Understanding and Reaching Family Forest Owners: Lessons from Social Marketing Research

Brett J. Butler – U.S. Forest Service
Mary Tyrrell – Yale University
Geoff Feinberg – GfK Custom Research
Judith Langer – Langer Qualitative
Donald Ferguson – Fleishman-Hillard

International Symposium on Society and Resource Management
Burlington, VT       June 10-14, 2008
Pop Quiz
According to 1,000 likely voters: who owns most of the forests in the U.S.?

A. U.S. Government
B. Forest industry
C. Family forest owners
Forest Ownership in the United States, 2006

- Family: 36%
- Federal: 33%
- State: 9%
- Local: 1%
- Other private: 21%
Who are the family forest owners?
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
Size Matters: Size of Family Forest Holdings in the United States, 2006
Correlations between Size of Holdings and Management Practices
Family Forest Ownership Objectives
United States, 2006

- Aesthetics
- Family legacy
- Privacy
- Nature protection
- Part of home or cabin
- Land investment
Family Forest Ownership Objectives (continued)
United States, 2006

- Hunting or fishing: 40%
- Part of farm: 40%
- Other recreation: 30%
- Timber production: 30%
- Firewood production: 20%
- Nontimber forest products: 10%

Percent of Family Forest Land
Management of Family Forests
United States, 2006

- Timber harvesting
  58% of family forestland

- Forest management plan
  18% of family forestland

- Management advice
  37% of family forestland
Demographics of Family Forest Owners
United States, 2006

Age: 44% 65 or older

Occupation: 52% retired

Gender: 84% male

Race: 96% white

Education: 41% college degree

Income: 27% $100,000 or greater
Plans for the next 5 years?
United States, 2006

None/minimal
Firewood
Timber
Heirs/sell
Buy

Percent of Family Forest Land

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80%
Pop Quiz
Who is this?

A. Woodsy Owl
B. Smokey Bear
C. Connie Fir
D. Santa Claus
Social Marketing

Selling ideas, not products

Examples:

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

- Woodland retreat
- Supplemental income
- Working the land
- Uninvolved
Attitudinal Segmentation
United States, 2006

- Woodland Retreat: 32%
- Working the Land: 25%
- Supplemental Income: 21%
- Uninvolved: 22%
Prime Prospects Segmentation

- **Engaged in land management**
  - Favorable attitudes toward stewardship
    - Model Owners
  - Unfavorable attitudes toward stewardship
    - Potential Defectors

- **Unengaged in land management**
  - Prime Prospects
  - Write-offs?
Prime Prospects Segmentation
United States, 2006

- Model Owners: 24%
- Prime Prospects: 30%
- Potential Defectors: 37%
- Write-offs: 9%
Prime Prospects and Attitudinal Segmentations
United States, 2006

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

Percent of Forest Land

Model Owners
Prime Prospects
Potential Defectors
Write-offs?
Social Marketing: “Surround Sound” Communications

- Online
- Partnerships
- PSA/Advertising
- Retail
- Direct Mail
- Celebrity Sightings
- Events
- News Media
Words Matter

- Most forest owners don’t own any forests

- Need to use their terms, not ours
Motivations

- Deep love of the land
- Aesthetics
- Privacy
- Country living
- Family legacy
- “They’re not making any more of it”
Forest Management

- Active management is a good thing
- “Sustainability,” “stewardship,” and “management” are turn offs
- Mixed feelings about foresters and loggers
General Communications

- Peer to peer
- Mass media
  - Local papers
  - TV
  - Magazines
- Internet
- Civic organizations
Message Testing

• Positives
  – Love of the land
  – Multiple benefits
  – Owner responsibility
  – Options

• Negatives
  – Preachy
  – Jargon
  – Global issues
Conclusions

- Family forest owners rule!
- Size matters
- Beauty, legacy, and privacy
- Reaching beyond the choir
- They are a bunch of old guys
Questions?

Brett Butler
U.S. Forest Service, Amherst, MA

bbutler01@fs.fed.us; 413.545.1387

www.sustainingfamilyforests.org
www.fia.fs.fed.us/nwos