

Project: Forest Conservation

Project Leader: Paul Catanzaro

Project Overview

Family forest lands provide tremendous amounts of wood products and ecosystem services in the U.S, particularly in the northeast where 52% of the land is held by family forest owners (FFOs). Due to an aging landowner population, in the coming years, almost half of the FFOs in the U.S. will be deciding the future of their land (i.e., convert to another use, parcelize, conserve). These decisions will be the most important determinants of the viability of working forests, because forest cover loss and parcel size reductions eliminate or lessen forest management opportunities. Stabilizing the forest land base by stemming the tide of conversion and parcelization is critical to ensuring a future of viable and competitive working forested landscapes.

The proposal team of the Universities of Massachusetts, Maine, Vermont and Cornell aim to help stabilize the forested land base by working to ensure that a significant proportion of FFO lands are passed from one generation of landowners to the next with minimal amount of forest conversion and parcelization. The research component of this project will use landowner interviews and a mail survey to better understand how FFOs make decisions about the future of their land. These research findings will inform regional extension programs that use peer network and train-the-trainers approaches to help inform FFO decisions. By working to stabilize the land base in this way, this project will assist in maintaining a viable forest industry, and, ultimately, vibrant rural communities.

Activity Summary – 2015

- Developed, delivered, and analyzed a survey meant to collect basic demographic data of landowners (e.g., how many have a will) and the stage of decision making they are in regarding the future use and ownership of their land.(1)
- Using answers to the survey we created a series of semi-structured interview questions. The qualitative data collected allows us to gain a far richer understanding than survey results alone as to the reasoning behind the decisions landowners are making. As of 9/30/15, the Massachusetts team had completed 12 interviews. (1)
- Peer reviewed Journal articles ¹ D'Amato, A.W., P.F. Catanzaro, L. Fletcher. 2015. Regeneration responses to patch selection and structural retention within second-growth northern hardwood. Forest Science 61(1):183-189 (1) Kilgore, M.A.; S.A. Snyder, D. Eryilmaz, M.A. Markowski-Lindsay, B.J. Butler, D.B. Kittredge, P.F. Catanzaro, J.H. Hewes, K. Andrejczyk. 2015. ²Assessing the relationship between different forms of landowner assistance and family forest owner behaviors and intentions. Journal of Forestry 113(1):12-19

- D Andrejczyk, K., B.J. Butler, B.J. Dickinson, J.H. Hewes, M. Markowski-Lindsay, D.B. Kittredge, M.A. Kilgore, S.A. Snyder, P.F. Catanzaro. ³Landowner Assistance Programs in the USA: A Qualitative Exploration of Program Impacts on Behaviour. Small-scale Forestry. First online: 19 August 2015
- Keystone Annual Training Workshop (1)
- Expanded the “Find a Professional” search engine tool (1)
- MassWoods e-newsletter (5)
- Updated MassWoods website with a completely new design and optimization for use on mobile devices. Collaborated with Beth Armour on design concepts, images, and content development(1)
- Quarterly stumpage price reports surveys were administered, analyzed, and posted (4)
- I worked with the Mass Land Trust Coalition to update their service provider list of professionals experienced in conservation based estate planning. We now have a link on MassWoods to the updated MLTC service provider list and are able to connect landowners with professionals with conservation experience working in their town.(1)
- Established the Open Space Committee Small Grant program.(1)
- Crafted language for the USDA National Forest Stewardship Program to include concept of conservation based estate planning (1)
- Your Land, Your Legacy workshops (9)
- Advise a graduate student (1)
- Woods Forum Outreach Programs (2)

Narrative Summary and Impact

Your Land, Your Legacy

The Forest Conservation program, in partnership with Mount Grace Land Conservancy and the Franklin Land Trust, was awarded a second, four-year, \$400,000 grant by the MA Dept. of Conservation and Recreation to help family forest owners make informed decisions about the future of their land, decisions that will meet the needs of their family and the commonwealth.

The foundation of this initiative has been the “Your Land, Your Legacy” publication. After distributing 13,000 copies of the first edition, we developed a second edition this year.

An important impact this year, is that I convinced the USDA Forest Service to include a conservation-based estate planning section into their new Forest Stewardship Program standards for Forest Stewardship Management plans across the country. The Forest Service will be including language that I draft in their new standards.

Internet Based Outreach

Everyone is on the internet. It represents an enormous opportunity to efficiently inform the decisions of landowners. However, it is critical to learn how to be both efficient and effective. The Forest Conservation program has been working for several years on internet based outreach projects, including our main website MassWoods.net. We continue to work on ways to connect people to resources and resource professionals.

Keystone: Important People Making the Conservation Difference

Natural resource professionals cannot assume that landowners consider them the most credible source of information when making a decision about their land. In fact, research shows that when landowners need to make a decision about their land, they turn to trusted friends and neighbors for information and to hear their experiences.

In ecology, a keystone species is one whose impacts on its environment are larger and greater than would be expected from one species. The Keystone Project invests education and reference materials in important, keystone people, community opinion leaders such as large landowners and members of municipal board members, watershed associations, and land trusts. Keystone trains those people that landowners naturally turn to for information.

The goal of Keystone is to put into place in each community the people that can be a local source of information to landowners, communities, and organizations, those shaping the future of our landscapes one decision at a time. Graduates of the project, called cooperators, make a significant conservation difference at the local level by transferring information and ideas to landowners and decision-makers.

The training covers subjects such as forest ecology and management, wildlife management, land protection, and community outreach. In exchange for the training and take-home resources, graduates of the program agree to return to their communities and volunteer at least 30-hours of their time towards projects that promote forest and wildlife conservation.

Cooperators also become a part of a statewide network, available to help each other and acting as local contacts for UMass outreach programs and resources. The Keystone Project, originally called Coverts, was started in 1988. Since then, 450 community leaders have been trained. For more information about Keystone, visit: <http://masskeystone.net/>.

Total educational contacts

	Adult Contacts
In Person	15269
Indirect Contacts (Print, Web, etc...)	21576

Collaborating Organizations

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

