

PROJECT OVERVIEW

NCSSF Research Project C2

Existing and Potential Incentives for Practicing Sustainable Forestry on Non-industrial Private Forest Lands

Project Leader

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The structure of public and private financial incentive programs for U.S. non-industrial private forest owners was developed in the 1940s and 50s. It was motivated by concern over timber scarcity and recognition that more intensive management of private forests could increase the timber supply. The first incentive programs were designed to encourage more active management for timber. Over the past several decades, policy concerns have shifted toward stewardship and sustainability, but most existing incentive programs follow the same structure.

Key Issue

There may be a disconnect between practices that these incentive programs encourage and practices associated with sustainable forestry.

Project Objectives

The four objectives were to:

- identify tax, cost-share, and other types of financial incentive programs with potential for enhancing sustainable forestry on non-industrial private lands
- evaluate the relative effectiveness of various programs and methods of administering similar programs
- provide insight into interactions between different types of programs
- disseminate the study findings to forestry practitioners and policy-makers through an integrated package of deliverables.

Key Findings

A review of literature, survey of state management assistance foresters, and focus groups of non-industrial private forest owners yielded three conclusions:

Federal and state financial incentive programs play a limited role in promoting sustainable forestry practices on non-industrial private forests. There is no structural disconnect between these programs and sustainable forestry. Forest owners want to practice sustainable forestry, and the programs promote sustainable forestry practices. However, the programs play a minor role in owners' land-use and management decisions.

There are considerable differences between regions in forest owner objectives and interests, consistency between owner objectives and incentive programs, program administration, and owners' perceptions of the programs' effectiveness and appeal.

Three key findings delivered a consistent message across all four national regions:

- The highest program priority among forest owners is one-on-one access to a forester or other natural resource professional to walk their land with them and discuss management alternatives.
- Financial incentive programs need flexibility to address regional differences in forest characteristics and owner objectives.
- The most effective way to increase the impact of financial incentives would be to ensure adequate funding and stable program requirements over time.

Deliverables

The project team members are communicating the findings through popular summaries and refereed publications directed toward the study's user audiences. Publications in the following outlets will address the needs and interests of each audience:

- non-industrial private forest owners: *Forest Landowner* and *Tree Farm Magazine*
- public and private foresters: *The Consultant* and the *Northern*, *Southern*, and *Western Journals of Applied Forestry*
- researchers and policy-makers: *Forest Policy and Economics* and *Resource Management and Optimization* or the *Journal of Forest Economics*.

When copyright regulations permit, electronic copies of or links to the articles will be sent to NCSSF for inclusion in the project website.

The team members are also communicating with user audiences in the following ways.

Non-industrial private forest owners:

- making presentations at annual meetings of forest owner organizations
- encouraging forest owner organizations and other organizations that represent non-industrial private forest owners to link their websites to the project website.

Public and private foresters:

- making presentations at the annual meetings of public and consulting forester organizations
- encouraging public and consulting forester organizations to link their websites to the project website.

Researchers and policy-makers: making presentations at national and regional conferences for forestry professionals and state tax professionals

PowerPoint files used in the presentations were provided to NCSSF for inclusion in the project website.