

Stewarding Wisconsin's Forests

A Look at Extension's Forestry Programming

With approximately 17 million acres of forestland covering nearly 49 percent of the state's landscape, Wisconsin's forests are a critical ecological and economic resource. They enhance water, air, and soil quality, provide wildlife habitat and food, and offer opportunities for recreation, hunting, and fishing.

In Wisconsin, forests are a powerful economic engine, with the industry employing over 126,000 people and contributing \$42 billion to the state's economy each year. Stewardship of this resource is crucial to continue the quality of life, jobs, and significant economic impacts that forests provide. Owning 68 percent of Wisconsin's 17 million acres of forested land, private landowners are central to this stewardship and the future prosperity of Wisconsin's forest-based economy.

UW-Madison Division of Extension partners with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the US Forest Service, providing outreach and education programs to Wisconsin's forestry community. These programs foster thriving forests and a robust forest products industry through:

- Sustainable forest management
- Assistance with wildlife management
- Improved industry efficiency and product quality
- Workforce and professional development
- Product diversification through agroforestry

Private Landowners

Much of Wisconsin's forestland is experiencing environmental pressures, which presents challenges for forest health and maintaining biodiversity. Because 75 percent of private woodland owners do not have a land management plan, Extension works closely with partners to educate landowners and connect them to available resources.

Covering topics from tree planting and controlling invasive species to timber harvests and growing mushrooms, UW-Madison Extension Forestry educators equip landowners with knowledge and skills so they actively steward their forests and plan for the future. Programs like Learn About Your Land; Your Land, Your Legacy; and Women Owning Woodlands aim to help landowners create plans that help them reach their goals – whether that is securing their family's legacy, increasing wildlife habitat, creating economic opportunities, or harvesting timber for personal use.

By getting landowners out on the land, we help them witness the real-world impact of stewardship – enhancing both recreational value and financial gain. The Coverts Project, a four-day residential workshop on managing woodlands for wildlife habitat, encourages landowners to engage with their neighbors and communities, creating a community dedicated to woodland management.

We work with landowners to address the two most common barriers they face in stewarding their woods: finding and paying for a forester to write a management plan. The Wisconsin Stewardship Plan Project helps landowners overcome both barriers by pairing eligible landowners with private foresters, who then write the forest stewardship plans, and connecting landowners to cost-share options to fund their plans.



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Farmers/Producers

For some landowners, forests provide an additional opportunity for diversifying income. Agroforestry is a land management approach that integrates trees and shrubs into agricultural landscapes. It combines agriculture and forestry practices to create more sustainable and productive land use systems, generating multiple income streams from the same land.

Our Agroforestry program works with woodland owners who are interested in high-value non-timber forest products like ginseng, saps/syrups, and gourmet mushrooms. Selling these products diversifies farm income and makes landowners less vulnerable to market fluctuations or single-crop failures. Our outreach also helps landowners plan and implement practices to improve their operations, such as silvopasture, alley cropping and windbreaks.

Foresters

Through field days and courses, Extension offers opportunities for foresters to stay current on best practices and new trends in forest management while earning continuing education credits so they can better serve landowners.

Through our partnership with the Wisconsin Forestry Center, we support the SilviCast podcast, forest management webinar series, in-person courses, and the creation of tools, such as the Photographic Guides to Defects in Hard Maple and Red Oak, to help foresters support the industry.

Forest Products Industry

Extension works with the forest products industry, especially the solid wood products industry, to find ways to keep Wisconsin at the forefront of the industry. Through sharing new knowledge and technology, we help companies prepare for new trends. We also test production techniques to develop cost-effective methods and inform managerial decision-making.

The forest products industry faces workforce shortages and an aging labor force. Extension partners with the industry to develop and provide workforce training programs in forestry operations and sawmill operations. Extension educators lead immersive courses that prepare potential and current employees working in forest product manufacturing for roles that are critical to primary and secondary wood operations. Offering course opportunities close to home makes them economical and accessible to industry professionals.

In addition to workforce development, Extension has developed forestry and wood products curricula for high schools to introduce students to careers in the forest industry.

Ready to Partner

Sustainably managed forests benefit present and future generations. If you have questions about forestry or forest management, get in touch with us.

We're ready to partner with you.

WISCONSIN FORESTRY CENTER

The Wisconsin Forestry Center (WFC) provides dedicated service for the needs of Wisconsin's forestry community, including professional development, workforce recruitment and development, applied research, and community outreach initiatives. Located at UW-Stevens Point, the WFC works closely with UW-Madison Division of Extension specialists and educators, UW-Stevens Point forestry faculty, and industry partners to deliver high-quality, application-based forestry professional development trainings.

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FORESTRY NATURAL RESOURCE EDUCATORS

Forestry educators and key partners lead classes and other efforts to engage landowners in the sustainable management of Wisconsin's privately owned forests. Current programs include Learn About Your Land; Women Owning Woodlands; Your Land, Your Legacy; Agroforestry; Maple Syrup; Climate Resilience; and the Wisconsin Stewardship Plan Project.

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WOOD PRODUCTS

Extension Wood Products Specialists focus on forest products markets, wood product life-cycle analysis, and wood manufacturing process improvement; all strategies for remaining competitive within a global forest products marketplace.

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WILDLIFE

Extension Wildlife Specialists, found on both the UW-Madison and UW-Stevens Point campuses, serve and advise Wisconsin residents on matters relating to the sustainable use, management, and appreciation of wildlife resources. The Wisconsin Center for Wildlife's mission is to engage students, landowners, professionals, and the public in sustainable wildlife management through research, education, and outreach.

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