked with the MA DCR to update Ch. 61 current use tax program calculator to the current year’s rates
- Develop Facebook posts to market content on the site

Outcomes:

Metric	Result
Sessions	18,770
Pages/visit	2.01
Avg. Visit Length	2:00
Find a “Local Professional” page	1,208
Visits to “Future of My Land” page	1,576
Visits to “Landowner Programs page	1,441
Visits to “Ch. 61 Current Use” page	4,068
Visits to “Caring for my Land” page	411
Visits to “Forest Resiliency” page	470

Initiative 5: Southern New England Quarterly Stumpage Survey

Background: Collecting data inform decisions

Originally initiated by Dave Kittredge, the Southern New England Quarterly Stumpage Survey is the longest record of stumpage prices in the northeast. It is used by practitioners, policy makers, and researchers. Since Dave’s illness, I have taken over the implementation of this survey.

Activity:

- Send out a survey to more than 200 foresters, loggers, mill owners, and timber buyers to collect information on the market price for stumpage
- Enter data into spreadsheet
- Generate summary statistics
- Post on www.MassWoods
- Share with partners (e.g., MA DCR)

Impact:

- The results are used by the MA Department of Revenue to establish the current use value of Ch. 61/A forestland that provides landowners a significant reduction in their property taxes.
- Results used by landowners when making forest management decisions
- Results are used by foresters and the wood products industry to evaluate the current market price of timber

Activity Summary:

- Awarded \$125,000 contract from the MA Department of Conservation and Recreation to develop and deliver legacy planning programs to MA landowners
- Primary author of a hard copy landowner publication (Your Land, Your Legacy) to help inform landowner decisions about the future of their land for residents of MN, WI, OH, PA, NY, VT, NH, PA
- Based on the findings of my NIFA sponsored research, lead the development of a white board video about a family planning the future of their land: <https://masswoods.net/deciding-future-my-land> made state specific for MN, WI, OH, PA, NY, VT, NH, PA ME, VA
- Delivered two presentations to VA Forestry, Summit National Association of State Foresters – Natural Resources Planners Committee
- Hosted **2** landowner outreach events that reached **42** landowners who collectively own **over 1,400** acres of land. More than 100 additional landowners received our “Your Land, Your Legacy” publication in the mail (2)
- Organized and hosted two events for Woodland Connections for Women (WCW) (2)

Woodland Connections for Women (WCW)

- Research and experience have demonstrated that women play a particularly important role in landowner decisions regarding the future of the land. WCW events were designed to give women a safe, supportive atmosphere to learn about their land and options for its conservation. This year we organized and delivered **2** events that attracted **28** women owning a total of **1,705** acres. Evaluations from these two events combined show that the all-women nature of the event:



- Increased the likelihood of attendance for **88%** of the women
- Increased the enjoyment of the program for **88%** of the women; and
- Increased the value of the program for **58%** of the women.

Forester Training

- Foresters interact with many landowners who in total own thousands of acres of land.

- Foresters are therefore an important group to reach with conservation-based estate planning training.
- This year we trained **12** foresters who serve in a variety of ways (consulting forester, land trust board, land acquisition for watershed, industrial forester) giving them multiple opportunities to inform landowner decisions.
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Role: Project Coordinator – NOTE: I used to co-organize this with Dave Kittredge, but since his illness and retirement, I have had to implement this entire initiative myself.

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Total Educational Contacts

	Adult Contacts
In Person	25
Indirect Contacts (Print, Web, etc...)	475

Collaborating Organizations

- **Mount Grace Land Conservancy**
- **Franklin Land Trust**
- **MA Dept. of Conservation and Recreation**
- **U.S.D.A. Forest Service**

