

Roll-up of Answers
Discussion Topics
Stewardship Advisory Committee Meeting
March 10, 2010

Prioritization

Given limited resources and a strong federal push to develop “priority areas”, how should we distribute stewardship program delivery?

I would prioritize communities with development pressure. The priority area should be to work with landowners in areas where keeping forests as forests is a concern. This perpetuates the north/south divide in Maine, which is unfortunate, but most small landowners are not going to be active managers. The forests in the rural areas are not at the same kind of risk for conversion. The Stewardship Plans documents many different values from the woods and could encourage keeping forests as forests.

Focus on areas most subject to conversion & parcelization –“keep forests as forests”

[Focus] education of landowners & newer residents in areas with development pressures such as the mid-coast; the WHIP program can be an excellent tool in this process

[Use] interface/nexus w/Beginning With Habitat focus areas, SGCN species and habitats
Maintaining contiguous large blocks of forested areas (family ownership)

SWAP—wildlife priority areas are already identified. Makes sense to overlay Stewardship Program delivery to these areas for synergistic benefit?

Do not exclude any landowners, but give greater weight to funding projects within SWAP Focus Areas & other priority habitats.

Consider focusing on landscape-scale priority areas (e.g., Towns or watersheds) where there are local, hot button issues and where there is community interest in solving conservation problems (e.g., water quality, protecting working forests, protecting

Outreach re forest products industry-long term planning-overall health of industry:
Assessment of

- availability of [forest resources]
- infrastructure of mills/woods products industry
- job creation in wood products industry-local economies of scale

I believe that as resources become more scarce water will emerge as most important along with carbon retention and oxygen production. Aesthetics and wildlife will become less important. Delivery should emphasize the most important and support others secondarily.

- Areas under threat from conversion. Don't give up the southern part of the state but try to maintain a forest economy.
- Wildlife habitat loss
- Keep forest landowners

LOF summary: Committee leans heavily towards prioritizing according to likelihood of conversion from forest. Secondary theme is to be guided by wildlife habitat needs. Also mentioned; water, forest products and job creation. One nod to landscape scale focus.

Resource concerns

What worries you the most about the future of family woodlands?

Less than optimal forest management because of economic need, especially among economically stressed Mainers. I suspect the options considered for the land are different among low income owners than the traditional stakeholder we hear from (college educated, upper middle class, white, males, etc.)

I think we need to increase connectedness to the land. People need to understand all the benefits that these lands provide. By proactively stewarding forestland for wildlife, water quality, timber, and others, we will hopefully increase appreciation of our woodlands and lead to less ***parcelization and fragmentation***, two major problems in parts of Maine.

Division, sale, and development

Development pressures (conversion)

Tax burdens

Local forest product markets—loss or lack of--

Forests will be fragmented/and or sold off for development

Logger supply

Wood markets

Development/forest fragmentation

Lack of management—mostly due to small size

Should encourage “coops” to pool resources and gain critical mass. Develop “model” coop structure that retains independence of each landowner.

Fragmentation and cost of ownership. Pressure from organizations composed of poorly or ill informed crusaders to limit harvesting with ill conceived laws.

Conversion/parcelization

Open access for hunting/hiking

Intergenerational transfer

LOF Summary: Fragmentation/parcelization/development/conversion by far the biggest concerns of the Committee. Underlying that are generational transfer, economic stress, tax burden, lack of markets and loggers, and loss of connectedness to the land.

What are the most important resource concerns (examples: soil erosion, fish habitat, invasive species, etc) facing Maine in the next 5 years?

Invasive species—hands down!

Invasive species and climate change adaptation

Definitely invasive species, pests, and diseases.

Drinking water quality

Water quality

Ground water (legal protection from water bottle industry)

Water resources

My other concerns are mostly human-related than resource concerns (although they impact the resource): subdivision/fragmentation/development, estate transfer, infrastructure to manage forests (foresters, loggers, transportation, equipment, etc.), and **training of professionals to provide more than timber advice (recreation, family communication, wildlife habitat management, water quality, etc.).**

I think increasing parcelization and fragmentation are critical concerns; but I also would add to that water quality concerns, reduced biodiversity, and wildlife habitat.

