

## WSU Extension Puget Sound Forest Stewardship E-Newsletter

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### Forester's Notes

June 1st marked a small milestone for me: five years in this position. It is hard to believe that it has been that long—the time has just flown by. I remember a couple of days before I started this job, I asked for advice from one of my longtime mentors, Don Hanley (who is now WSU Extension Forester Emeritus having retired several years ago after a long and very distinguished career). I asked Don how I should tackle the job and whether I would know what I was supposed to do when I first sat down at my desk. Don told me that when he first started, there was about half an hour where he wasn't sure what to do, and then the phone rang and he had been running ever since.

In my case, I am still waiting for that half hour. When I walked in the door there was an assignment waiting on my desk. The budget proposal for my program was due in just a couple days, and if I expected to get paid, I needed to start figuring out the funding immediately. Then the phone started ringing, my email started filling up (how did all of these people even know I was there?), and I was off and running without even a moment to set up my desk.

Five years later, the program has grown from just Snohomish and Skagit counties to now include King and Island counties. Looking back at the numbers, there have been ten Coached Planning courses (each one being a series of ten workshops), two Advanced Forest Stewardship series, three forest owner field days, seven forest tours, 17 stand-alone workshops, over 900 individual consultations (including exactly 100 site visits), 35 of these newsletters (this one makes 36), and I have lost count of all the school field trips I have led in the woods. In person attendance has been around 2,000 (not counting the school kids). The newsletter mailing list has grown from zero to over 1,000, and there have been 41,672 visits to my website.

So what happens now? Like many university faculty the five-year mark is the end of the probationary period, and I go up for tenure next month (which is an all-or-nothing deal—you either get tenured or you get fired). If they let me stay, will things slow down? Not a chance! I am just getting warmed up. There are over 50,000 forest owners in the four-county area, which means there are many more people to reach, new programs that need to be developed, existing programs that need to be increased, refresher courses needed for those who have gone through already, and issues to be addressed that we have not even fully discovered yet. There is a lot of work to be done to ensure a sustainable future for small-scale forestry in the Puget Sound area.

In the meantime, we have a bunch of new workshops coming up, including summer forest tours that are just a few weeks away, and the most ambitious fall line-up of classes to date. You all make it a joy to come to work each day. Thank you for a wonderful five years, and I am looking forward to many more.

Kevin W. Zobrist  
WSU Area Extension Educator, Forest Stewardship  
Serving Snohomish, Skagit, King, and Island Counties

## Summer Forest Tours

Summer twilight forest tours are almost here! Our “twilight tours” don’t involve vampires, but rather long summer evenings touring local, family-owned forests. These free, family-friendly, out-in-the-woods events are a chance to share ideas, see what others are doing, and look at real examples of challenges and solutions. Each tour concludes with a potluck dessert. Topics we’ll be covering on the tours include dealing with aging alder, managing riparian zones, storm damage, thinning, pruning, cost share programs, incorporating orchard areas, and more.

There are three tours this year:

- July 10th in the Mount Vernon area
- July 11th in the Maple Valley area
- July 12th on Camano Island

**Now is the time to sign up for these tours.** For details and sign-up, please visit <http://snohomish.wsu.edu/forestry/twilight2012.htm> or call 425-357-6017.

## **Fall Workshops**

We have three great workshops coming up for you this fall.

### **Forestry and Wildlife Workshop**

September 15th, Carnation

Join WA Department of Natural Resources Forest Stewardship Wildlife Biologist Jim Bottorff for an in-depth workshop on forestry and wildlife. Topics covered will include understanding forest wildlife habitat, protecting and enhancing habitat during forest management activities, providing supplemental habitat (e.g. nest boxes), and controlling wildlife damage to trees. Registration is open and space is limited. Details and registration information are available at <http://snohomish.wsu.edu/forestry/wildlife12.htm> or by calling 425-357-6017.

