

# Landscape Scale Restoration Project Report



**Project Name:** Developing the Road to New Woodland Owners:  
Establishing the Woodland Welcome Wagon in West Virginia

**Funding Year:** 2010

## Stakeholders

Forest Service Region: USDA Forest Service - R9

Sponsoring Organization: West Virginia Division of Forestry

State Project Contact: Dave McGill | 304-293-5390 | [dmcgill@wvu.edu](mailto:dmcgill@wvu.edu)

Participating Organizations:

Grantee: West Virginia Division of Forestry

## Project Funding

Agreement(s): 10-DG-11420004-063

Funding Sources

## Project Design

# Landscape Scale Restoration Project Report



## Project Purpose

Woodland properties in WV are at risk of remaining or falling into a condition where lack of management diminishes the health of the forest, the health of forest industry, and the financial well-being of the landowners. This project will fill the direct marketing niche for forestry education programs for new landowners to encourage active management of forested properties.

Most landowners still have no written management plan for their properties. To increase contact and technical support for WV landowners, the WV Division of Forestry, with assistance from WVU Extension, will use the Welcome Wagon approach. This approach is a method of contacting new landowners and has been successfully tested and adopted by several collaborating agencies in Ohio. This project will identify and contact new woodland owners and make relevant information available for decisions they will encounter as new woodland stewards. The WV Woodland Welcome Wagon will provide introductory information on forest products and services, and show new landowners how they can get connected with woodland stewards organizations, the professional forestry community, the WV Forest Stewardship Program, and the WV Managed Timberland Tax Program. Initially, working in counties in close proximity to the more urban WV DOF area offices, this program can be expanded into more distant counties using lessons learned from this initial phase of the project.

To do this a project team made up of West Virginia Division of Forestry and West Virginia University Extension Service Personnel will coordinate this three-phase project.

Phase 1 - will identify new landowners

Phase 2 - will contact and outreach those new landowners

Phase 3 - will evaluate and follow up

Outcomes will be recorded by mailed survey methods and phone follow-up.

Timeline: project will begin Jan 2011 and end December 2012

Geographic scope is statewide.

----

# Landscape Scale Restoration Project Report



## National Themes & Outcomes

### **Conserving and Managing Working Forest Landscapes**

- High priority forest ecosystems and landscapes are identified and conserved.
- Forests are actively and sustainably managed.

### **Protect Forests from Threats**

- Threats to forest and ecosystem health are identified, managed and reduced.

### **Enhance Public Benefits from Private Forests**

- The economic benefits and values of trees and forests are maintained and enhanced.
- People are connected to trees and forests and are engaged in environmental stewardship activities.
- Trees and forests are managed and restored to help mitigate and adapt to changing conditions.

## Strategic Issues

Land parcelization/fragmentation;  
forestland ownerships transitioning from rural-based landowners to absentee and second-home owners;  
forest health; property and forest taxation; intergenerational transfer of forested property;  
invasive species containment and control; oil and gas exploration vs. landowner rights; and  
traditional forestry best management practices.

## Collaboration & Partners

West Virginia University Extension Service, and  
West Virginia University Division of Forestry and Natural Resources

## Integrated Delivery

New forest landowners will be identified by WVU Extension graduate students under the supervision of Dr. Dave McGill. These new landowners will be contacted and provided with relevant information so they can make decisions as new forest stewards. To do this a project team made up of WV Division of Forestry and WVU Extension Service will coordinate the project.

## Influence on Positive Change

Outcomes will be recorded by mailed survey methods and telephone follow-ups. Surveys will elicit information about what types of activities the landowners have carried out because of the initial contact and whether they enrolled in the WV Forest Stewardship program or the Managed Timber Tax program. It's believed that new landowners will take advantage of the workshops, meeting foresters, and having forest management plans developed for them. This model can be used in other states.

# Landscape Scale Restoration Project Report



## Accomplishments

### Deliverables

A. Compile lists of new landowners in three specified regions (Eastern, Northern, and Southern).

B. Development of information packets.

Packets developed during the 2008 Redesign project Call Before You Cut were used.

C. Twelve workshops per year in specified regions.

### Accomplishments to Date

#### FY2013

In Fall 2013 WVU Extension hired a new graduate research assistant to facilitate an expansion of this project to 45 additional counties. Valerie Grant spent time contacting each tax assessor in the expanded project area to request permission to use their data for research and outreach purposes.

#### FY—2014 Accomplishments

The process of discovering new woodland owners for this project relied on WV Tax Department data. In FY2014, Graduate Research Assistant Valerie Grant contacted county tax assessors from 45 counties to ask their permission to use these data. She received permission from 33 county assessors to access the 2013 and 2014 tax addresses. The remaining 12 either refused permission or were non-contacts. Invitation postcards were mailed to potential program participants after the “new” landowner had been filtered from the larger databases.

A postcard survey was developed and mailed to the new landowners. The postcard survey consisted of seven questions. Three single option questions, three yes or no, and one open ended question.