Fragmentation of lands

Homogenization of forests—at least in industrial lands, and most harvesting is similar, resulting in partially cut stands that provide poor habitat values.

Loss of biodiversity (older age classes)

Connectivity

Economics of [stewardship] approach vs. [liquidator's].

Erosion

LOF Summary: Repeated concern about fragmentation and conversion; also strong mention of invasive species, water quality (including threat from bottled water industry) and wildlife issues (loss of biodiversity and connectivity). One somewhat unique concern involves the comparative economics of stewardship and liquidation/conversion: right now stewardship loses.

Practices on the ground

What are the exemplary practices that should be modeled and/or rewarded?

Landowners who are tackling estate transfer, particularly in working with their kids and grandkids to transfer their first-hand knowledge of the woods. The whole family should be rewarded.

Foresters who are finding innovative ways to be compensated for providing services that are not tied to selling timber.

Landowners who are finding innovative ways to benefit (economic and non-economic) from their property.

Payment for ecosystems services

Sustainable forest management over the long term.

Increasing productivity of the stands.

Reducing logging damage to residuals.

Enhancing wildlife habitat (e.g., snags and early successional habitat)

Retention of old patches/snags & wildlife trees

Protection of wildlife habitat

Protection of water quality; Sustainable forestry (using BMPs); Riparian protection/BMPs

Certified forests

Management plans

Using a forester

Setting aside unique areas

Invasive species removal

LOF Summary: pretty good list covering a good range of general activities, but not much in the way of specifics. Worth noting: families that handle generational transfer by passing on knowledge of the woods should be rewarded.

What practices are the most/least needed?

Practices most needed to me include:

Practices that enhance forest health and productivity.

Practices that protect water quality, conserve biodiversity, and provide important wildlife habitat.

Practices that help control invasive plants.

Maintaining large contiguous forested lands

As for specific projects? My bias is towards that improve long term productivity of working forests. Things that will also benefit society directly. Improving the productivity and composition of our forests will produce a higher value stream of timber providing the opportunity for more value added industries like milling. Currently industry is headed the other way towards the lowest

common denominator as in pulp grade wood for fuel pellets or as biomass fuel. wood for paper pulp once seemed like a low value byproduct. Now it seems like a decent value added industry benefiting the state in tax base and multiple opportunities for employment.

The number one way to improve forest species structure is with the early application of herbicides to release established softwood from competing hardwoods or as site prep (killing hardwoods originating from stump sprouts, like beech & red maple) to allow more commercially desirable species to become established by seed (like ash, oak, birch, sugar maple)

the other big opportunity for bettering the forest is the control of invasives. This not only betters the actual property but also all the nearby lots that may become infested from seed disseminated from those plants. Again, herbicides are the most effective method for this and the only viable control for some species.

In the case of invasives it would be desirable to come up with funding for properties that don't necessarily meet the ten acre wood lot standard. They are equivalent to the rundown house in the neighborhood acting as a reservoir of mice repopulating an otherwise clean neighborhood.

When traveling out west about twenty years ago I was under the impression counties were much more aggressive in managing noxious weeds. for example machinery had to be steam cleaned before being moved any distance. How is that funded and managed? Certainly invasives would seem to merit the same attention.

(?) Clearcutting-most
Impaired culverts-most

Management plans
Using a forester.
Affordable certification to access markets.

Least: Deer management in southern Maine-there are too many deer in York & Cumberland Counties

LOF Summary: Most members responded to the "most" side of the question. Generic thoughts include maintaining diversity, enhancing health and productivity, etc. In the specific, controlling invasive species was top of the list, with related mention of reducing hardwood competition by chemical methods. Also mentioned: management plans, using a forester, affordable certification, maintaining large blocks of contiguous forest, replacing impaired culverts. Interesting point made about controlling invasive species on parcels less than 10 acres, to reduce infestation of larger surrounding properties.

