



Reaching Underserved Communities with Climate-Smart Forestry: A Pilot Peer Education Extension Program with Women Forest Owners



Kripa Neupane, PhD Student, Penn State University, Melissa Kreye and Allyson Muth, Penn State Extension
Mysha Clarke, University of Florida, IFAS Extension; Janet Steele, Clemson Cooperative Extension

Introduction

Women have the potential to contribute to forest conservation and climate change solutions by being more involved in forest management decisions. However, many lack formative experiences in forest management which could be a barrier to participation in climate-smart forestry opportunities. A needs assessment study with women forest owners in Pennsylvania and South Carolina revealed that climate-smart forestry incentives could be useful for some legacy planning goals. Based on this, we designed a *peer-education program on legacy planning and climate change that trains community members to be informed*



Program Goals

- Help women connect their personal values about family and forest ownership to climate change mitigation/adaptation efforts.
- Initiate women to explore carbon incentives and legacy planning opportunities.

Participants



Collaborators and Contributors



Community Contributors: Susan Benedict, Pennsylvania forest owner, Dana Groom, South Carolina forest owner, Vivian Kirkland, South Carolina forest owner, Laura Jackson, Pennsylvania forest owner, Holly May, Pennsylvania forest owner, Betty Young, South Carolina forest owner.

Start your own group!

Resources and materials for this program are available to educators and communities.

Please contact:
Dr. Melissa Kreye
Director, Forest Owner Carbon and Climate Education Program
Pennsylvania State University
mxk1244@psu.edu

Approach

Stage 1: Group leader trainings

- How to build interpersonal skills
- How to identify the information needs of the group
- How to assist learners when completing assignments
- How to host discussion groups and meet and greet with professionals

Stage 2: Groups are established

- Cohorts made up of 2-4 forest owner families are arranged
- A forest values quiz is used to help to establish management priorities
- Extension materials on legacy plans and climate topics are curated for each group
- Forestry professionals are scheduled for a meet and greet

Stage 3: Launch Group Activities

- Learners review extension materials on their own
- Leaders host 2-3 guided discussion groups and assist with assignments
- Leaders host a meet and greet with select forestry professionals

Resources and Materials

- Extension resources on climate and carbon to pics
- Extension resources on legacy planning to pics
- Template for personalized invitation for participants
- Guide for the initial visit with learners
- Forest management priorities quiz
- Discussion guide for group meetings
- Forest visioning assignment
- Tips for hosting meet and greet meetings with professionals

Collaborative Learning Benefits (n =10)

Table 1. Legacy planning discussions (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree)

Statement	Mean Score
Participants felt free to communicate their opinions.	4.4
I really enjoyed listening to other people's point of view.	4.5
The discussions helped broaden my understanding of the issue.	4.2
The participants probably learned something from each other today.	4.1
I feel more comfortable talking about these issues with my peers in the future.	4.2
Grand Mean	4.28

Table 2. Forest carbon/climate change discussions (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree)

Statement	Mean Score
Participants felt free to communicate their opinions.	4.0
I really enjoyed listening to other people's point of view.	4.8
The discussions helped broaden my understanding of the issue.	4.5
The participants probably learned something from each other today.	3.8
I feel more comfortable talking about these issues with my peers in the future.	4.1
Grand Mean	4.24

Change in Perceived Knowledge and Motivation (n =10)

Table 3. Knowledge and attitudes towards legacy planning (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree)

Statements	BEFORE	AFTER	Difference
I think I am pretty good at understanding legacy planning topics	3.11	4.25	+1.14
I generally like learning about legacy planning alternatives	3.88	4.62	+0.74
I feel comfortable talking to my family about forest legacy planning	3.55	4.25	+0.70
I feel confident about making planning decisions in the future	3.22	4.25	+1.03
Grand Mean			+0.92

Table 4. Knowledge and attitudes towards forests and climate change (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree)

Statements	BEFORE	AFTER	Difference
I think I am pretty good at understanding climate related topics	3.4	4.1	+0.7
I like learning about climate change topics	3.1	4.7	+1.6
I believe understanding climate topics will help me or my forest in some way	4.3	5.0	+0.7
I believe understanding climate topics will help my community in some way	4.1	4.7	+0.6
I am concerned about what could happen if I don't do anything about climate change	4.0	4.4	+0.4
I have the skills to talk to my family and friends about climate change	2.6	4.0	+1.4
I have the skills to communicate about local climate impacts	2.5	3.8	+1.3
I have the skills to share strategies that can support communities and ecosystems	2.1	3.8	+1.7
Grand Mean			+1.05