



Family Forest Research Center

Focusing on Families to Conserve Forests

We are a partnership of the USDA Forest Service
and the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

www.FamilyForestResearchCenter.org

Family forest owners include the families, individuals, trusts, estates, family partnerships, and other unincorporated groups of individuals that own private forests.

the issue

Family forest owners control 263 million acres (or 35%) of U.S. forests. They face decisions about if and how to manage their land and whether or not to develop, subdivide, sell, or pass on their property to heirs. Complex social and ecological factors influence these decisions. The cumulative impacts of millions of family forest owners' independent decisions will determine the future of U.S. forests.

our mission

The Family Forest Research Center studies the behaviors and attitudes of the people who own forests. By investigating the social, political, and economic dimensions of family forest ownership, we seek to improve forest conservation in order to better meet the current and future needs of forest owners, communities, and society.

our objectives

- Conduct cutting-edge, collaborative research with partners from government, non-governmental organizations, and universities with expertise in forestry, human dimensions, geography, spatial analysis, land change science, economics, and policy analysis
- Understand family forest owners' attitudes, behaviors, and demographics
- Understand the factors affecting family forest owners' decisions and the effects of these decisions on forest ecosystems and society
- Share our results and inform effective forest policy



“All of us have different goals and objectives, but the one thing we all have is pride of ownership.” **Family forest owner, Washington**





“I like my privacy, and I like being close to nature.”

Family forest owner, Massachusetts



“We all love being out in the woods, and it’s my dream to keep our land in the family.”

Family forest owner, Alabama

RESULTS FROM OUR NATIONAL WOODLAND OWNER SURVEY

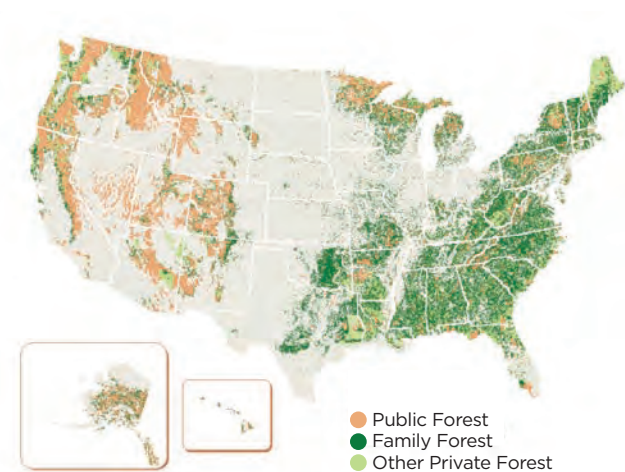
Facts about **Family Forest Owners**

- 61% of owners own fewer than 10 acres
- 1 in 3 forest owners are 65 years of age or older
- Average land tenure is 26 years
- Most owners own land for beauty/scenery, privacy, nature protection; to pass on land to heirs; and because it is part of their home site

Facts about **Family Forest Land**

- 53% of family forest land is owned by people with 100 or more acres
- 1 in 5 acres is owned by someone who plans to sell or transfer some or all of their land in the next 5 years
- 2 in 5 acres are owned by absentee owners
- 1 in 5 acres is owned by someone who has written a forest management plan and 58% of family forest land is owned by people who have commercially harvested trees

FAMILY FOREST OWNERSHIP IN THE U.S.



The Family Forest Research Center asks the important questions.

www.FamilyForestResearchCenter.org

Are family forest owners . . .

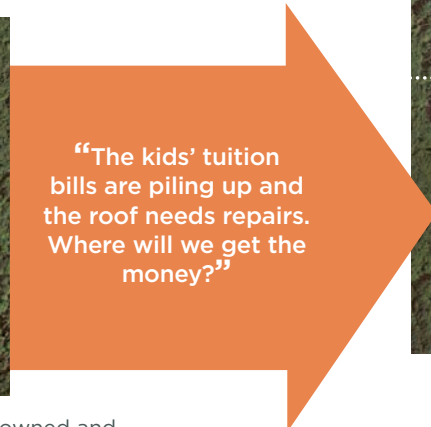
- aware of land **conservation options**?
- choosing to participate in forest **conservation programs**?
- driving **land-use change** along the urban-rural gradient?
- appropriately accounted for in **forest policies**?

Family decisions **drive forest change**



THE OWNER The Smiths have owned and lived on 50 forested acres for the past 25 years.

THE LAND The property provides privacy, walking trails, clean well water, and the potential for sustainable timber harvesting.

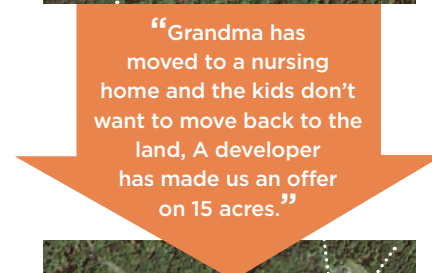


“The kids’ tuition bills are piling up and the roof needs repairs. Where will we get the money?”



THE OWNER The Smiths decide to sell two lots. A new owner builds a driveway and home.

THE LAND Now there are three, smaller properties. The new development fragments the forest and provides an inroad for invasive species.



“Grandma has moved to a nursing home and the kids don’t want to move back to the land. A developer has made us an offer on 15 acres.”



THE OWNER The Smiths decide to sell more land to a developer for a subdivision. New driveways and homes are built.

THE LAND Further development disrupts wildlife habitat and trails, more wells affect groundwater supply, and timber harvesting is no longer economical.

Forest owners are making many decisions across the landscape that affect forest fragmentation, habitat connectivity, and ecological function. Questions arise about how changes in climate, species distributions, and markets will impact the land and, in turn, future forest owner decision making.

- affected by federal, state, and local **taxes**?

- influenced by **social networks** when making decisions?

- better served through **social marketing**-based outreach?

- interested in **carbon sequestration** programs?

- agreeable to having **biomass** harvested from their land?

- willing to provide **recreational access** to the public?

- concerned about and reacting to **climate change**?

- harvesting **non-timber forest** products from their land?

We are implementing the National Woodland Owner Survey, the Conservation Awareness Index, and other tools to answer these questions.

“We’re trying to figure out how we can keep our land intact after I kick the bucket.”

Family forest owner, Wisconsin

The decisions of millions of family forest owners across the landscape and over time will shape the future of U.S. forests and the public benefits they provide. Since 2006, the Family Forest Research Center has been conducting collaborative research that

- **illuminates** family forest owner behaviors, attitudes, and decision making;
- **informs** effective forest policy; and
- **increases** forest conservation.



FAMILY FOREST RESEARCH CENTER

160 Holdsworth Way
Amherst, MA 01003

or e-mail us at:

info@familyforestresearchcenter.org

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