### **Forest Health Workshop**

October 6th, Everett

Join WA Department of Natural Resources forest health specialists for an in-depth workshop on forest health. Topics covered will include forest health concepts and issues, Western Washington forest insects, Western Washington forest diseases, and abiotic impacts (e.g. drought, pollution, storm damage). Registration is open and space is limited. Details and registration information are available at <http://snohomish.wsu.edu/forestry/foresthealth12.htm> or by calling 425-357-6017.

### **Wind Damage Workshop**

November 6th, Preston

Join us this fall as we get into our windy season to learn about how to properly care for your trees and your forest before (prevention) and after (clean-up) a windstorm. This is a reprise of the popular workshop we did last year. Registration is open and space is limited. Details and registration information are available at <http://snohomish.wsu.edu/forestry/wind12.htm> or by calling 425-357-6017.

## **Forest Stewardship Coached Planning**

Our flagship course teaches forest landowners how to prepare their own forest stewardship plan with guidance and "coaching" from natural resource professionals. A written stewardship plan may qualify you for property tax reductions and cost share assistance. You will also learn how to keep your forest healthy and productive, attract more wildlife, and achieve your specific ownership objectives.

Usually we offer this series once or twice a year, but for 2012 we have a total of four classes on tap. The Whidbey Island class is complete, we're midway through the online class (which has been a huge success), and we've got two classes coming up in the fall in Bellevue and also on Vashon (rescheduled from this spring). **Registration is open** for both the Bellevue and Vashon classes

- **Vashon: October 3rd – November 28th.** After a several-year absence, we are happy to be returning to Vashon Island this fall. Classes will be on Wednesday evenings at the Vashon Land Trust Building, and there will be two Saturday field trips. Details and registration information are available at <http://snohomish.wsu.edu/forestry/CP12Vashon.htm> or by calling 425-357-6017.
- **Bellevue: October 4th – December 6th.** Our fall class will be on Thursday evenings in southeast Bellevue this year at the Lewis Creek Park Visitor Center. This is a smaller facility, so space is more limited this year than usual. Since we've always sold out in the past (with more space), be sure to reserve your spot early for this class. Also, special discounted rates are available for City of Bellevue residents. Details and registration information are available at <http://snohomish.wsu.edu/forestry/CP12Bellevue.htm> or by calling 425-357-6017.

*And save the dates for 2013 Coached Planning classes:*

- **Online** (for Western WA properties) – Wednesdays January 16 – February 27
- **Everett** – Thursdays February 28 – April 25

## Tent Caterpillar Outbreaks

We are seeing lots of activity by the western tent caterpillar this year, especially in the islands (Whidbey and San Juans). I want to assure everyone that while their activity may be unsightly and a little disconcerting, it is completely normal. These are native insects that are a natural part of our forests. We do not recommend spraying chemicals for this. Mechanical control (e.g. removing and disposing of branches with tents) or tolerance (i.e. waiting it out) are the best courses of action.

Here is some great information on the subject from WA DNR entomologist Karen Ripley:

“Western Tent Caterpillar is a native insect that has 3-year population outbreaks on (about) a 9-year cycle. We've been watching for them this year, especially since it's been about 8-9 years since the last outbreak on Whidbey Island (which was JUST like this, maybe worse) and we saw abundant tents on parts of San Juan Island last summer. These tent caterpillars feed on the foliage of red alder, cottonwood, fruit trees and many other broadleaf trees and shrubs. They hatch from an egg mass in approximately May, when the new foliage is emerging. Initially they shelter in a silken “tent,” leaving it to feed and returning to shelter during times of adverse weather and at night. The tents are usually the most conspicuous