On the "least" side, only one practice was mentioned: deer management in southern Maine, due to overpopulation. (Could argue this indicates a greater need for a certain type of deer management.)

What do woodland owners want to do?

I do believe the stewardship ethic is strong among landowners, although they don't use those words specifically. This stewardship involves taking care of their land, family, and

perhaps even community. Hokey, and landowners would not phrase it this way, but I think it is true. They want to be good stewards, and respected for their stewardship.

That is a very good question. Some landowners, such as the SWOAM members, are actively interested and engaged in sustainable forest management – “The Choir”. Many others are not sure what they want to do with their land – “fence riders”. Using Brett Butler’s techniques, if we can draw these people into educational workshops, etc. then perhaps we can get them interested in developing stewardship plans. This will take a lot of work in the communities getting to know the conservation-minded individuals who can inspire other landowners in their community. They constitute the so-called “Social Capital” that Extension Forester Paul Catanzaro talks about

In a perfect world a landowner should be fully involved in the prep and decision making of putting a plan together so as to make informed decisions about their property.

In reality my clients who are most active in practicing intensive management on their land do one thing, they look me in the eye and rely on my word as to whether a practice or specific investment is worthwhile and whether it is going to be cost effective. I am their professional and that is who they put their trust in, not some huge document. They also rely on me to compile the necessary paperwork & documents and to get them Q'd up when opportunity comes down the road. This usually means getting a plan prepared or updated to qualify for the cost share funding. This is sort of 180 degrees to the idealistic way planning would be done. Maybe a simpler plan just focusing on growing trees would be a good idea. With the feds taking over for the state I have no expectation of that actually happening.

Retain ownership of property (under economic pressures)

Enjoy their land

Make \$

Share land with others (?)

Usually something other than forest management-[need to] use FM as a tool to achieve LO objectives

LOF Summary: Interesting that the answers are more on the broad philosophical side than specific actions or practices. “Enjoy their land. Retain ownership. Make money. Trust their forester to tell them the right thing to do. Be respected for their stewardship efforts. Share their land. Usually something other than forest management, per se.”

Building a better education and outreach program

Name the top 3 three things MFS can do to help family forest owners:

Outreach related to backyard wildlife, landscaping, etc. that could help reach the people who don't know they own a "woods" or are a "family forest."

More face-to-face opportunities for landowners to have contact with a resource professional – more than one landowner outreach forester?

More coordination with the pest and disease folks so that they use landowners calling in with tree health sorts of things as a way to get landowners more involved in active management.

Work diligently in local communities to identify the "Social Capital" that can make a difference in inspiring landowners; to derive support for conservation efforts and for proactive stewarding of forest lands.

Provide education and technical assistance on forest management (timber, wildlife, water quality, biodiversity).

Educate landowners about parcelization and fragmentation, using case studies from Maine, and experiences from individuals (Social Capital) who have tried to deal with this serious problem in Maine.

Provide information on Intergenerational Transfer. Education [about] maintaining family lands. You had a very good presentation on this subject at Augusta Civic Center a couple of years ago with attorneys, etc.

BMP workshops

Help develop the marketplaces for payment for ecosystems services

Disseminate info about conservation options

Educate about multiple values of forest lands

Partner with other institutions where goals are similar, e.g. "Grow Smart"

Connect landowners with foresters

Fund management plans

[Develop] mgt. plan "lite", similar to ice storm assessments

Develop a program of presentations for lake, bird, recreation, and watershed groups to establish contact with the forestry agency and profession. Programs on multiple subjects to present by a forester at public meetings. (Repeated from "priorities" above.)

Encourage tree growth enrollment or conservation via easement

Innovate new ideas about subsidizing (\$\$) landowners to keep forests as forest

See "Resource concerns"-[encourage coops]

Provide cost share programs (incentives)

Continue to do a great job translating the Federal maze for landowners

Change programs to up front (partial payment) rather than full reimbursement

Property tax abatement

LOF Summary: Most answers are the activities that MFS is already doing; the Committee wants us to keep up the good work and or do more of it. A few are outside our purview (property tax abatement). One somewhat interesting reply involves identifying the “social capital” in communities and using it to inspire other landowners.

