



Rural Technology Initiative

Working Paper 8

Forest Stewardship Coached Planning in Washington State

June 2007

David M. Baumgartner

Patricia J. Cohn

Amy Grotta

Andy Perleberg

Donald P. Hanley

Arno Bergstrom

Natural Resource Sciences, Extension

PO Box 646410

Washington State University

Pullman, WA 99164-6410

and

Steve Gibbs

Washington State Department of Natural Resources

Forest Practices Division

P.O. Box 47012

Olympia, WA 98504-7012



**USDA Forest Service
State & Private Forestry
Cooperative Forestry**



**University of Washington
College of Forest Resources**

Box 352100, Seattle, WA 98195

www.ruraltech.org



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Forest Stewardship Coached Planning in Washington State

Summary

Written forest management plans have long been viewed as important tools for building stewardship among family forest owners. Plans are also a way for landowners to clarify and implement practices to meet their management goals. There are three basic types of forest management plans in the state: 1) tax plans, 2) commercial production plans, and 3) stewardship management plans. Forest stewardship management plans, the focus of this paper, contain more detailed information than tax plans and are more oriented to forest ecosystems and multi-resources than commercial plans. There are three primary ways family forest owners obtain forest stewardship plans in the state: 1) hire a consulting forester; 2) participate in the Department of Natural Resource's personal coached management plan writing program; or 3) attend a Forest Stewardship Coached Planning (FSCP) course. From 1992 to 2005, over 2,000 family members and others, representing more than 1,300 family forests in Washington attended a Forest Stewardship Coached Planning course conducted by Washington State University Extension (WSUE) and the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The course provides forest stewardship education and assists private forest landowners in writing their own forest stewardship management plans with guidance and 'coaching' by natural resource professionals. The course has proven to be a highly successful approach for educating family forest owners and improving management of their forests. A survey of past course participant's was conducted in 2006. As a result of the course, 96% of the respondents had a better understanding about management options, and 73% had implemented a practice they would not have done otherwise. Management planning is prevalent among the respondents, with 61% having a written plan and another 9% knowing what they want to do without having a written plan. Course participants expressed strong interest in attending future topic-specific forest stewardship classes. Ninety-nine percent of participants would recommend the course to others. These results validate the FSCP program as a successful approach in educating family forest owners about forest stewardship practices, producing forest stewardship plans, and implementing forest practices. Key to this success is the three-pronged educational approach of traditional in-class lectures and discussions, a hands-on, learn-by-doing field day in a group setting, and one-on-one individual site visits by a forester or other natural resource professional. This educational model empowers landowners with knowledge and helps them to put practices on the ground. WSUE and DNR are using the results of the survey in planning future FSCP courses and other forest stewardship educational events.

Introduction

Family forests or non-industrial private forests (NIPF) are important in Washington State, totaling 3.1 million acres or nearly 20% of Washington State's total forestland and are held by an estimated 100,000 family forest owners. It has long been noted that private forestlands provide ecosystems services such as clean water and wildlife habitat along with resources such as recreation and timber. Although management for timber ranks moderately high as an ownership objective among Washington State family forest owners, many landowners, especially new landowners, are interested in managing their land for wildlife, recreational, and environmental purposes (DNR 2002, Blatner *et al.* 2000). Forest stewardship plans are a way for landowners to clarify and implement practices to meet their management goals.

As described below, landowners in Washington State have three main options for obtaining a stewardship plan. One of those is by attending a Forest Stewardship Coached Planning course (FSCP) offered by Washington State University Extension (WSUE) and the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR). This program was established in 1992 and has since served over 1,100 family forest owners. Coached planning courses are currently offered in only a few states including Washington, Montana, and Idaho.

Previous assessments of the course (Theoe and Bergstrom 1996, Perleberg 2001) evaluated local programs; these assessments were conducted after the course had been running a few years and surveyed only participants who attended some courses on the west side of the state. The purpose of the study presented here was to conduct a comprehensive, statewide assessment of the coached planning approach of educating and helping landowners to write their own management plans and to measure the impacts of the course on landowners and their management practices. The study also sought to derive a profile of course participants, knowledge gained, stewardship plan completion rate, and practice implementation. To answer these and other questions, WSUE evaluated its FSCP course by conducting a statewide survey of past participants from 1992 through 2005. This paper presents the results of that survey after giving an overview of forest stewardship plans in the state and the FSCP course.