sign that an outbreak is present – the dark mass is highly visible and persists in the branches even after the caterpillars have finished feeding and matured enough to pupate and metamorphose into moths (which then, in about August, mate and lay eggs for next year's batch of caterpillars). The caterpillars themselves can be a nuisance, they make your trees look crummy (temporarily) and are kind of gross with droppings, stench, and creepy-crawly-ness. The caterpillars will stop feeding and disappear for the year soon. The trees will produce a new crop of foliage soon. It's extremely rare that significant damage occurs and that's generally only during times of severe drought (which is not present now). As for the nuisance – yep. You own your property to enjoy it, but spraying pesticides won't help make your property a healthy place to enjoy or change the tent caterpillar trajectory significantly either. You can do other things such as kill (squish) caterpillars you can reach. Search (later) for egg masses to destroy by hand. And you can watch for signs of parasitic flies and wasps and viruses that will be encouraging to you because it is these creatures that will kill large numbers of the caterpillars and bring this outbreak down in the end. It does take about 3 years for an outbreak to run its course. This is part of living in the Pacific Northwest. It will pass, and return, and pass again.

Hand here is some more great information from WSU Extension entomologist Sharon Collman:

“Western tent caterpillar has a beneficial role in nature in that defoliated trees may become more efficient in their physiological processes and compensate by producing more leaves. Defoliation also allows light and water to reach the forest floor so the understory plants benefit. At the same time all the digested leafy material rains down as thousands of little caterpillar poops. When water moistens them, the microbes can feast, returning nutrients back to the plant. A wonderful circular system. The most common parasitoid of western tent caterpillar is a tachinid fly. She lays a white egg on the body (most often around the head area) of the caterpillars. The maggots feed on non-essential organs then the major organs last. Tolerance is fine for us who are tolerant, but many people find caterpillars just too creepy to live with. In peak years, roads become slick with their wandering bodies creating traffic hazards; one man said his wife left and wouldn't come back until the caterpillars were gone; in Seattle during a peak year the 911 lines were clogged with caterpillar calls, preventing answering real emergencies. Quick fixes include pruning out tents where practical. The usual garden pesticides will kill the caterpillars but leave an unsightly batch of cadavers hanging on the silken pads and the tents still remain. A better solution when caterpillars are bivouacked low on the trunk is to reach up and work the fingers under the silken pad and slowly pull it down (the caterpillars will hang on), and wrapping it hand over hand until silk and caterpillars are all pulled off, place it in a paper bag, freeze it and toss it in the compost. DO NOT use torches to flame them. Handmade torches of string and rags, burn through the string and the rag unravels and has caused roof, dry grass fires and burned people severely. The flame isn't so good on the tree either.”

Want to learn more about these and other forest insects? Here are some additional resources:

- Forest Insects in Western Washington – WSU Extension online class available at <https://extension.wsu.edu/forestry/FSU/Pages/om19.aspx>.

- Biology and Control of Tent Caterpillars – WSU Extension website available at <http://gardening.wsu.edu/library/inse003/inse003.htm>
- Western Tent Caterpillar – USDA Forest Service Forest Insect and Diseases Leaflet (FIDL) #119 available at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/nr/fid/fidls/fidl-119.pdf>

## Market Update

Here is the latest news on log prices in the Puget Sound area based on data provided by our friends at DNR in their monthly Timber Sale Query reports.

Log prices have been pretty stable over the past several months. Alder is down a little bit, but not horribly so. Otherwise, trends are pretty flat.

