

North East State Foresters Association
Regional Pilot Project: NY/NE Family Forest Owner Engagement
Activities: Training, Action Plans, Implementation & Reporting
August 30, 2011 to August 30, 2014

Consistent with the US Forest Service landscape approach to improving stewardship, the purpose of this regional pilot project is to test how most effectively to engage family forest landowners in contributing to three main goals: 1) strengthen markets for forest products, 2) strengthen forest stewardship, and 3) conserve the many values of the region's forest landscape for future generations.

Four high priority interstate landscapes have been identified by the North East *State* Foresters Association as pilot project areas for this project. These include the Quabbin to Cardigan (NH and MA), the Southern New England Heritage Forest (RI, CT, and MA), the Green Mountain and Berkshire Hills (VT and MA) and the Taconics (CT, NY, VT and MA). The conditions and the characteristics of landownership within these areas vary dramatically; thus, different approaches to reach landowners effectively will be needed between pilot project areas. This effort will be a collaboration of the offices of the State Foresters, State Conservationists, USFS staff, local officials and regional conservation partnerships of conservation groups and agencies.

This project task involves identifying and testing the "best" methods to reach family forest landowners in the different pilot project areas around the region. Efforts will be directed at engaging these landowners in addressing three questions: should I manage my land; should I enroll in current use; and should I plan for the conservation or the development of my land?

Highstead's Regional Conservationist, Bill Labich, will provide coordination, as requested by the North East *State* Foresters Association, or by specific pilot project area partnerships, or teams. Highstead will organize and support training, information-sharing and technical transfer-focused events over the course of three years.

In year one of the grant, pilot project area partners will be participating in activities 1-5, and in years two-three, in activities 4-5.

Activities

1. Train in strategies used to engage different types of landowners,
2. Explore information about existing landowners in each pilot project area,
3. Develop an action plan for implementing and evaluating up to three landowner engagement tools, techniques, or programs ("strategies"),
4. Implement the strategies, and
5. Report on implementation: results, issues, lessons.

1. Train in strategies used to engage different types of landowners. (October 1, 2011 to December 31, 2011)

On December 7, 2011, at Harvard Forest in Petersham, Massachusetts, partnership coordinators and other partnership members, as well as staff of conservation organizations (in pilot project

areas where no existing regional conservation partnerships exists), State Foresters, State Conservationists, and in some cases US Forest Service personnel will be participating in a trainings with two main parts: 1) Tools for Engaging Landowners Effectively (TELE) by Yale and the USFS' Sustaining Family Forests Initiative; and, in 2) specific tools, programs, and techniques by state, federal or non-profit staff with the most expertise on that tool (Peer to Peer). In the Peer to Peer training, trainers will include staff of both non-governmental and governmental agencies. After the training, the members of each pilot project area will have the opportunity to meet. At this meeting, it is suggested that members introduce themselves, review the scope of work together, identify the next meeting date, time, and location, and begin to discuss which land owner groups and strategies are of interest to them.

2. Explore Information about Landowners in the Pilot Project Areas (January 1, 2012 to February 28, 2012) – Once trained in the TELE and Peer to Peer trainings, each pilot project area's partners will pull together known information about landowners in their region. Each group of partners will pick the landowner group(s) they would like to focus on and up to three strategies to implement and evaluate. The information collected will help the partners match the strategy to the landowner group(s) of interest.

3. Develop an Action Plan for Implementing and Evaluating Up to Three Landowner Engagement Tools, Techniques, or Programs (January 1, 2012 to March 31, 2012)—Equipped with available information on landowners in their region, each area's group of organizations and agencies and staff (existing partnership or collaboration) will meet at least once to develop an action plan for the remainder of the grant period. The action plan will include descriptions of, and roles and responsibilities for participating members of the partnership/area collaboration:

- a. the landowner group(s) they seek to reach out to,
- b. local information about landowners in the area,
- c. the desired, measurable outcomes,
- d. the strategies to be used to achieve these outcomes,
- e. the method for evaluating the effectiveness of each strategy,
- f. the organization and personnel and the strategies and sub-tasks they will be working on,
- g. their timeline,
- h. their budget, and
- i. their reporting responsibilities (both in-person at annual events and through quarterly reports).

4. Implement the Strategies (March 1, 2012 to August 30, 2014)—Each area's partners will determine the non-governmental organization/partner(s) that will be working on each strategy and sub-task. The selected groups will develop sub-contracts with NEFA. Then they will work to implement the strategy(ies). They will apply the appropriate evaluation tool. During this time, each group will also receive together one, two-day training on TELE from Yale's SFFI that will help them create effective communication products to use in conjunction with their chosen strategies.

5. Reporting on Implementation: Results, Issues, Lessons at Annual Regional Conservation Partnership Gatherings, etc. (August 30, 2011 to August 30, 2014)—Each area's partners will prepare periodic reports on the status of their work based on a template and schedule provided by

Highstead. In addition, all area participants, including State Foresters (or their staff), State Conservationists (or their staff), USFS staff, local officials and regional conservation partnerships of conservation groups and agencies will participate in annual gatherings to share updates, lessons, results, and best practices with other partnerships including some that are not currently part of this grant initiative. These gatherings will likely be scheduled for the fall of 2012, the fall of 2013, and the spring of 2014.

NY/NE Family Forest Owner Engagement Timeline by Quarter

Task	2011				2012				2013				2014			
1. Trainings																
2. Landowner Information																
3. Action Plan																
4. Implementation																
5. Reporting to larger group																