Forest stewardship plans are products of the federal Forest Stewardship Program created by the *Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act* of 1978, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 2103A. A primary goal of this federal program is the development of comprehensive, multi-resource management plans that provide landowners with information to manage their properties for a variety of products and services. The federal program provides technical and financial assistance through state forestry agency partners to encourage owners to develop plans (USDA Forest Service 2006). By September 1998, almost 149,000 forest stewardship plans had been completed nationally (USDA Forest Service 1999). In Washington for the period 1997–2005 inclusive (9 years), the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) approved 2,992 Forest Stewardship Plans covering 230,000 acres of forestland for an average of 332 plans per year on ownerships averaging 80 acres (Gibbs 2006).

The Forest Stewardship Coached Planning (FSCP) multi-session course is designed to assist family forest owners with writing their own forest stewardship plans and to educate these owners about the management and stewardship of their forest resources. In Washington, Washington State University Extension (WSUE) and the Washington State DNR collaboratively conduct the FSCP course.

Forest landowners with a forest stewardship plan approved by the DNR are eligible to participate in federal cost-share programs which provide funds to pay for implementation of forest stewardship practices, and other forestland designation programs such as the DNR Stewardship Forest Program.

Also, tax incentive programs for landowners with approved forest management plans are available in all Washington counties. Coached planning participants may submit their completed forest stewardship plans to their county to qualify their property for current use taxation programs.

Washington counties have an interest in managing and maintaining private forestland in Washington and encourage the development and use of forest stewardship plans. For example, in King County, Washington's most populated county, county government is concerned about the increasing urbanization and development of interface areas and wants to retain forestland "for its environmental, social, and economic benefits" (King County 2006). Retention of forest cover also reduces County costs for storm water treatment and flood control. The County's Forestry Program in collaboration with WSUE helps landowners develop and write multiple resource management plans to encourage retention of forestland. King County also offers tax incentives, training through WSUE, and technical assistance to landowners with as few as 4 acres of forestland (King County 2006). Approved forest stewardship plans provide King County forest owners with some flexibility with respect to the County's Critical Areas Ordinance, which governs land use and development. For example, with an approved plan, a landowner can implement forest practices in sensitive areas such as wetlands or slopes; without a forest stewardship plan, the property owner would be subject to costly development permits to implement such actions.

Private Forest Management Plans In Washington State

There are three basic types of forest management plans in Washington State: 1) tax plans, 2) commercial production plans, and 3) stewardship management plans. These types of plans contain different levels of information; much depends on the author and the owner's goals. Tax plans usually contain only the 'bare bones' information necessary to receive reduced property tax rates. Commercial production plans are strongly oriented to the production of commercial forest products, i.e. growing forests to produce the greatest possible volume of high quality wood in the shortest timeframe possible. Forest stewardship management plans, the focus of this paper, contain more detailed information than tax plans and are more oriented to forest ecosystems and multi-resources than commercial plans (Sachet 2006).

Forest Stewardship Plans

The primary purpose of these DNR-approved plans is to help guide landowners in achieving their management objectives and to increase the economic and environmental contributions of their properties to society. Preparation and implementation of a DNR-approved Forest Stewardship Plan are entirely voluntary and at the landowner's discretion. However, there are four specific cases when a written management plan is required: 1) To qualify the property for reduced forestry property tax rates; 2) To qualify the property for recognition as a "Stewardship Forest" in the DNR Forest Stewardship Program; 3) To qualify the property for certification as a Tree Farm in the American Tree Farm System; and 4) To receive federal cost-share funds (financial assistance) to help pay for implementation of forest stewardship practices (Gibbs 2006).

In Washington, there are three primary ways family forest owners can obtain a DNR-approved Forest Stewardship Plan: 1) hire a consulting forester; 2) participate in the DNR's personal coached management plan writing program; or 3) attend a FSCP course. The authors estimate that of all DNR-approved Forest Stewardship Plans (1997–2005 inclusive), 75% were written by consulting foresters, 5% through personal coached plan writing, and 20% by participants of a FSCP course.

Plans Prepared by Private Consultants

Hiring a consultant to write a forest management plan is usually the quickest way to obtain one. The cost for a basic plan covering 80 acres ranges from \$500 to \$1,500; however, the cost rises accordingly with the addition of additional services, such as an intensive timber inventory. There are federal government funded cost-share programs that will provide up to 75% (to a maximum of \$800) of the fee. Plans created through cost-share programs must meet particular criteria and be approved by a DNR forester.