For an updated price graph, please visit

<http://snohomish.wsu.edu/forestry/documents/LogPrices.pdf>

## Forestry in the News

- *Bloomberg BNA* ran an article on new rules proposed by the EPA that will mean that logging roads do not need discharge permits for stormwater runoff: <http://www.heraldnet.com/article/20120208/NEWS01/702089883>
- The *Missoulian* reports on some...interesting new logging techniques: [http://missoulian.com/news/local/u-s-forest-service-workers-fell-day-s-worth-of/article\\_71f4354a-a550-11e1-b5c2-001a4bcf887a.html](http://missoulian.com/news/local/u-s-forest-service-workers-fell-day-s-worth-of/article_71f4354a-a550-11e1-b5c2-001a4bcf887a.html)
- *The Daily News* reports on the gradual comeback of the regional lumber market: [http://tdn.com/news/local/regional-lumber-market-continues-gradual-comeback/article\\_82a96d64-a222-11e1-9a8f-0019bb2963f4.html](http://tdn.com/news/local/regional-lumber-market-continues-gradual-comeback/article_82a96d64-a222-11e1-9a8f-0019bb2963f4.html)
- *The Daily Herald* (Everett) reports on a Whidbey Island forest that has been put into a conservation trust: <http://www.heraldnet.com/article/20120407/NEWS01/704079941>
- *The Daily Herald* (Everett) reports on the first log shipment from the Port of Everett in eight years: <http://www.heraldnet.com/article/20120308/NEWS01/703089975>
- *The Daily Herald* (Everett) ran an AP article on the need for forest restoration in light of current fires: <http://www.heraldnet.com/article/20120613/NEWS02/706139795/>
- *The Daily Herald* (Everett) reports on the 2012 Darrington silviculture challenge competition between UW and UBC forestry students: <http://www.heraldnet.com/article/20120303/NEWS01/703039945/>

- The *Yakima Herald-Republic* reports on the use of winter logging in parts of the state, which takes advantage of the snowpack to minimize ground disturbance: <http://www.yakima-herald.com/stories/2012/02/25/frozen-forests-logging-in-winter-protects-ground-from-damage/>
- *The Seattle Times* ran an AP article on accounting for natural wealth: [http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/business/technology/2018454591\\_apgreenaccounting.html](http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/business/technology/2018454591_apgreenaccounting.html)
- *WSU News* reports on research at WSU showing the negative impact of common forest herbicides on butterflies: <http://news.wsu.edu/Pages/Publications.asp?Action=Detail&PublicationID=30665&PageID=>
- Here's an interesting article from UPI.com on the ability of plants to smell disease and react: [http://www.upi.com/Science\\_News/2012/03/05/Study-Plants-can-smell-disease-and-react/UPI-62661330980131/#ixzz1oRblj7gY](http://www.upi.com/Science_News/2012/03/05/Study-Plants-can-smell-disease-and-react/UPI-62661330980131/#ixzz1oRblj7gY)

## Focus on: Carbon Credits

This is part three of a four-part series that started back in September 2011. If you missed (or forgot) the first two parts, I recommend going back and reviewing the September and November editions of this newsletter, as they provide important context for this next part of the discussion. ([http://snohomish.wsu.edu/forestry/documents/Newsletter\\_04\\_04.pdf](http://snohomish.wsu.edu/forestry/documents/Newsletter_04_04.pdf) and [http://snohomish.wsu.edu/forestry/documents/Newsletter\\_04\\_05.pdf](http://snohomish.wsu.edu/forestry/documents/Newsletter_04_05.pdf))

Through about 2008, carbon credits were seen as a huge potential opportunity for forest owners, and voluntary markets were becoming well-established. The markets were voluntary because companies were not required to buy carbon credits to offset emissions, but many did so voluntarily as part of an environmental ethic and/or for marketing purposes. The Chicago Climate Exchange emerged as a leading venue for carbon credit trading. Prices exceeded \$7 per ton in mid-2008, which began to enter the realm of financial feasibility for forest owners.

A key barrier for the average forest owner to sell carbon credits was (and still is) the cost of doing business. Most small landowners would not have nearly enough carbon by themselves to sell credits in mainstream exchange markets. So a landowner would need to enlist the services of an aggregator, which is a third party who contracts with a bunch of different landowners, aggregating them as one unit with enough collective carbon to trade in the marketplace. There are fees associated with aggregation services, as well as other expenses such as the need to have a robust, professional forest inventory done to document the volume of timber and associated amount of carbon. At low carbon prices, the cost of just doing business exceeded the value of the carbon credits. In other words, it might cost you \$5 in documentation and aggregation expenses to get \$1 worth of carbon credits. Obviously

the whole purpose of a forest owner pursuing carbon credits is to generate supplemental revenue, so selling credits at a net loss was not going to work.

