



Extension Forestry

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY

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Forester's Notes

A year like no other

We draw now to the close of a year unlike any other—a year that turned out far different than any of us imagined. It has been ten months since our last in-person Extension Forestry event. The shift to online-only delivery did not diminish participation in our programs. On the contrary, we had more participants than ever this year due to the ease of online access and more widespread use of and familiarity with online delivery platforms like Zoom. A majority of this year's participants were first-time participants in the WSU Extension Forestry program. We hope it is the first of many to come. We heard from a lot of folks that they would not have been able to

participate in our in-person programs even without the pandemic, so we are glad to be able to include more people.

Unfortunately, flipping the calendar will not immediately resolve the ills we face, and the first day of 2021 will look a lot like the last day of 2020. Things may get worse before they get better, but at least “get better” is now on the horizon and we have a rough sense of how long it will take for adequate vaccinations to push the virus below pandemic levels. I think one of the hardest parts of 2020 was the indefinite nature of things. I wish we could assign a timeline for resolving some of the other struggles we are grappling with. Indefinite perseverance is daunting and exhausting, and it can make hope a heavier lift.

Because it will take a good chunk, if not all of 2021 for the pandemic to settle, our 2021 programs will continue to be online only. You can look forward to an online winter school, another online field day, several online coached planning courses, and a bunch of other webinars in between. A year from now, though, I expect to be announcing a slate of in-person programs to fill out 2022.

I won't say that we will be returning to normal a year from now, because I think normal, as we understood it at the end of 2019, is gone. When the vaccines have been given, the masks come off, and the restaurants, stadiums, theaters, and other familiar gathering places are fully open again, I don't know that it will ever feel quite the same as it did. Near the end of the Lord of the Rings movies, Frodo asks himself, “How do you pick up the threads of an old life? How do you go on, when in your heart you begin to understand there is no going back?” Many of us may face similar thoughts. For those who have lost loved ones and livelihoods this year, life is drastically altered, and no vaccine will change that. Even for society at large, though, and all of those who did not suffer deep personal losses, life is permanently altered. Our models of business, education, healthcare, and social interaction will all reflect differences going forward. We think about things differently now because of this collective experience of 2020 and the different perspectives it has brought.

This is not to say things will be bad, just different. I think there are a lot of positive things that developed out of the pandemic that we will want to keep with us going forward. For our programs, for instance, we will be offering more of our content online because it makes it accessible to more people and to new people. There will probably be multiple online Coached Planning courses per year going forward, and I expect online versions of the Forest Owners' Field Day and the Forest Owners' Winter School will become staples of our curriculum. This will not be to the exclusion of our

traditional in-person offerings, but rather an addition to them. This will allow a mix and match of learning experiences that I think will be more enriching.

Equilibrium and restoration

I hear the term “new normal” a lot. I don’t particularly like that term. If there’s one thing forests teach us, it’s that the nature of life is constant change. Normal is a moving target. It always has been, it just doesn’t usually leap ahead such a great distance all at once like it did in 2020. I think one of the most misunderstood aspects of forest ecosystems is the concept of what one should “normally” look like. Part of the public outcry with the Yellowstone fires of 1988 was a sense that a blackened landscape is not what a national park is supposed to look like. Yet, for that ecosystem, a stand-replacing fire is...normal. Disturbance is normal. Tree mortality is normal. A “messy” forest appearance is normal.

Instead of a new normal, I prefer to think in terms of equilibrium—a system in balance. Whether in life or in the forest, disturbance happens, things are thrown off balance, and then things return to an equilibrium. I think equilibrium is characterized by functionality. In disturbance, some functions are temporarily lost. When equilibrium returns, hopefully key functions also return.

I think of forest restoration in terms of restoring a functional system as opposed to a particular forest construct. We cannot replicate the forests of the past. Climate change, invasive species, land use patterns, and other factors mean that the forests to come, even those that reach old growth stage, will be different from the forests that once were. There may be much that is familiar, but it will not be quite the same. Rather than trying to fully replicate something from the past, I think a more realistic and reasonable goal is the restoration of key ecosystem functions and processes, and the vitality, resilience, and biodiversity that they provide for.

