



WSU Extension Educator Amy Grotta demonstrates how a core taken from a tree can be used to assess the forest's age and growth history.

Photo: C. Green

forest stewardship

Situation:

The rural areas of King County form a buffer between the cities and the working and protected forests of the Cascade foothills, and are held predominately by private individuals in parcels between 5 and 20 acres in size. Though privately owned, these forested lands provide multiple public benefits, including flood control, fish and wildlife habitat, including the federally listed Chinook salmon, a local source of timber and non-timber forest products, and amenity values. Because predicted regional climate change impacts include increased winter and spring runoff, retaining forested lands in the rural areas has become even more vital.

Every private forest owner's set of property goals is unique, and may include wildlife habitat enhancement, recreation, a place of refuge, periodic timber harvest, or simply the maintenance of a healthy forest. Many owners of these lands are recent "urban transplants" who lack a basic understanding about forest function, health and management.

In partnership with the King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks and the Washington Department of Natural Resources, WSU King County Extension conducts **Forest Stewardship Coached Planning** classes for rural landowners. These eight-week classes provide up-to-date information and hands-on instruction in ecology, soil and water resources, forest management, and many other topics. Participants develop their own written Forest Stewardship Plan with guidance from the instructors. Many use their plans to become eligible for Forestlands, Timberlands, or Public Benefit Rating System tax incentive programs. Others complete stewardship plans to benefit from having written documentation of their goals, objectives, resources, and implementation strategies. Still others take the classes simply to learn more about their property.

Program Goals

Engage small forest landowners in making informed choices about the stewardship of their forests, taking into account their individual objectives and ecological principles.

Promote the economic and ecological viability of small-scale forestry.

Promote awareness among non-forest owners of the ecological, economic and social value of private forests.

Comments from Forest Stewardship Class Participants

"I thought the class was excellent! ...I've learned a tremendous amount and have been amazed at the whole cycle of life related to the forest and how human decisions make a positive or negative impact."

"Really good group of speakers who are evidently enjoying their work. Contagious!"

"I simply did not know how to manage the forested portion at all. Learned many important strategies for maintaining forest health, fostering wildlife, controlling invasive species and pests etc."

"Information/speakers were excellent. We cannot learn too much about the forest of which we are stewards."

KING COUNTY EXTENSION ~~ MID-YEAR REPORT ~~ JUNE 2009



Washington DNR Forester Mike Nystrom demonstrates proper tree planting techniques to Forest Stewardship Class participants.

Photo: A. Grotta



Private lands contain many remnant forest patches with high quality wildlife habitat. The Forest Stewardship Program teaches the value of these features and how to protect them.

Photo: Anonymous

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2009 Program Accomplishments

- 17 people representing 13 different households or ownerships participated in the winter session of Forest Stewardship Coached Planning Class in Vashon. Together, these participants own over 57 forested acres. A second class will begin in September in Preston.
- Three forest stewardship plans have been written by 2009 class participants and approved by the King County Forestry Program, with additional plans in progress.
- A one-evening workshop on Conservation Easements, Transfer of Development Rights and Open Space Tax Incentives took place in January in Renton, with 19 people attending.

Future Plans

- Two workshops will take place in the EPA grant area of focused stewardship to replace the spring class. One informational workshop for stewardship volunteers took place in May in Issaquah. 24 volunteers representing King County, residents, and 7 organizations attended, with plans to help drive stewardship efforts in the Raging River and Patterson Creek watersheds. A two-part Wildlife Workshop for landowners is planned for November in Carnation.
- A two part Restoration Planning Workshop will take place in Carnation in September 2009, highlighting choosing the right plants for your site, getting started on a Restoration plan, Noxious Weeds and site tours.
- The Youth Environmental Leadership Institute, previously the Summer Youth Forestry Institute, will take place July 1-July 29th. Ten at-risk youth ages 16-19 from Youth Source will participate, mapping and removing noxious weeds on the John Wayne Trail, while learning forest ecology, meeting career experts, and building leadership and team skills under the 4-H model of experiential learning.

Program Highlight: Reaching Non-traditional Audiences

While the Forest Stewardship program targets individuals and families that own forest land, the program attracts many non-traditional landowners, managers, and professionals that benefit from the curriculum. Over the past several years, course participants have included:

- Staff from King County Parks, DDES, Facilities Management, and municipalities
- Members of community groups (e.g. churches or clubs) that own large forested tracts for recreational use
- Wetlands consultants
- Realtors who specialize in forested property
- Staff, board members, and volunteers from five non-profits that own forestland and/or engage in forest restoration
- Homeowners' associations, open space board members, and water district board members

We are gratified to see the impact of this program magnified through the participation of these audiences!