



Extension Forestry

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Forester's Notes

The discomfort zone

Life can be uncomfortable. Lately it has been particularly uncomfortable for I think most people. Nothing feels normal. Violence, chaos, division, rancor, and the ongoing disease pandemic dominate the headlines. It's difficult to know whom to trust and what to believe. Other than the disease pandemic, none of this is new per se, but circumstances have aligned to make such issues particularly acute right now. The pervading sense of uncertainty about the future is also particular acute right now.

Things we always took for granted have been completely altered, and our lives feel upended. I was watching re-runs of the TV show "The West Wing" the other night, and

there was a line that really caught my attention: “The most costly disruptions always happen when something we take completely for granted stops working for a minute.” That quote from almost 20 years ago feels particularly prescient right now.

If I were to define my own comfort zone, I think it would include words like simple, familiar, consistent, safe, and predictable. What strikes me about this is that, aside from being comfortable, nothing really happens in this comfort zone. There’s no growth, no development, no expansion of the wisdom that comes with experience, and none of that special kind of clarity that only comes in moments of challenge, discomfort, and loss when we really see who we are and what’s important to us. When I think of people who made significant achievements that improved our world, I think of people who were operating way outside of their comfort zone. My own best achievements and growth came when I was the least comfortable.

Uncomfortable stewardship

As with life, growth and development of your forest may require venturing outside of your comfort zone. Undertaking silvicultural activities is daunting, especially major operations like thinning. Whether thinning or harvesting, for most people it’s a once-in-a-lifetime event. It involves working with a number of unfamiliar people, including loggers, foresters, and regulatory agencies. What should go into the contract? What’s a fair deal? Will it turn out how you want it? What if there’s a fire or a forest practices violation? Having a consulting forester on your team is essential and can mitigate the uneasiness, but the unfamiliarity, uncertainty, and risks remain.

Other activities can also take you into unfamiliar territory outside your comfort zone. Are you getting the right seedlings and planting them correctly? Do you need to work with a professional planting crew? How about invasive species control? Are you using the right method? If using herbicide, are you using the right product, is it really safe, and what do the unfamiliar terms on the label mean? Even fire risk reduction can be an uncomfortable endeavor. Is it really necessary? Are you removing too much vegetation? Will wildlife habitat suffer? While these are everyday matters for us foresters, it is not an everyday thing for you.

Another endeavor that I see people get uncomfortable with is cost share programs. The paperwork can be overwhelming. What are you getting yourself into? Is this program really meant for you? What if you accidentally violate one of the rules? What does all the jargon on the forms mean? Will you really be able to get the work done in the timeframe needed? A lot of folks shy away from these programs because they lie outside of the comfort zone. Yet, these programs are extraordinary opportunities for major achievements on your property that would otherwise be out of reach.

Venturing into these unknowns, however uncomfortable, may be essential for meeting your objectives of a healthy, thriving forest. Even our own health and vitality comes with some discomfort. How many of us avoid the exercise that would improve our health and longevity because it's uncomfortable? How many of us avoid the better foods we should eat because they don't taste as good?

The discomfort is usually temporary, though. A forest usually looks terrible right after a thinning, for instance, but give it a few years to recover and react and it becomes more beautiful and functional than you could have imagined. Similarly, when we get into patterns of exercise and healthy eating, our bodies adjust, it's no longer so uncomfortable, and we develop new tastes. More importantly, we see growth and vitality. We endure discomfort for the potential for a better tomorrow.

Mistakes are part of life

All of these stewardship activities have inherent risks and uncertainty—that's what makes them uncomfortable. You may make mistakes and suffer losses and setbacks. Mistakes are a part of life, and without giving ourselves the space and grace to make them, we'll never get anywhere. I tend to find it odd when people say they have no regrets in life. I feel like a life without regrets is a life not fully lived or at least never given a critical assessment.

Many mistakes are learning opportunities that provide growth and wisdom. In this respect, maybe they aren't so regrettable after all. Some mistakes, though, are repeats of past mistakes or things we knew weren't right but did anyway. That's part of the human condition. I certainly have my share of mistakes and regrets, and some of them are real whoppers. Some of my worst ones may still lie ahead, but I can't just hide from life so as to avoid anything uncomfortable or embarrassing.

