

Who Will Inherit the Family Woodlands? Talk About It

Next Generation of Landowners

The Challenge

Many woodland owners don't discuss the future ownership and management of their forest lands with their co-owners or heirs. Educating landowners about the importance of estate and succession planning for family woodlands and encouraging them to follow through will help conserve forested landscapes.

The Solution

In 2006, the U.S. Forest Service Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry (NA) began the Next Generation of Landowners (NextGen) initiative. The Area is reaching out to landowners and the professionals who serve and advise them with the NextGen message—the need for families to become knowledgeable and to discuss estate and succession planning.

The Northeastern Area has worked with a number of States to develop estate and succession planning workshops, publications, and other tools for woodland owners to help them start conversations and planning with family members. NA has also developed a tradeshow booth for outreach at agriculture and forestry fairs, conventions, and other venues. State partners in forestry and cooperative extension have been important to reaching woodland owners. Both NA and State partners have used the booth and accompanying publications to convey the importance of estate and succession planning to landowners and others in the forestry and agriculture community.

Resulting Benefits

- Providing estate planning tools to forest landowners will ultimately reduce the amount of forest fragmentation and parcelization

*“For environmental reasons, for social reasons, and for heritage and economic values, keeping family lands intact benefits us all.” — U.S. Forest Service
Chief Gail R. Kimbell*



The Next Generation initiatives encourage families to talk about estate planning.

- Forest landowners have greater access to advice and information about options for setting up estate plans.
- Resource management specialists have a tool to use when talking with forest landowners about their estate planning options
- Resource professionals have already talked with families who collectively own tens of thousands of forested acres.

Sharing Success

- Exhibited the NextGen display at numerous venues, including AARP conventions, National Wild Turkey Federation and Society of American Foresters conferences, and State events such as the Indiana Forest and Woodlands Owners Association meeting.
- Facilitated state-to-state technology transfer—Vermont, Maine, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Delaware, and Pennsylvania have developed or are planning estate and succession workshops.
- Implemented quarterly conference calls for States to exchange results and best practices, helping them to educate landowners more effectively.
- Identified a quality estate and succession planning curriculum for family forest owners called Ties to the Land developed at Oregon State University. At least two States have selected this ready-made curriculum for their workshops.



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