Personal Coached Management Plan Writing Program

Under this method, the owner works directly with a DNR forester who makes a site visit, helps set management goals if needed, and provides information or sources to begin compiling the plan. The DNR forester reviews a draft plan written by the landowner, provides suggestions for changes, and returns the plan for revisions. The advantage of this method is cost savings for the landowner. It generally takes 45 to 90 days to produce a completed plan.

Forest Stewardship Coached Planning Course

The FSCP course provides owners with assistance similar to the Personal Coached Management Plan process, but takes place in a classroom and field setting over a 6–9 week period. Courses are offered throughout the state and are taught by WSUE and DNR staff, along with consultants and other public agency employees. The goal of the course is to provide basic forest ecology and management information and methods needed for family forest owners to write their own plans and to help them manage their properties. Quite often, many family members participate in FSCP courses fostering “family” interaction and intergeneration approaches to land management.

FSCP Course Background

The first Forest Stewardship Coached Planning course in Washington was offered by WSUE in 1992. To encourage action beyond the classroom, Arno Bergstrom, WSUE Field Educator, in collaboration with Don Theoe, DNR Stewardship Forester, adapted a concept from Montana State University Extension that involved owners in the plan writing process. Partial funding to initiate the program came from the USDA Forest Service Cooperative Programs. This initial effort became a course that now meets one night per week (2+ hours) for 6 to 9 weeks (length varies by locally determined curricula variations) plus a field day where course participants practice identification and inventory skills they have discussed in class. Class size ranges from 15–40 students and costs about \$150. Participants can also receive an on-the-ground, personalized consultation by a DNR Stewardship Forester and/or biologist to discuss plan development and implementation. Course promotion and registrations are handled by WSUE. WSUE and DNR provide lead instruction with assistance from other public agencies and private consultants.

The course gives students a basic understanding of forest ecology, management practices, and setting management goals. Landowners—with guidance from instructors—are encouraged to write their own forest stewardship plans. Course participants receive a notebook of study materials and related reference publications, which then becomes a sort of reference library. The typical curriculum includes: forest stewardship, management objectives, mapping, forest ecology, fish and wildlife habitat identification, inventory and enhancement, conducting resource inventories, measurements, silvicultural techniques, tree/plant identification, forest soils, riparian areas and water quality issues, forest health, site regeneration, special forest products and cultural resource protection, and finally, taxes, legal issues, forest practice regulations, and incentive programs.

Course participants who complete a Forest Stewardship Plan for their property may submit the plan for approval to participate in the Forest Stewardship Program administered by the DNR. Landowners with approved plans may qualify for reduced ‘current use’ property tax rates from the county assessor, as well as federal cost-share programs that provide monetary incentives for implementing forest management practices such as pre-commercial thinning, upgrading of culverts, and rehabilitation of sites that have been taken over by noxious weeds.

The Importance of Plans and Extension Education

Written forest management plans have long been viewed as important tools for building stewardship among family forest owners. Not only do plans foster sustainable forestry, but they also serve to educate and engage family forest owners (Munsell and Germain 2004). Written plans are a motivating factor for implementing forest practices. In a national survey of participants in the Forest Stewardship Program, Esseks and Moulton (2000) reported that over three-quarters of NIPF owners with a written plan had started to implement their forest management plans. In the Pacific States (which include Washington State), 82% of respondents had begun to implement their plans. Over time, landowners with plans are likely to implement more practices (Egan *et al.* 2001, Jennings 2003).

Extension programs and services have been linked to plan development and implementation. Munsell and Germain (2004) found that family forest owners active in forestry extension programs were more likely to have a forest management plan and that the likelihood increased with greater participation in forestry extension activities. Further, they found that extension programs transfer stewardship values and sustainable forest management information, and in turn, written management plans increase the frequency and likelihood of plan implementation.

In Washington State, Baumgartner *et al.* (2003) found that users of WSU Extension services are more likely to conduct active forest management projects and may have a clearer understanding of the multi-use capabilities of their forests. An earlier survey of FSCP participants in two western Washington counties (Theoe and Bergstrom 1996) focused on commitment to and implementation of plans completed through the WSUE FSCP program versus professionally prepared plans. That study found that landowners had learned enough to be able to prepare management objectives and make sound management decisions. Perleberg (2001) in a three-county study in northwest Washington found that 50% of WSUE FSCP coached planning participants completed plans and 88% implemented practices with or without a plan.