Solitude and community

One of the functions of our programs that was diminished in 2020 was that of community. I saw this reflected over and over again in program evaluation responses. Online programs can do an excellent job delivering structured education content in a way that’s understandable, comfortable, useful, and applicable. What’s lost is the networking—the side conversations in the hallways and around the coffee pot during breaks and other unstructured time. This is much harder to foster in an online format.

Distance was certainly a theme of 2020—social distance, distance learning, and so forth. With distance comes solitude. For some, solitude brought needed benefits. Forest owners know well the restorative power of a quiet, solitary walk in the woods. In

his book *Out of Solitude*, Henri Nouwen writes “A life without a lonely place, that is, a life without a quiet center, easily becomes destructive.” Again, though, it becomes a question of equilibrium and balance. An overabundance of solitude and isolation may not be such a good thing, and many of us are feeling that toll, myself included.

Nouwen also notes the importance of community and in the value of care that comes from peers as opposed to professional specialists. In education, I think making personal connections is just as important as the structured education content. Not only can you get just as much if not more practical education from your fellow participants as you can from your formal instructors, but you also meet an emotional need of knowing there are others out there just like you who are dealing with the same challenges and frustrations. I look forward to bringing us together again for physical gatherings in the classroom and in the woods. In the meantime, I’ll be working on ways to foster more community in our online programs.

I wish you the best for 2021, and I hope you find contrasts to the difficulties of 2020—joy where there has been grief, faith where there has been anxiety, peace where there has been suffering, hope where there has been despair, renewal where there has been loss, equity where there has been injustice, mercy where there has been wrath, grace where there has been contempt, friendship where there has been loneliness, and revival where there has been fatigue. And may you never run short of that most important forest product—toilet paper.

Kevin W. Zobrist
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Serving the Puget Sound Area

Two-minute newsletter evaluation

Periodically we evaluate our programs and services. Please help us evaluate this newsletter by completing our [two-minute newsletter questionnaire](#). It is quite brief—a handful of yes/no questions and space to leave comments if you wish. Thank you for helping with this!

2021 Washington Forest Owners' Online Winter School – February 27th

Take time during the off-season for forestry education

Is it time to “sharpen the saw” of your forestry knowledge?

Do you want to learn new things about enjoying and caring for your property? Do you want to learn things like why so many trees are dying and what to do; how to protect your property from wildfire; agroforestry and nontimber product opportunities; how to improve wildlife habitat; how to successfully plant and care for young trees; and much more? Do you want to participate in roundtables and discussion panels to get stories and tips from your fellow landowners? If so, this Winter School is for you!

Winter School is the classroom counterpart to our summer field days. It is designed to let you attend multiple sessions on topics of interest to you all in the same day. Winter School will help you address challenges on your property, restore healthy forest conditions, and achieve your goals. Winter School will feature thirty seminars, expert panels, and roundtable discussions specifically for people with forested property in Washington. There will be both eastern and western Washington sessions

Whether you are a “novice” to family forestry, or your family has owned land for many generations, there is something new for everyone to learn.

When and where

The 2021 Online Winter School will take place from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM, Saturday February 27th, 2021. Sessions will be done via Zoom.

Cost – Free!

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 offer the Online Winter School for free.

This is a family-friendly event! Youth are encouraged to participate, so tune in with your next generation of forest stewards.

What you will need

If you do not have one already, you will need to [sign up for a free Zoom account](#) in order to participate in the event. You should also install the Zoom client by going to the [Zoom download page](#). The top item, Zoom Client for Meetings, is what you will want if you are using a computer. Scroll down the page to see app options for phones

and tablets. You should set up your Zoom account in advance of the Online Winter School. If you already have Zoom installed, make sure it is updated to the most current version. There will be opportunities to pre-test your connection before the Winter School (details will be provided after you register).

What to expect

Live sessions

The Online Winter School will consist of five 50-minute sessions, during each of which you can pick from a variety of topics. You will be able to ask questions and interact with instructors and panelists via the chat box. There will be an hour-long break for lunch from 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.