Are forest management plans the most effective way to promote stewardship for family forest owners?

Yes and no. The written plan itself isn't that valuable, but the contact with a professional is and the written plan is the avenue to that contact. The landowner becomes more aware of their options

I firmly believe that good quality stewardship plans are vital in promoting stewardship for family forest owners. However, that being said, we need to develop new approaches working with the “Social Capital” in landscape-scale areas to identify local issues (e.g., concern about too much urban sprawl, reduced biodiversity, or lowered water quality) that can inspire woodland owners to conserve and proactively steward their lands.

FMPs together with information about conservation opportunities

I have sold a fair number of stewardship plans in the last few years; the vast majority of the landowners were in need of a plan for tree growth tax law, occasionally a tree farm or folks needing an appraisal for depletion.

The sales pitch is you can get an inventory and be qualified for further cost sharing for the same net cost as if we prepared a bare bones plan. Pretty easy sales pitch & cost benefit ratio. I also of course tell them I am required to include a bunch of other stuff in the plan they didn't ask for. 98% of the landowners would never pay me to add the other things into a plan. Some may find it interesting but none would choose to include it if they were paying out of pocket.

There isn't a year that goes by that there isn't a revision (read addition) to the requirements of a plan. None of the changes are big but it is the death by a thousand cuts or boiling a frog alive analogy. You get my point. It is fast approaching where it is easier and more efficient to go back to writing plans that the landowner wanted, not a plan designed by somebody else just because it is subsidized. Every process is so focused on documentation and lots of paperwork.

Planning is good but a waste of paper if recommendations never get implemented. To assist the smaller landowners, the one time/infrequent users of the system, the process from plan to cost sharing of practices should be simpler and more stream lined. As much as I hate impersonal boiler plate stuff a systematic table for documentation should be supplied or recommended so that we foresters are supplying you folks with just the data you need and we are not each trying to invent our own wheels.

For the smaller land owners they can't afford to undertake a very big project based on partial funding. A big top heavy funding process discourages these landowners and can make cost sharing cost prohibitive. The landowners with bigger properties (who are more likely to under take large scale projects capable of better economics of scale) haven't done so because they have not had woodswise caliber plans prepared due to the expense. Even with cost sharing, a plan for several hundred acres would have a substantial out of pocket expense never mind the upfront

cost prior to receiving the reimbursement. Keep in mind this investment is purely speculative as there is no guarantee of any funding of work in the field yet. In addition, the primary purpose of this plan is documentation for Me forest service or NRCS. In our clients eyes, they would either choose to go forward or not based on there trust in us. Our clients are not choosing to spend the \$\$ on documentation. They would spend their own hard earned dollars directly on the investment.

Only when coupled with effective incentives

Yes in combination with \$ incentives

Yes, coupled with tree growth enrollment & conservation easements

Yes-it makes people think about all aspects of their land

LOF Summary: Overwhelming support for FMPs, with additional overwhelming sentiment that plans are not enough by them selves. The added elements include effective incentives for implementation, contact with professionals, and information and incentives for conservation easements. Although the question was not framed as such, the context is individual landowner/parcel FMPs, not “landscape”.

What are optimal rates (% or other) for incentivizing management plans and practices?

I'm not sure. I came from a state where, I believe, the Stewardship Plans were all written by the DNR foresters and they were free with a small donation. The DNR was a trusted source, and it seemed appropriate because this is largely a public service. The DNR had broader expertise, beyond timber, to contribute to discussions with landowners.

I would say 75%.

75%-90%; essential to have improvement practices for contract life to be at least cost neutral

75% incentive/25% landowner

LOF Summary: Limited number of responses here; three called for 75% or greater, one recalls another state where the state forestry agency provided Stewardship Plans free (public service) with a small donation.

