A Philosophy for Extension Educators about Carbon Markets

Melissa Kreye, Director, Forest Owner Carbon and Climate Education (FOCCE) program, Penn State Extension

August 28, 2023

In education and extension, we often pay attention to delivering “just the facts” or the science behind the topics our clients are interested in. This is also true when it comes to climate change and carbon incentives. Unfortunately, polarizing news around these topics can make it difficult to not share our personal opinion or remain unbiased in selecting what we teach. Today more than ever, what we teach and how we deliver our programs has implications for the environment and ecosystems. We at FOCCE believe the most important goal of extension education is to engage all types of landowners and communities in climate-smart forestry issues. How they choose to interact in that space, as economic actors, voluntary actors, educators, or advocates, is up to them because they are the people who will help create the new future for forests.

The carbon market programs we see today are only the “tip of spear” for establishing new ecosystem service marketplaces. These incentives are very much needed to help make private land ownership financially feasible and to support the continued provision of public goods, such as clean air, water, and wildlife. We also need to recognize the importance of supporting stewardship values and help landowners cultivate a land ethic around climate-smart forestry.

The following is a list of our values that help guide our practice of extension education. We hope this list will be of value to you as you look to bring climate-smart forestry information to your clients.

**FOCCE Values for Extension Programming**

1. Distribute content that is grounded in interdisciplinary science.
2. Be unbiased in the materials and information we present.
3. Prepare landowners and stakeholders to engage in forest management and the carbon economy.
4. Promote systems thinking so clients can independently navigate our changing forests and the carbon economy.
5. Address the values, needs, and conditions of the forest owner community and those who rely on this community.
6. Recognize and respect diversity in landowner capacity and motivation.
7. Recognize and respect diversity within the carbon economy and the government agencies that work with private landowners.
8. Be inclusive and acknowledge interconnections between social and ecological justice.
9. Foster agency within stakeholders to advance community-level action.
10. Build and sustain a community of practice around climate resilience and private forestlands.