

Family Forest Owner Market Research Project

Motivating Forest Conservation and Stewardship Behaviors

The Wingspread Conference Center Panel that proposed this project noted that many diverse parties are interested in communicating with forest owners to provide meaningful information and services to influence their behaviors in numerous ways. Some wish to promote forest management for economic goals, others wish to promote conservation easements or wildlife habitat, or recreation, etc. Others wish to promote awareness of forestry services or information sources. Some wish to promote certification.

For the purposes of this project we do not seek a consensus on just a few common denominator objectives—which would not serve the needs or interests of many parties. Rather, we want to ensure the market research is conducted in a way that will produce useful information for a spectrum of interests as reflected in the composition of the Advisory Committee. It will be essential to design the work in a way that will enable those kinds of interests to be identified among target owners.

We compiled and organized the list of examples that follows from input received from the Family Forests Initiative Advisory Committee. We emphasize that this list is inclusive of each Committee member's personal and organization's perspective to ensure that forest owner behaviors that are of concern or interest to the broad spectrum of interests represented on the Committee are included and clearly stated. It is recognized that few of these are necessarily of interest to all forest owners, but each may be of interest to many owners. This list will be used to discuss project objectives with potential market research firms.

The overarching goal is for this target group of family forest owners to be engaged in understanding their forestland and thus be able to articulate their own objectives and make thoughtful, well-informed decisions about management, stewardship, or conservation.

UNDERLYING OBJECTIVES

That landowners ...

- become knowledgeable stewards of their land
- understand that forests are a constellation of resources, identify which ones are personally important to them, and plan for responsible stewardship of those resources
- actively seek information and education about whatever forest resource is important to them
- seek management/stewardship/conservation advice, options, tools from qualified scientists, agencies, conservation organizations and forest management professionals
- actively manage the forest as may be appropriate for stewardship of the desired resources
- create long terms plans for their forest and its stewardship

With these objectives in mind, the market research project will strive to identify who these landowners are, and how to reach them to increase awareness, educate, then motivate individual landowners towards various management, stewardship, and conservation behaviors.

CONSERVATION AND STEWARDSHIP BEHAVIORS

MAINTAIN A STEWARDSHIP ETHIC

- Be good land stewards and be productive in achieving goals and objectives
- Work to achieve the outcomes desired from the personal values of the landowners
- Have pride in ownership
- Personal pride and adoption of an identity as a family forest owner, forest steward, family forester
- Establish and continue a lifelong commitment to forest conservation and management activities as part of a personal land ethic and quality of life priority
- Understand the history, value and limitations on private property rights

PLAN FOR RESPONSIBLE, KNOWLEDGEABLE STEWARDSHIP OF THEIR LANDS

- Realize that owning forest land creates a personal responsibility, independent of public or private program incentives
- Write out forest management and ownership objectives
- Write and use a forest management plan
- Write and implement a habitat conservation plan
- Understand the importance/values of forests and what good science suggests as the best practices for maintaining and enhancing these values
- Understand how to proactively prevent all sorts of forest related problems before they occur
- Optimize economic opportunities for timber
- Optimize economic opportunities for non-timber forest products and environmental or recreational services
- Discuss local issues with adjoining landowners
- Take personal responsibility for sustaining quality of life related to fire protection (Firewise)
- Seek realistic ways to improve net return on investment and support good forest stewardship

MAINTAIN THE LONG-TERM FOREST LEGACY (KEEPING FORESTS FOREST)

- Plan for ownership succession, through an informed decision-making process, taking into account the forest, forestry, and multi-generational family needs
- Learn and subsequently educate heirs about the benefits (i.e. economic, environmental, social) of responsible forestry and stewardship
- Provide for continued forestland ownership in bequests to heirs
- Sell or transfer forestland in a manner that permits other, non-heir aspiring forest owners to acquire and manage forestland
- Bequest to a conservation organization, trust, etc.
- Sell or donate a conservation easement

ACTIVELY SEEK INFORMATION

- Acquire technical knowledge needed to responsibly manage forestland values
- Understand certification, co-ops, and conservation easements
- Understand markets, tax structures, regulatory rule-making, and how to participate in the political process to create/maintain a favorable economic environment for forest owners
- Learn about forestry, landowner, and conservation organizations
- Know governmental, regulatory, and service agencies and programs
- Participate in a forestry field day or similar educational experience
- Subscribe to a forestry magazine, web site or other source of information about forests and forest ownership
- Seek out free forestry information from public, private, nongovernmental, academic or other sources

ACTIVELY SEEK PROFESSIONAL ADVICE, SERVICES

- Consult with natural resource professionals
- Seek out credible information and contact a professional (forester, wildlife biologist, etc.) before taking action
- Build knowledge and connections to people who can help the landowner/land manager gain confidence to make informed decisions about management actions
- Consult with natural resource professionals (foresters, wildlife biologists, soil scientists, hydrologists, etc.)
- Consult with business and other technical professionals (attorneys, accountants, engineers, etc.)
- Consult with a Natural Heritage program or other source to determine “special places” for conservation
- Subscribe to and promote publications relating to natural resource management

IMPLEMENT RESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Have a written harvest plan that addresses all issues relevant to the operation, including potentially impacted conservation values
- Consider the economic, biologic, land and water (and where appropriate, social) values when planning specific implementation activities
- Document the specific prescriptions needed to implement the management plan at the appropriate time of action
- Seek recognition as a responsible manager (certification may be one way to do this) and make necessary investments to achieve and maintain it
- Seek and use highly qualified foresters and logging professionals, such as Master Certified Loggers, and other service contractors with exemplary standards

REACH OUT, ENGAGE, JOIN: BE A ROLE MODEL FOR RESPONSIBLE FOREST STEWARDSHIP

- Join and be active in a local, state, regional, or national forestry, landowner or conservation organization
- Mentor fellow landowners and family members
- Participate with other family owners and others to jointly address landscape or watershed level issues and concerns, including cross-jurisdictional entities
- Invite and encourage other landowners to join and participate in natural resource management organizations
- Financially support natural resource management organizations
- Seek and use opportunities to publicize (theirs or someone else's) achievements in natural resource management
- Become "family forest management" ambassadors (i.e. role models)
- Be an advocate for forest stewardship
- Join, promote, and enjoy a social network
- Take an active role in local, state, and national policy and legislation
- Promote membership in a forestry co-op
- Work cooperatively to maintain and improve economic, social, and legal opportunities for family forest owners
- Promote participation/support at some level in education, demonstration and outreach activities