Egan *et al.* (2001) and Jennings (2003) report similar findings from their evaluations of the Forest Stewardship Program in West Virginia—participation in landowner assistance programs increased the likelihood of implementing forest practices. For a number of practices (e.g. road construction, timber harvest) a reference to the practice in the plan increased the likelihood of its implementation by several times than plans that did not reference the practice.

Methods

To assess the impacts of the FSCP course in Washington, Washington State University Extension conducted a survey of past course attendees. The current WSUE and DNR team responsible for teaching the FSCP course developed the questionnaire based on course experiences and participant interactions. In the winter of 2006, the questionnaire was mailed to individuals or families who took the WSUE FSCP course between 1992 and 2005. Where multiple members of a family attended the course, only one copy of the questionnaire was sent to that family. The Social and Economic Sciences Research Center (SESRC) at Washington State University conducted the survey using Dillman's total design method with a three-wave mailing (Dillman 2000): an initial mail contact that included a cover letter and survey booklet, a reminder/thank-you contact sent one week after the first mailing, and a third contact sent to non-respondents three weeks after the initial mailing, including another questionnaire and an updated cover letter. Addresses were obtained for 1,115 family forest ownerships that had participated in the coached planning course. Some addresses had been lost over time, so the actual number of course participants is estimated to have been more than 1,300 families and others.

Results

With 554 responses, the overall response rate (completed and partially completed questionnaires divided by the total sample size) was 49.7%. After removing the undeliverable and ineligible mailings, the completion rate (completed and eligible completed questionnaires divide by eligible sample) was 60%. The response rate was higher for more recent course attendees, (75% of the respondents had attended a FSCP course within the past five years 2001 to 2005). Most of the 158 undeliverable addresses were those of course attendees from the early years of the FSCP course and had likely moved, changing addresses, since taking the course.

Respondent Profile

Respondents owned an average of 168 acres of forestland with a median of 21 acres. The demographic profile of the respondents (Table 1) was similar to that found in other surveys of private forest landowners in the state, mostly white, male, well-educated, well-off, and older (Blatner *et al.* 2000, DNR 2002, Creighton *et al.* 2002). About 53% of the principal decision-makers were male, 18% female, and 29% of respondents made joint family decisions. Most of the respondents had owned the land for more than five years, and 16% had owned their land less than five years.

Table 1. Profile of survey respondents.

Characteristic	Range	Relative frequency (%)
Age (n = 514) (median 58 years)	<40 years	4
	40 – 55	38
	56 – 70	43
	+70	15
Education (n = 520)	Never attended school	0.2
	Elementary School	0.2
	High School	9
	Trade School	5
	Some college	42
	Graduate school	43
Employment (n = 488)	Retired	37
	Employed Full-time	32
	Other Self-employed	19
	Employed Part-time	6
	Self-employed Farmer/Rancher	4
	Homemaker	2
Income (n = 440)	0 - \$25,999	9
	\$26,000 – \$50,999	31
	\$51,000 – \$75,999	23
	\$76,000 – \$99,999	18
	\$100,000 +	28
Amount of land owned (acres) (n = 530) (median = 21 acres)	< 10	22
	10-50	52
	51-100	11
	101-400	5
	+400	10
Years owned (n = 522) (median = 15 years)	< 5 years	16
	5 – 14	33
	15 – 29	27
	30 – 79	21
	80+	2
Principal decision-maker (n = 517)	Male	53
	Female	18
	Joint family	29

Landowner Motivations for Taking the Course

Although the course is marketed and taught with the completion of a written management plan as the primary focus, only 58% of respondents indicated that this was their reason for taking the course (Table 2). Learning how to manage and understanding more about forest resources were the most cited reasons for taking the course. Eighty-two percent of respondents indicated that learning about forest stewardship planning and management was the reason they took the course and 66% took the course to learn more about forested and other ecosystems. Qualifying for reduced taxes was important to 31%.

Table 2. Reasons for attending the Forest Stewardship Coached Planning Course.

Reason for taking course	Relative frequency (%)
To learn more about forest stewardship planning and management	82
To learn more about forested and other ecosystems	66
To write a forest stewardship plan	58
To enroll or continue enrollment in tax incentive programs	31
To learn more about technical assistance	26
To learn more about educational assistance	16
To learn more about cost-share programs	15

Forest Stewardship Plan Completion and Family Participation

Writing a forest stewardship plan was a reason why 58% of the respondents took the course (Table 2), and 56% actually completed a written plan (Table 3). Most respondents had done some sort of stewardship planning and 69% had some type of purposeful plans for their forests. This included 61% with a written plan and another 8% who had made a mental plan and didn't believe they needed a written plan. Having a written plan was of interest to many who did not complete one, with lack of time (7%) and indecision about goals (5%) were the main reasons for not writing a plan: *"Although I have not completed the 'forest plan,' the class helps me think 'what if.' I was hoping to work on the plan this winter but work and kids keep me very busy,"* noted one respondent.