If you were in charge, how would you design an assistance program? How would it look and feel?

I would throw much more resources in the form of personnel into this. Throw more people at this issue! I would consider using a whole cadre of AmeriCorps volunteers with forestry background for some efforts.

I would develop a goal such as “Keeping Forests as Forests” to focus efforts on both conservation of forestlands (e.g., conservation easements) and on proactive management

of forestland through traditional cost-share programs. Further, I would emphasize working with the Social Capital of communities to help build up local support for these activities. The importance of this social connectedness can not be understated, in my view. Without local support, it will be much more difficult to succeed in conserving and proactively stewarding our forestlands.

My biggest peeve is that for years we have been told we need to reference a need in the plan in order for the need to qualify for funding. That doesn't come close now. All those plans all need revisions to even be considered. Many of our clients are interested in the spectrum of possible recommendations for their timber. They might possibly make some intensive investments but are not committed to it. For years it was all hypothetical because there was no \$\$ available. Then one day \$\$ come down the pipe and you have to go and revise the plan showing specific recommendations for each stand as well as units and location for practices. It is not reasonable to know how many acres of a practice you want or need five to ten years down the road. You can anticipate the general need but not the exact units. In addition, the units being applied for depend on the cost share/incentive payment rates.

Currently the ramp up of paperwork and documentation for cost sharing practices is so involved there is cost sharing for it. That has got to tell you the paperwork is out of hand. With this level of paperwork and up front documentation it requires plans be big and costly to justify jumping through the hoops. It is only the most aggressive managers, the ones verging on investors willing to step up to that level. All the mom & pop type owners aren't up to the challenge just to get some assistance to go control an acre of invasives. But if you go to the seminars that is when the project is most efficient to get your arms around and you stand a chance of success on.

In a perfect world a landowner should be fully involved in the prep and decision making of putting a plan together so as to make informed decisions about there property. In reality my clients who are most active in practicing intensive management on their land do one thing, they look me in the eye and rely on my word as to weather a practice or specific investment is worthwhile and weather it is going to be cost effective. I am their professional and that is who they put their trust in, not some huge document. They also rely in me to compile the necessary paperwork & documents and to get them Q'd up when opportunity comes down the road. This usually means getting a plan prepared or updated to qualify for the cost share funding. This is sort of 180 degrees to the idealistic way planning would be done. Maybe a simpler plan just focusing on growing trees would be a good idea. With the feds taking over for the state I have no expectation of that actually happening.

My understanding is we are now just talking about NRCS funding but as long as you are asking, The claims for payment required for the old woods wise plans were redundant. 90% of the information was repetitious on those forms. Couldn't it be boiled down to just one, possibly two pages. Four was ridiculous. The current system as I see it is possibly four years out you get funding to help with a project like controlling an acre patch of bittersweet.

In those four years the vines have grown exponentially, who knows what is occurring in the owners life which my be distracting them.

A quicker more responsive system to serve motivated landowners would be much better. We should be able to strike while the iron is hot!!!!

I would be remiss if I didn't offer some positive comments as well. Without cost sharing folks wouldn't do much or any pre-commercial work

You, Andy are very helpful to work with and facilitate what needs doing. In all the presentations over the past couple years you make most of this training reasonably palatable when it has the potential to be less than such.

That is a plus of the current NRCS plan is it can be written for individual lots. The down side is it is still a very intensive plan.

One that was easy to use

That followed a management plan

Resulted in long term benefits

[Do] what can be done to help make our [stewardship] approach to forestry economically viable.

LOF Summary: “One that was easy to use. That followed a management plan. A quicker more responsive system to serve motivated landowners would be much better. We should be able to strike while the iron is hot!!!! Throw much more resources in the form of personnel. Consider using a whole cadre of AmeriCorps volunteers with forestry background for some efforts. Focus efforts on both conservation of forestlands (e.g., conservation easements) and on proactive management of forestland through traditional cost-share programs. Emphasize working with the Social Capital of communities to help build up local support for these activities. The importance of this social connectedness can not be understated, in my view. Without local support, it will be much more difficult to succeed in conserving and proactively stewarding our forestlands.”