Sometimes we can do everything right and things still don't turn out well. You could do a perfectly executed thinning operation that would put your forest on track for health, vitality, resilience, and quality habitat. There's always a temporary increase in vulnerability to storm damage right after thinning, though, and if there just happens to be a severe storm that winter, the stand may get trashed. Similarly, you could plant a thousand seedlings that are well-matched to your site and planted properly, but if there happens to be a severe drought that summer you may lose most of them. These situations are just bad luck, but that doesn't stop the feelings of regret. What can we do, though, aside from making the best decisions we can with the information we have? The alternative is to never do much of anything.

As we continue through this uncomfortable season, I encourage you to remember that growth occurs during discomfort. Does that make our current tribulations worthwhile? I wouldn't say that. I do believe, though, that the challenge of taking significant next steps for your forest are worth the effort, even if you make a mistake or run into bad luck. Great things may be waiting for you just outside your comfort zone.

Kevin W. Zobrist
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Serving the Puget Sound Area

2020 Washington Forest Owners Online Field Day – October 24th

Coming up next week!

Register for the [Field Day](#) now!

This year's regional field days will be combined into a single virtual event on Saturday, October 24, 2020 from 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. This event is free, but pre-registration is required. Are you interested but don't think you can make it to the live event on the 24th? Register anyway so that you will get access to the recordings after the event.

A different format

This year's field day will be quite different than usual in that it will be held online. Online field day is a bit of an oxymoron, but we are working hard to make it work. It will be a bit of an experiment. We will feature the same great content and instructors as usual, and per usual you will get to pick from a variety of session every hour. The sessions will be done over Zoom. Sessions cover both eastern and western Washington. A complete list of session topics is available on the [Field Day](#) website

The "field" day will be a hybrid of live and pre-recorded video. Most of the session content will have to be pre-recorded in the field, but the instructor will be on Zoom live as the pre-recorded content is playing, taking your questions in real time and pausing for discussion. The difference between this and our regular webinars is that the content is field-based, not PowerPoint-based.

This program is made possible in part by funding support from Washington State University, the Snohomish Conservation District, the Society of American Foresters,

Island County, WSU Extension Island County, and San Juan County. In-kind support is provided by the Washington Department of Natural Resources and others.

Winter 2021 Northwest WA Online Coached Planning course

Registration is now open for winter 2021!

Registration is now open for our winter online course. This course will be for **northwest Washington**, for properties in Clallam, Island, Jefferson, King, Kitsap, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, and Whatcom Counties. Southwest Washington and eastern Washington courses are also offered during the year. Visit the [WSU Extension Forestry Website](#) to see what courses are coming up for your region.

Space is limited and the course will sell out quickly. It is already filling rapidly from the waiting list left over from the fall courses. Register for the [northwest Washington Coached Planning course](#) now!

A forestry class for property owners

Would you like your property to be a recognized Stewardship Forest and be able to display the Stewardship Forest sign? Do you want to know why people say this is the best course they've ever taken? Would you like to walk your property with a professional forester, see things with new eyes, and learn about everything that is going on in your forest? Join us this fall for one of our two remaining 2020 Forest Stewardship Coached Planning courses, which will both be online.

Coached Planning is our flagship program. This comprehensive, university-based forestry class will help you get the most out of your property. Whether you have just a few wooded acres or a larger forested tract, if you have trees on your property, this class is for you!

Topics covered

- How do you know if your trees are healthy? What should you do if they aren't?
- What types of trees do you have? Does your forest look like a "mess"?
- Are characteristics of your property attracting or repelling the wildlife you enjoy? What can you do if wildlife cause damage?
- When should you worry about trees being hazards?

- How do you know if your trees need to be thinned, and how do you go about it?
- Are invasive and noxious weeds taking over your underbrush? What are the risks and what can you do about it?
- What kind of soil do you have and how does that affect what grows?
- What is the risk of wildfire on your property?

Save money, too

As part of this course we will "coach" you in the writing of your own simple forestry plan that may qualify you for property tax reductions or conservation cost-share grants.