A final schedule, with Zoom links for each session, will be sent out in advance so you can plan which sessions you want to attend live.

Recordings

If you can't attend live on February 27th, register anyway! Registered participants will receive links to the recordings of the sessions. This will also allow you to see all the sessions you are interested in, even if they're scheduled for the same time slot—watch one live and catch the recordings of the others later.

More information

Details and registration

Register online before 5:00 p.m. Friday, February 26, 2021. For details on sessions offered and to register, visit the [Winter School Website](#).

Acknowledgements and Accommodations

This program is made possible in part by funding support from Washington State University, Island County and WSU Extension Island County, King Conservation District, King County, San Juan County, Skagit County, and the Snohomish Conservation District.

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 Brendan Whyte at 425-357-6023 or brendan.whyte@wsu.edu at least two weeks prior to the event.

2021 Conservation District Native Tree and Plant Sales

Most 2021 plant sales will be online pre-order only (no walk-up sales). Local counties are in various stages of pre-orders right now. Some are already done/sold out, some are open now, some haven't started yet, and some haven't even been announced yet. Below is the local sale information we currently have.

King Conservation District

- March 5th-6th pickup dates
- Pre-orders only
- Pre-order now
- [King Conservation District Plant Sale website](#)

Pierce Conservation District

- Already sold out!
- [Pierce Conservation District Plant Sale website](#)

Snohomish Conservation District Sale

- February 27th and 28th pickup dates
- Preorders only
- Pre-order January 5th – February 10th
- [Snohomish Conservation District Plant Sale Website](#)

Whatcom Conservation District

- March 13th-14th pickup dates
- Preorders only
- Preorder now until March 1st
- [Whatcom Conservation District Plant Sale website](#)

Whidbey Island Conservation District

- Preorders are now closed
- [Whidbey Island Conservation District website](#)

2021 Country Living Expo

The Expo goes virtual

Curl up in a comfy chair and choose from 70 classes spread over three days! While we will all miss the camaraderie found meeting kindred spirits in person, the advantages of a virtual expo are many. No bathroom lines, no filled classes, no getting lost trying to find a room. Instead, sit back and enjoy the popular Country Living Expo and Cattlemen's Winterschool 9:00am to 5:00pm each day January 29, 30, and 31, 2021 from the comfort of your own home!

With ten brand new workshops and plenty of mainstay topics in 70 classes, this year's Expo offers everyone the unique opportunity to take exactly the classes you want. By using the free Zoom platform on your computer, classes can't fill up, and everyone has a seat.

In addition to several forestry classes, you can learn about hop growing, making Spanish tapas, bicycle maintenance, seed saving, sheep dairying, growing tomatoes, raising swine, solar power water systems, fruit tree pruning, tractor maintenance, raising waterfowl, and many more topics. There is really something for everyone!