Respondents that indicated they were interested in workshops were added to mailing lists for WVU Extension Service workshops such as Timber!, Women Working in their Woodlands, the Forest Stewardship Program’s Walk in the Woods and WV Woodland Owners Educational Tours.

#### FY 2015--Final

In the final year of the WV Woodland Welcome Wagon (WV WWW) project, Graduate Research Assistant Valerie Grant carried out the tallies of the 2014 mailings to “new” woodland owners and completed 6 Meet Your Forester (MYF) workshops. In addition, she presented a poster about the WV WWW project at the 2014 Society of American Foresters national convention in Salt Lake City and she did this on a separate grant she obtained for travel. New woodland owners were identified in the remaining 45 counties not in the original 10-county

# Landscape Scale Restoration Project Report



project area. Eleven counties declined our request for tax information. One county changed formatting in their tax database that prevented us from using it to identify new landowners. A total of 23 counties were not included in the expansion - 12 non-contact or decline, one with unusable data, and the original 10 from the pilot program. About 1,680 new landowners were sent invitational postcards. The response rate for the mailed postcard questionnaire was 22% with 81% requesting information.

Final numbers from the pilot and the expanded project:

2,580 landowners were contacted, 595 responded, and 1,559 requested informational packets or invitations to workshops.

Eight months after the last MYF seminar WVU Extension carried out an evaluation of the seminars using telephone interviews. They found that among the 32 participants that they were able to contact, 5 had never contacted a forester but did so following the seminar. About 8 said they were aware of controlling invasive species as a result of attending. When asked what they remembered most, 14 of the participants remembered something about forest management services or options for their properties, 3 remembered something about weed control in forests, and 19 thought they might be using some of the information in the coming six months.

## Deliverables in Progress

FY2011

To date, no deliverables have been completed.

WVU Extension is in the process of evaluating the effectiveness of this project. A mailed questionnaire is going out in early 2012 to make this assessment. Results will be in the next annual progress report.

FY 2012

WVU Extension Graduate Research Assistant, Meg McCuen, used WV Tax Department data for 10 counties and sent out 900 invitations to "new" landowners who were gleaned from WV tax records from the 10-county priority areas. The invitations included a postage paid return questionnaire/postcard that indicated the level of participation desired by the addressee.

Levels of participation included:

- 1) send informational packet,
- 2) send invitations to woodland related meetings, and
- 3) do not want to participate.

There was a 25% (225) response rate and of those postcards returned, 88% (198) wanted some form of participation, whether the packet and/or the invitations. All workshops have been carried out for the participants in the priority areas. Engagement strategy has been completed and evaluation in the form of a mailed questionnaire was completed. We are continuing to process data from the mailed questionnaire.

# Landscape Scale Restoration Project Report



## FY2013

New woodland owners are being identified for the outreach effort. Following an initial invitation WVU Extension will gather new forest landowner names for inviting to natural resources seminars to connect them with professional foresters and conservationists. In 2013 WVU Extension also published results from the initial WV Welcome Wagon project. These papers were:

- 1) McCuen, M., D.W. McGill, K.A. Arano, and S.Owen. 2013. West Virginia Woodland Welcome Wagon: Design, implementation, and evaluation in three priority areas. Journal of Extension.
- 2) McGill, D.W., T.L. Fegel, M.E. McCuen. 2013. Motivations for cross-boundary interactions among neighboring properties in West Virginia, USA. Submitted for the Proceedings of the IUFRO Small-Scale Forestry Conference 2013: Future directions of small-scale and community-based forestry. 8-12 September 2013, Fukuoka, Japan.

## FY2014

In addition to the two Meet Your Forester (MYF) workshops held in fall of 2014, WVU Extension planned 6 more in various counties around the state. These will be reported in the FY 2015 report.

## FY 2015--Final

Unreported in the 2014 update was the completion of the screening of "new" landowners and the subsequent mailing of the informational packets to them. In addition to the two MYF workshops in 2014, WVU Extension held six more in counties around West Virginia. These MYF workshops were designed exclusively for the WV Woodlands Welcome Wagon project in order to give new landowners the chance to meet with various types of forestry professionals. Total attendance for the 8 MYF workshops was 151 attendees, for an average of 19 per workshop. New landowners screened in this project were invited to these 8 workshops, as well as 5 landscape stewardship meetings, 4 walks in the woods, 2 shiitake mushroom workshops, and 5 Timber! workshops.

# Landscape Scale Restoration Project Report



## Challenges

No new challenges to report in 2011.

### FY 2012

The project expansion is ongoing. Funding transfers between WVU and the WV DOF was being processed during this time.

### FY 2013

Funding was accessed Spring 2013 and a graduate research assistant was hired. No major challenges in 2013.

### FY 2014

No new challenges.

### FY 2015--Final

No new challenges

## **Information Last Updated**

12/14/2015