Where should the funding come from for forestry assistance?

Knowing that taxes are not an option I would say forestry assistance should come from its own lottery ticket, like the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund.

I think from a variety of sources: Federal, State, and through private dollars. We need to look at corporate sponsorships to help fund incentive programs. The concept of a “Landscape Auction” that is being developed by the White River Partnership in Vermont should be considered. Landscape auctions are specifically tailored to place-based needs, and can result in, for example,: a) support for private landowners to manage landscape elements on their land; and b) support conservation groups to purchase development rights or to buy land for conservation.

Regional ecosystem services funds

Public funds-ecosystem services

Subsidy from wood consuming markets (self interest)

USFS

Forestry assistance from the USDA should come from the USDA Forest Service, the agriculture department’s forestry agency, because it has the forestry educated personnel. Not all forest owners are farmers (only a small %) and the [farmer-oriented] agency does not have forestry personnel

Taxes on land sales!!!

Penalties for removing land from tree growth.

LOF Summary: See list, the answers speak for themselves.

Communication

Does MFS communicate effectively? Too little/too much? What do you think about the MFS Website? List-servs? Fair handouts? Other?

Yes. [Assume this refers to first question.]

I don't have a whole lot of experience to comment on this one.

I'm not on a list serv

I think List-Serves are an effective way to reach out to targeted [audiences].

I have been impressed by the marketing of the Woods Wise program (e.g. use of the media to reach out to woodland owners). This should be continued and enhanced. WoodsWISE TV commercials were great.

I think the website is good. The Woods Wise information provided on the website seems to provide a good road map for landowners who want to learn more about their woods, and gives them options for connecting with their lands better.

I personally don't like the format of the DoC websites- hard to navigate, visually redundant...

A revision of the state web site would be in order also. A simple "one stop shopping" place showing what is available and a quick explanation of what you need to do to be eligible and apply for it. I know the information is there on the web site but I have a hard time finding it if I can't remember where it is hidden. Somebody (Just a typical mid to older age landowner) who doesn't know the special code language of the forest service should be involved with the redesign of the web site. To me I don't see a system for all of the links on the website. Some better organization or system of layout would help make it easier to find the information already offered. Also, a landowner version of the email sent out to the foresters by Lord Gregory would be good as well.

Website is good

Need more District Foresters for ed./outreach

Communications need to be more focused on target landowners

Emphasize non-forestry values of forest management

The handouts I've seen are good

MFS does an admirable job with what it has. More \$ resources for outreach would be very useful.

LOF Summary: Generally positive responses. Kudos for the media spots. Mixed reviews on the web site. The fact that two of the members are apparently not on any of our list servs is telling. Again, there is a call for more effort in this area.

Additional bonus topic

What would you like to be doing more of that promotes stewardship? What would make that possible?

I would like to do more social science research that benefits family forest landowners (studies on how to effectively reach and motivate landowners, studies that lead to a better understanding of decision-making processes, and studies that show the impacts of various policies). We've been working on creating a Family Forest Initiative (FFI) through the Center for Research on Sustainable Forests at UMaine that will let us researchers do more family forest research. We should talk about ways of working together more. There will be an advisory committee that Andy should be on. There are also partnerships to be had when it comes to the research and outreach aspects of the FFI.

Connecting with people, building networks at the local level through techniques such as "Peer to Peer", developing Social Capital. This takes time and a lot of hard work, but in my view, has a lot of potential for pay-offs.

Additional state staff (no cost [assume means no cost to landowners]) for new customers utilizing programs

- 1) keep markets we have
- 2) develop more markets
- 3) promote more concentration yards for small volumes from small woodlots

LOF Summary: More social science research. Peer to Peer network building. Develop "social capital". Maintain and expand wood markets, especially for small woodlots.

Random Thoughts:

Outreach to land trusts on the merits of managing some of their land for restoration, wildlife, ecological services, etc.