Private Forest Owners: Past, Present, and Future

Brett J. Butler
U.S. Forest Service

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Questions to be addressed

- How are forest ownership patterns changing?

- What are some of the implications for the forestry community?
Changing ownership patterns

- Public lands increasing
- Forest industry decreasing
- Family forests:
  - Smaller holdings
  - More absentee owners
  - Increased importance of amenity values
  - More “environmental” concerns
National Woodland Owner Survey

Conducted by the U.S. Forest Service, Forest Inventory and Analysis program

To better understand:
- Who the landowners are
- Why they own land
- How they have used it
- How they intend to use it
National Woodland Owner Survey

- Self-administered questionnaires
- Since 2002, approx. 6,000 landowners contacted per year
- Response rate: 51%
- Total number of responses: 14,919
National Woodland Owner Survey

Coming in 2008:
- General Technical Report
- On-line data access tool
- Survey assessment and redesign
Forest Ownership in the U.S. – 2006

- Federal: 33%
- Other private: 21%
- Family: 36%
- State: 9%
- Local: 1%

All forests
Private Acres

Size of Forest Holdings (ac)

1993 2006

Private forests
Private Owners

![Bar chart showing the size of forest holdings in millions for owners between 1993 and 2006. The chart displays data for different size ranges: 1-9, 10-49, 50-99, 100-499, 500-999, and 1000+.](chart.png)

Private forest owners
How are family forest owners changing?

- Land characteristics
- Ownership objectives
- Forest management?
- Concerns
- Future plans
- Demographics
Land Tenure

Percent of Family Forest Land

<10 10-34 25-49 50+

Land Tenure (Years)

"Newer" Owners

"Older" Owners
Reasons for Owning

- Beauty/scenery
- Privacy
- Family legacy
- Hunting
- Nature protection

Older owners vs Newer owners

Family forests: 10-999 ac
**Older** owners are more likely to be interested in:
- Timber production
- Firewood production

**Newer** owners are more likely to be interested in:
- Recreation
- Hunting
- Privacy
- Land investment

Family legacy and aesthetics are equally important to both groups.
Absentee and Farm Ownerships

Absentee owners
- Old: 37%
- New: 56%

Farm owners
- Old: 43%
- New: 37%
Harvesting and Forest Management

**Harvested trees**
- Old: 61%
- New: 42%

**Written management plan**
- Old: 17%
- New: 12%

**Received management advice**
- Old: 34%
- New: 33%
**Older** owners are more likely to be concerned about:
- Legacy
- Property taxes
- Insects
- Fire
- Regulations
- Storms

**Newer** owners are more likely to be concerned about:
- Regeneration
- Exotics
- Air pollution
- Development
- Noise
- Trespassing
Implications

- Increased importance of family and other non-industrial (and foreign) forests
- Increased financial pressures
- Need to adapt to owners changing needs, desires, and circumstances
- Outreach moving from the Grange to Starbucks
- How to prioritize limited resources
Influencing Behavior

- Moving beyond the “model owners” and targeting the “prime prospects”
- Misperceptions about forests, forestry, and other concepts
Sustaining Family Forests Initiative

A collaboration among government, industry, conservation, certifications, landowner, and academics organizations

Our goal is to conduct social marketing research:
• That will serve as a wide-ranging resource
• To aid in the development of outreach and services
Sustaining Family Forests Initiative

Population of interest: Family forest owners with 10-999 ac

Phase I – Quantitative
- National Woodland Owner Survey
- Cross-tabulations
- Attitudinal segmentation
- Prime prospects segmentation

Phase II - Qualitative
- Focus Groups
- Validation of Phase I
- Underlying motivations
- Language
- Messages
Social Marketing

Selling ideas, not products

Examples:
- Anti-smoking
- Mothers Against Drunk Driving
- Smokey Bear
Attitudinal Segmentation

- Woodland retreat
- Working the land
- Supplemental income
- Uninvolved
Attitudinal Segmentation

- Woodland Retreat: 30%
- Uninvolved: 23%
- Working the Land: 25%
- Supplemental Income: 22%

Family forests: 10-999 ac
Sustaining Family Forests Initiative, 2006
Prime Prospects Segmentation

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Unengaged in land management
Prime Prospects Segmentation

- Model Owners: 27%
- Prime Prospects: 29%
- Potential Defectors: 36%
- Write-offs?: 8%

Family forests: 10-999 ac
Sustaining Family Forests Initiative, 2006
Prime Prospects and Attitudinal Segmentations

- Woodland Retreat
- Supplemental Income
- Uninvolved
- Working the Land

Model Owners
Prime Prospects
Potential Defectors
Write-offs?

Family forests: 10-999 ac
Sustaining Family Forests Initiative, 2006
Communication Messages

Do
• Hit hot button issues
• Stress options

Don’t
• Be preachy
• Go global

“You get a lot of satisfaction from your woodlands. They are beautiful, relaxing, colorful, full of life. Preserver that satisfaction for future generations.”
Words Do Matter

- Very few forest owners own any forest
- They talk about specific features of their land and specific management practices
- Terms like stewardship, sustainable management, and forest health are not part of their regular vernacular
- They do not strongly differentiate between conservation and preservation
- The terms forester and logger have mixed connotations
Social Marketing: “Surround Sound” Communications

- Online
- Partnerships
- Events
- PSA/Advertising
- Celebrity Sightings
- Direct Mail
- Retail
- News Media
A Social Marketing Example

Grandpa, Please Don’t Sell!
A Social Marketing Example

We sold the family forest...do we look happy?

Sustaining Family Forests Initiative, 2006
Summary

1. Owners are changing, so too must forestry
2. Need more effective and efficient methods for influencing owners
Credits

- National Woodland Owner Survey
  - Brett Butler
  - Earl Leatherberry

- Sustaining Family Forests Initiative
  - Scott Wallinger
  - Mary Tyrrell
  - Brett Butler
  - Larry Wiseman
  - Geoff Feinberg
  - Bill Banzhaf
  - Bob Fledderman
  - Eric Norland
  - Judy Langer
  - Don Ferguson
  - Scott van Manen
Questions?

Brett Butler
U.S. Forest Service
Amherst, MA

bbutler01@fs.fed.us
413.545.1387