Table 3. Prevalence of written management plans and reasons for not preparing written plans.

Status of plan	Relative frequency (%)
Completed a written forest stewardship plan during or after the course	56
Already had a written plan	5
Did not write a plan because I know what I want without a plan	9
Did not write because I am undecided about my goals	5
Did not write a plan because I have not had time	7
Did not write a plan because I need more technical assistance	2
Did not write a plan – other	16

Plans completed through the FSCP course covered an average of 81 acres per ownership with a median size of 21 acres, reflecting the small to medium size parcels owned by respondents (see Table 1). Some plans were written for properties of less than a few acres and 10% of the plans were for properties larger than 140 acres.

Setting management goals and writing a plan were often a family effort. Seventy percent indicated that a spouse helped with the plan; children helped with 13%, and other family members with 20% of the plans. This 'family approach' may be a key factor in the strong follow-through in implementing forest stewardship practices. In many instances, a husband and wife or multiple family members attended the course. Although detailed records were not kept, the authors estimate that a total of over 2,000 family members, representing 1,100 family forests, attended the course.

Knowledge Gained by Course Participants about Forest Stewardship

It appears that the course has been highly successful in imparting new knowledge to family forest owners (Table 4). Over 90% of respondents indicated that they had learned useful information about 7 of the 12 major course topics. More than 80% reported learning useful information on three of the 12 topics, and over 70% learned useful information about two of the 12 topics. As a result of taking the forest stewardship coached planning course, 96% of all respondents said they had a better understanding about management options for their forestland.

Table 4. Fraction of respondents gaining useful information by course topic.

Topic	Relative frequency (%)
Forest health	98
Improving/protecting wildlife and fish habitat	97
Growing or caring for trees	97
Forested ecosystems	96
Forest soils	94
Mapping/describing my property	92
Timber and wood products	90
Improving/protecting water quality	86
Protecting property from wildfire	85
Special forest products/agroforestry	82
Forest recreation, aesthetics, and cultural resources	77
Threatened and endangered species	71

It also appears that there is strong interest for additional or advanced forest stewardship courses for course graduates (Table 5). The survey presented a list of 25 potential topics for future courses, and most respondents indicated that they were somewhat to very interested in all of the potential topics. Some respondents were very interested in even the lowest-rated topics of grazing management and fisheries enhancement. Although many owners do not have fish-bearing streams or graze livestock, these topics are perceived as important by those landowners who have these resources. And advantage of having site visits by a professional natural resource professional is that family forest owners who have unique interests and questions not addressed by the course can receive information and instruction on these topics.

Table 5. Interest in attending future and advanced forest stewardship courses.

Topic	Relative frequency or respondents ‘somewhat to very interested’ in attending (%)
Forest insects and diseases	82
Tree/plant identification	80
Ecosystem management	77
Fire protection	76
Wildlife habitat enhancement	76
Thinning	76
Reforestation	73
Brush control	72
Wildlife identification	70
Forest practice laws	70
Forest estate planning	65
Forest inventory	64
Forest soils/fertilization	64
Animal damage control	62
Non-timber forest products	59
Water quality	59
Streamside/wetland vegetation	56
Harvesting/selling timber	55
Taxes and record keeping	52
Hardwood management	52
Conversion from brush and hardwoods to conifer forest	51
Road construction and maintenance	43
Fisheries enhancement projects	36
Grazing management	27

Forestry Practice Implementation

As a result of taking the course, 73% of the respondents reported implementing a forestry practice that they would not have implemented otherwise. Respondents reported that they had undertaken or would possibly undertake a wide variety of practices, reflecting the individual and differing interests and resources of course participants. Table 6 reports the four stewardship practices most frequently undertaken or contemplated in the following categories: growing or caring for trees; improving/protecting wildlife and fish habitat; improving/protecting water quality; and forest recreation/aesthetic enhancement. These findings are consistent with other studies showing that family forest owners participating in WSEU educational programs are more likely than non-participants to implement forest management practices (Creighton *et al.* 2002, Baumgartner *et al.* 2003).

Table 6. Top five stewardship practices undertaken or planned.