There were other problems, too. There was (and still is) great disagreement over what should qualify for carbon credits. A key term here is “additionality,” which is the idea that more carbon is sequestered as a result of payment for carbon credits than would have otherwise been sequestered in the absence of those payments. Many interests did not think that existing forests provide additionality, but only newly planted forests where there was not forest previously. The argument here was that paying landowners for what they would have done anyway does nothing to mitigate climate change. Others felt that existing forests should indeed qualify for credits, as that would provide the necessary incentive to maintain the land as forest, rather than converting it to another more economically advantageous use (like real estate development), which is a very real alternative for many landowners. The argument here was that it does not make sense to pay one landowner to plant a forest while another landowner cuts the forest down.

There was also sharp disagreement over what type of forest management qualified for carbon credits. Key terms here are “permanence” and “leakage.” Permanence is the idea that carbon sequestered remains sequestered and is not re-emitted through logging, fires, etc. Many interests wanted carbon credits only to be given for forests where the landowner would never harvest the timber. Others argued that sustainable harvest of timber for the production of long-lived wood products still amounted to the long-term sequestration of carbon. There was further argument that if there was not adequate timber harvest, that there would be greater usage of alternative building materials such as steel and concrete, the manufacturing of which results in huge carbon emissions. This brought in the concept of leakage, which is the idea that carbon sequestered in one place should not simply cause the carbon to be emitted elsewhere in another way (in this case, carbon sequestered in the forest could cause result in more carbon emitted by steel mills, etc.). For more background on these issues, please refer to parts one and two of this series, especially the discussions of carbon pools and substitution.

There was hope (circa 2008) that these disagreements would be resolved and that the price of carbon would continue to rise to the point of being a worthwhile endeavor for forest owners. There was also expectation that there might be a federal cap and trade law enacted, which would have required companies to offset their carbon emissions and would have caused the value of carbon credits to go up significantly.

Instead, what happened was a major economic collapse. Cap and trade was dead on arrival, as there was no way Congress would consider placing expensive new restrictions on businesses in a time of deep recession and widespread layoffs and bankruptcy. Furthermore, companies could no longer afford the luxury of purchasing voluntary carbon credits, so the voluntary markets collapsed. The price of carbon plummeted to just pennies, and the Chicago Climate Exchange ceased operation at the end of 2010.

So where does that leave us today? Could carbon credits make a comeback in the future? It is certainly possible, though I think there would have to be profound social, political, and

economic changes nationally and globally for that to happen on a large scale. There are still some small-scale opportunities out there for landowners to sell carbon credits. There are some companies and organizations looking to buy credits as part of their environmental ethic, and it is possible for landowners to connect with these willing buyers. There are also organizations out there, including local ones like Northwest Neutral, who work to facilitate such connections.

Overall, though, I do not see carbon credits as a broad, mainstream opportunity at this time (there simply are not enough willing buyers currently). For landowners who want to try to pursue some of the small-scale “niche” carbon markets, it will be important to look at the numbers carefully to make sure the benefits are worth the cost of the transaction. It will also be important to look carefully at the contract requirements to ensure that they do not conflict with broader management objectives.

## Tidbits

- Registration is open for the annual Western Washington Forest Owners Field Day, which will be Saturday August 18th near Olympia. For details and registration, please visit <http://extension.wsu.edu/forestry/Documents/WWAFOFD12.pdf> or call 509-667-6540.
- We have a new short video up on YouTube about inoculating logs to grow edible mushrooms: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOWCS5qbTOY>. And after you watch the video, you can check out the blooper reel of outtakes (making the video was harder than I thought it would be!): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wVYentMnzjQ>
- Help me reach 200! Our Facebook page now has 198 likes (far more than I ever anticipated). I'll be giving some presentations to other Extension professionals this summer on using social media in Extension programming. In anticipation of that, I'm trying to see if we cross the threshold of 200 likes. So if you're on Facebook, come check us out at <http://www.facebook.com/wsuforestry>.

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