



Forest Facts

OREGON'S FAMILY-OWNED FORESTS

February 2015

Oregon's family-owned forests

Oregonians who own no more than 5,000 acres of forest are known as family forestland owners. Some earn their living selling timber from their land, while others have non-forestry careers that provide their primary livelihood.

Combined, they own and care for nearly 4.7 million acres of prime Oregon forestland, about 44 percent of Oregon's privately owned forestlands.

Half of them say they wouldn't sell their land for any reason. Although these families number about 70,000, to most Oregonians they are largely invisible. Half are 65 or older. Four of every 10 are women. Many have owned their land for more than 25 years.

Most family forestland owners undertake extensive improvements on their lands. They've planted seedlings, removed invasive species, improved streamside areas, enhanced wildlife habitat, logged and thinned trees, reduced fire hazards, maintained roads and written forest management plans to help them keep their properties healthy and sustainable.

If you live in the outlying areas of Oregon's metropolitan centers, family forestland owners are likely to be your suburban neighbors. These owners benefit from the expert advice of stewardship foresters who work for the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), extension foresters from Oregon State University and private consultants.

"Trees grow slowly," says Mike Barsotti, an ODF retiree. "As a result, a landowner may undertake a particular management



Although trees and forests grow slowly, most family forestland owners work hard, undertaking extensive improvements to their lands.

action only once in his or her ownership tenure, so institutional memory is short. That's why it's important to be there for them when they have a need for assistance with anything from harvest to habitat enhancement."

Boosting local economies

Family forestland owners annually harvest about 425 million board feet of timber or about 11 percent of the state's total timber output. With federal timber harvest at historically low levels, timber supplies from family forests have become very important to mills as they try to ride the ups and downs of global markets.

Unfortunately, increasing economic pressure during recent decades has made forestry on smaller forested tracts less



Oregon's so-called "family forestland owners" collectively own and manage 44 percent of Oregon's privately owned forestlands. These lands provide environmental, social and economic resources that benefit all Oregonians.



affordable. A host of challenges including rising labor and fuel costs, changing raw timber markets and declining numbers of experienced loggers, haulers and mills, have reduced potential income from forest owner stewardship.

Conversion to non-forest uses, including residential development that permanently removes the land from forest use is becoming more common. Oregon will either create a positive environment for continued family forestland ownership into the future or we will not. If not, some of the most visible forestlands could largely disappear into other, non-forested uses.

While challenges exist for the future of family forestlands in Oregon and across the nation, so do potential solutions. Conservation easements, biomass fuel markets, recreation opportunities and carbon credits hold some economic potential for landowners to offset costs. There is also some potential for developing niche or specialty markets for locally grown forest products.

Help for family forest landowners

In Oregon, private consultants are available to assist owners of small forested properties. A number of organizations are also available – here's a few of them:

Committee for Family Forestlands

The Committee provides information and counsel to the Oregon Board of Forestry and State Forester in matters relating to family forestlands, including protection of resources and positive contributions to Oregon's vitality. "The Committee performs valuable work for the state, consistently looking ahead to find ways to protect resources and maintain a viable family forestland base," says Lena Tucker, Deputy Chief, Private Forests Division.

For more info: www.oregon.gov/ODF/pages/board/cff/cff.aspx

The WOW Network - Women Owning Woodlands

Many owners of small forested properties are women, and the Women Owning Woodlands Network is there to assist them. WOW Network offers both meetings and hands-on workshops, and has more than 300 members in Oregon.

For more info: www.womenowningwoodlands.net/

Oregon Small Woodlands Association (OSWA)

OSWA represents the interests of family forest landowners in Oregon. Their 3,000+ members are represented at the legislature and receive a newsletter and magazine, and attend a range of helpful workshops and woods tours.

For more info: www.oswa.org/

Oregon Tree Farm System (OTFS)

OTFS implements the Sustainability Standards and the educational and recognition programs of the American Tree Farm System (ATFS) in Oregon. ATFS was founded in 1941. Membership requires a written plan and certification that forest management is being done to a set of internationally recognized sustainability standards.

For more info: www.otfs.org/

Stewardship Foresters / Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF)

Through its Private Forests Program, ODF's 51 stewardship foresters are available to assist owners of small forested properties all over the state. They offer professional expertise on best management practices. Questions may range from insects and disease to managing for fish passage or overcoming reforestation challenges.

For more info: www.oregon.gov/odf/privateforests/pages/findforester.aspx



Photo left-side: Planting seedlings is a big deal in a tree-growing state such as Oregon, and millions of new seedlings are planted on private lands each year. Photo right-side: A healthy and prosperous Oregon relies on the health of our natural resources, and particularly our forests. Healthy functioning ecosystems found on privately-owned forests contribute to this effort.