Practice	Percentage responding 'yes'	Percentage responding 'No' or 'Maybe in future'
Growing or caring for trees		
Control competing grasses, weeds, or brush	73%	23%
Plant trees or shrubs	69%	26%
Pruning	64%	28%
Non-commercial thinning	49%	37%
Site preparation prior to planting trees	49%	37%
Improving/protecting wildlife and fish habitat		
Control non-native vegetation	72%	23%
Create snags or downed woody debris for wildlife	63%	27%
Retain 'wildlife trees' during harvest activities (above minimum required)	44%	43%
Plant trees and/or shrubs specifically for wildlife	40%	46%
Install nest boxes or platforms	33%	53%
Improving/protecting water quality		
Maintain roads/culverts to ensure drainage and minimize erosion	52%	26%
Restrict stream and vehicle access to protect soil	39%	27%
Seed for erosion control	33%	40%
Install erosion control devices on roads	29%	35%
Close, rehabilitate, or abandon roads	15%	25%
Forest recreation/aesthetic enhancement		
Create/maintain trails	65%	25%
Thin/prune for aesthetics	56%	30%
Plant trees/shrubs for aesthetic purposes	49%	34%
Allow individuals to access with permission for hunting, hiking, other outdoor activities	38%	22%
Activities to improve aesthetics for outside viewers	36%	30%

Attitudes Concerning Recommending the Course to Others, Comments, and Testimonials

Perhaps one of the strongest indicators of how respondents valued the forest stewardship coached planning course is whether or not they would recommend the course to other landowners. A positive response was almost unanimous, with 99% agreeing they would recommend the course to other landowners. Further favorable feedback is reflected in the following selection of comments and testimonials volunteered by survey respondents: *“I thought I knew quite a bit about forestland because I previously owned 80 acres, but after I took the class, I really learned volumes more and was able to help my parents, who still own a family farm and timberland,”* and *“Very useful information; format covered wide range of topics, some I had not considered before; very helpful in organizing management strategy and goals for the future—highly recommended; in fact two friends of mine attended the course at my suggestion and recommendation. Thank You!!”*

Course Participation and Use by Resource Professionals

Although not the target audience of the course or the focus of the study, resource professionals have attended almost every FSCP course. Records are not adequate to give an exact number, but the authors estimate that resource professionals have made up approximately 5% of the FSCP course attendees. It has been observed by the authors that these resource professionals, representing public (state, federal, tribal) and private land management organizations, frequently incorporate the knowledge and skills gained from the class into policy and management practices on public and large-scale private lands. Also, the concept of working-forests as a means to conserve forestland has become attractive to land trust organizations and county governments, in a few FSCP courses, personnel from county assessor offices attended the classes to learn more about forestry on family-owned parcels. Land trust managers take the stewardship ideas learned in class and apply them to lands with conservation easements in order to conduct forest stewardship practices and to maintain forest health.

Conclusions

The Forest Stewardship Coached Planning course conducted by Washington State University Extension and the Washington Department of Natural Resources provides personalized instruction and is highly successful in educating and motivating forest owners, assisting them with planning and implementing management practices. The ‘family approach’ of having spouses, children, and other family members attend the course and participate in plan development appears to also be important in plan completion and management practice implementation.

This course also influences more than landowners; almost every FSCP course has been attended by a small number of resource public and private resource professionals who use the knowledge and skills gained in managing public, private, and land trust forests. This included staff from county assessor’s offices, so they can better understand the importance of management plans. The completion of plans through the FSCP program is also helping county governments, which are using written plans in the implementation of family forest taxation policy and land use planning policy in efforts to retain family forests ownerships brought on by population growth and urbanization.

As measured by key respondent indicators, the FSCP course as conducted by WSUE and DNR is making a difference and positively impacting family forest management in Washington. Key respondent impact indicators include:

- 98% said they gained useful information.
- 96% said they had a better understanding about management options for their forestland.
- 73% reported implementing a forestry practice that they would not have implemented otherwise.
- 70 % have planned management (56% having completed a written plan as a result of the course, 5% who already had a written plan prior to the course, and another 9% knowing what they want to do without having a written plan).
- 99% would recommend the course to other landowners.
- Strong interest in attending future advanced forest stewardship educational courses.

The results of this survey validate the FSCP program as a successful approach in educating family forest owners about forest stewardship practices, producing forest stewardship plans, and implementing forest practices. WSUE and DNR are using the results of the survey in planning future FSCP courses and other forest stewardship educational events. Advanced and specialized courses are being planned for alumni of the FSCP program.

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