Registration info

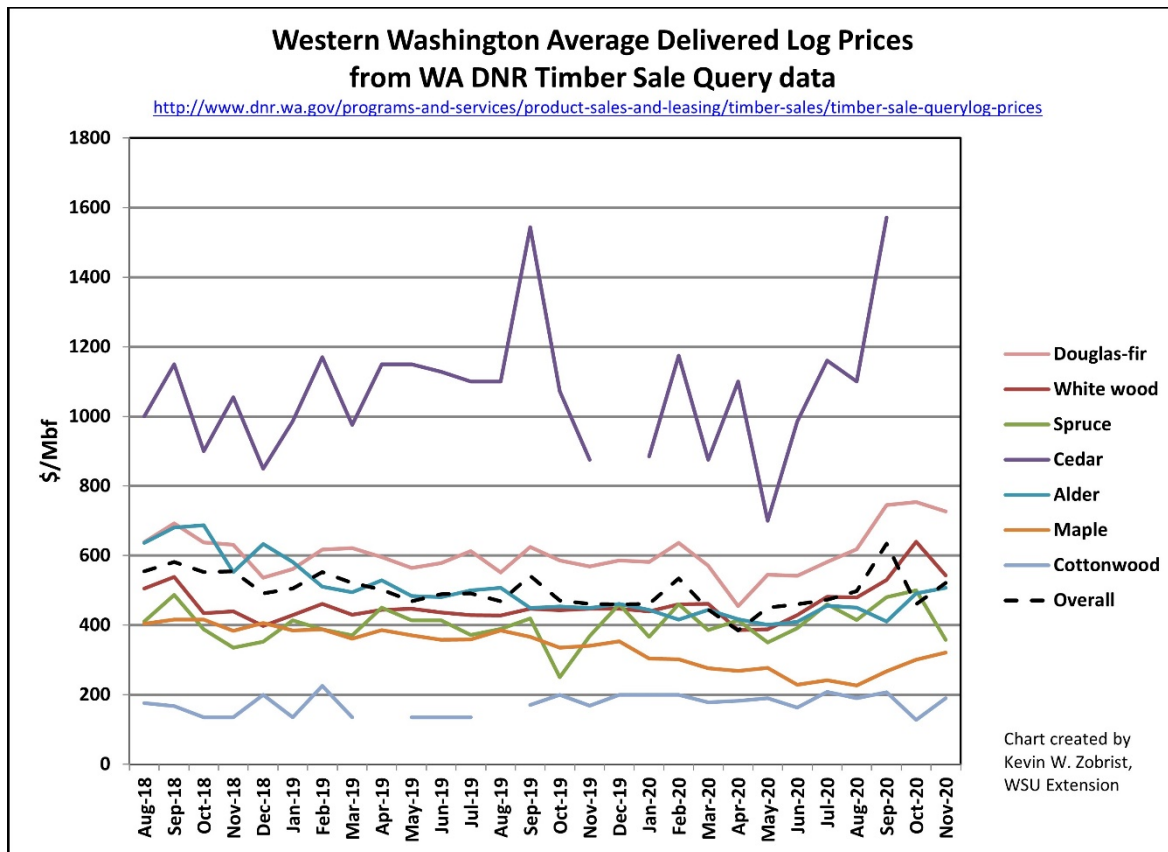
Adult registration for the entire Expo is \$55; sponsored student rate is \$10. Registration includes up to 12 classes (four per day) and free access to the film Kiss the Ground. For registration and more information on classes and the film, visit the [Country Living Expo website](#). For questions, [email the Expo staff](#).

WSU 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; contact WSU Extension at 360-935-2370 at least two weeks prior to the expo.

Market Update

Here is the latest news on log prices in Western Washington based on data provided by our friends at DNR in their [monthly Timber Sale Query reports](#).

Western Washington log markets have risen this past fall, especially for Douglas-fir and western redcedar.



Tidbits

Small Forest Landowner News

The winter 2020 edition of the DNR's [Small Forest Landowner Office newsletter](#) is now available.

Pacific Madrone News

The Winter 2020 edition of the [Arbutus ARME newsletter](#) is now available.

Pile burning webinar

Montana State University Extension Forestry has posted a [prescribed pile burning webinar video](#).

USDA seeks public input on guidance defining NIPF eligibility

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is seeking public input on Nonindustrial Private Forest Land (NIPF) related to technical and financial assistance available

through conservation programs of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). NRCS welcomes input from stakeholders across the nation, including those in Washington, to assist with the development of guidance about how to identify NIPF for program enrollment purposes. [NRCS invites input on this technical guidance](#) through January 19, 2021.

The Peace of Wild Things

You might enjoy closing out 2020 with this short [video of the poem *The Peace of Wild Things*](#) by Wendell Berry.

Subscription and Contact Info

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The Washington State University Puget Sound Extension Forestry program is made possible in part by funding from Island County, King County, King Conservation District, San Juan County, Skagit County, and Snohomish Conservation District. Extension programs and employment are available to all without discrimination. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local Extension office. Reasonable accommodations for the WSU Extension events described above will be made for persons with disabilities and special needs who contact us at least two weeks prior to the event.