When and Where

The evening classes will be held 6:00-9:00 p.m. Wednesday evenings, January 27th – March 17th, 2021, except for the first night, January 27th, when the class will end at 9:30 p.m.

Note: Due to COVID-19 there will be no in-person field trips for the 2021 class, but all participants are invited to join a future class field trip.

Location

Online – These courses will be offered via live, interactive webinars. A high-speed internet connection is needed. Dial-up will not work. You can also access the webinars with your computer or mobile device. Access instructions will be provided prior to the course.

Cost and Registration

What's Included:

- Eight live webinars taught by the state's recognized experts
- A digital library of reference materials and how-to guides
- A copy of the book Native Trees of Western Washington
- A consultation site visit to your property from a service forester. Site visits may be delayed until after the class is over due to the wildfires and COVID-19.

Cost: \$60

We know this is a difficult time financially for many people. Because of this, we have pulled together some additional funding to allow us to drop the normal \$200 per household/ownership course fee down to \$60.

Space is limited and is first-come, first-served. **This course will sell out very early.** Don't wait to register if you want to take the course. No refunds within 30 days of the course start date. For online registrations, Eventbrite processing fees are non-refundable.

Registration

If registering as a family from the same household/ownership, only do one registration for all of you—do not do separate registrations for individual family members.

The registration process includes a required short questionnaire. If you have forested property, please make sure you have your property information ready before you start the registration process, including acreage and county parcel number(s).

Register for the [northwest Washington Coached Planning course](#).

Acknowledgements and accommodations

This course is made possible in part by funding support from Washington State University, Island County, King County, King Conservation District, San Juan County, Skagit County, Snohomish Conservation District, and the Washington Department of Natural Resources.

Extension programs and employment are available to all without discrimination. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local Extension office. Reasonable accommodations will be made for persons with disabilities and special needs who contact us at puget.forestry@wsu.edu at least two weeks prior to the event.

New online resources

Small-scale sawmill directory

Many small-forest landowners do not harvest the quantity of timber necessary to access Washington's traditional forestry infrastructure and are looking for sawmills who will accept smaller quantities of logs as well as species that wouldn't go to a large commercial mill (e.g. walnut). We now have a searchable, up-to-date, statewide [small-scale sawmill directory](#). This directory is in the same format as our [consulting forester directory](#). The directory can assist property owners who wish to utilize timber from their own property, homeowners who would like to find a creative use for a backyard hazard tree, or woodcrafters looking for a local source of custom milled wood.

Invasive forest weeds website

We have a new [invasive forest weeds website](#) with links to a myriad of information about identification and control of most of the invasive weeds that plague small-forest landowners.

Recordings of spring/summer webinars

If you missed any of our 12-webinar spring and summer series, the recordings are now available on [our YouTube Channel](#).

Tidbits

Info on Asian giant hornets

By now you have probably heard in the news about invasive Asian giant hornets (“murder” hornets) and the danger they pose. WSU Extension has a new [Asian giant hornet fact sheet](#) with the information you should know about this.

Ken Bevis music video

For all you fans of singing DNR stewardship biologist Ken Bevis, check out this fun [music video](#) of his bear song.

Wildfire articles

Here are two recent articles about wildfire preparedness that are worth reading. There’s an important take-home message in the second one: If it’s time to evacuate, do so immediately without hesitation, and don’t necessarily wait until there is an order to do so.

[Fighting fire with fire in the Methow Valley](#)

[Is wildfire preparedness reporting a waste of time?](#)

Other Educational Opportunities

Disclaimer: Non-WSU events are listed for informational purposes with no implied endorsement by WSU.

OSU Webinars

We're not the only ones doing webinars! Oregon State University Extension Forestry is also doing a webinar series. Visit their [Tree School website](#) to see what they have coming up.

Got beaver issues?

The Snohomish Conservation District is offering a [Living with Beavers Webinar](#) from 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. on October 27th.

Subscription and Contact Info

Manage your subscription

You are currently subscribed to the Washington State University Puget Sound Extension Forestry mailing list. This newsletter is also available in a **large print** format. You can unsubscribe or change your subscription options by visiting our [newsletter website](#).

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