

Project: Forest Conservation

Project Leader: Paul Catanzaro

Project Overview

Sixty-two percent of Massachusetts is forested. A large majority (79%) of Massachusetts forests are privately owned. Most landowners enjoy their woodlots on a daily basis without much forethought about their land until something triggers a decision about its management or future. These decisions are often made reactively without the benefit of knowing their full range of options. When these decisions arise, landowners often turn to trusted family, friends, and neighbors for advice. The goal of the Forest Conservation project is to put into place in each community the people that can deliver accurate information at crucial decision making times. The separate initiatives associated with this project are based on:

Grant funded applied research - Research to inform the critical issues on which we focus, the project outputs we produce, and to quantify the impacts we achieve.

Social Networks - Enhancement of social networks to inform landowner decisions.

Technology - Utilize the internet and other technologies to reach landowners and to facilitate their information sharing.

Forest Resources Management - Provide research based information to protect and restore forest resources while providing forest products, including ecosystem services.

This program was designed based on an analysis of current data and research findings about the forest resources of Massachusetts. The forest conservation program works closely with faculty partners to help define critical issues and research needs. Research results are used to define critical forest conservation issues and to identify "pressure points" in which this program can have an impact on priorities. In addition, the forest conservation program uses data from partner organizations, including The Nature Conservancy and Massachusetts Audubon to help define priorities and research needs. Other stake holder groups, such as The Trustees of Reservations, Mount Grace Land Conservancy Trust and the MA Department of Conservation, are also consulted as a part of developing projects.

Activity Summary – 2016

- Peer reviewed Journal Article - Markowski-Lindsay, M., P. Catanzaro, A. Milman, D. Kittredge. 2016. Understanding Family Forest Land Future Ownership and Use: Exploring Conservation Bequest Motivations. Small-scale Forestry DOI: 10.1007/s11842-015-9320-z.
- Forest Landowner Estate Planning Survey - This is a multi-state, NIFA funded, 4-year integrated research-extension project. We completed a mail survey to 2,000 landowners and semi-structured interviews to 35 landowners across MA, NY, VT, and ME
- Keystone E-Newsletter and listserve - Used the e-newsletter and list serve to announce a variety of resources, programs, and opportunities for forest conservation. The list serve also allows cooperators to engage with each other
- Sent out four Constant Contact e-newsletters to over 1,000 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
- MassWoods website maintenance and delivery. Surveyed >150 conservation organizations and >50 foresters to update their listing on the website to ensure accurate contact information.
- Generated new content for the site:

Metric	Result
Total Visits	17,832
Pages/visit	2.4
Avg. Visit Length	2:27
Find a “Local Professional” page	1,736
Visits to “Future of My Land” page	1,676
Visits to “Landowner Programs page	1,541
Visits to “Ch. 61 Current Use” page	4,017

- The southern New England Stumpage Price Survey - Surveyed >150 conservation organizations and >50 foresters to update their listing on the website to ensure accurate contact information.
- Conference Presentations: Your Land, Your Legacy “Understanding and Informing the Land Transfer Decisions of Family Forest Owners.” Society of American Foresters National Conference, November 2015, Baton Rouge, LA. (1)
- Advisor to one graduate student, Rebekah Zimmerer, a 2016-2017 Fulbright Scholar (1)

Narrative Summary and Impact

NIFA Competitive Grant Award: Understanding And Informing Family Forest Owner Decisions Of Intergenerational Land Transfer To Ensure Working Forested Landscapes.

In 2015 we were awarded a 4-year, \$500,000 grant for an integrated research/extension proposal through USDA NIFA. This is a multi-state effort. Below is a summary of the project.

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.

This year we implemented a screener survey to landowners to gain a better understanding of the stages landowners and in regard to their decisions about the future of their land. These findings have informed the semi-structured interviews that we are now conducting to gain a richer understanding of these critical decisions.








Total educational contacts

	Adult Contacts
Direct Contacts	2835
Indirect Contacts (Print, Web, etc...)	18432

Collaborating Organizations

- **Mount Grace Land Conservancy**
- **Franklin Land Trust**
- **MA Dept. of Conservation and Recreation**
- **U.S.D.A. Forest Service**
- **Society of American Foresters**
- **Holyoke Open Space Committee**

arroll, Kathleen

Clifton, Natalia	(Ext Project) Pesticide Education Program 	Approved 	    
Hashemi, Masoud	(Ext Faculty Plan) Sustainable soil and cr		