

# Connecting Women and Families in Forestry: Reaching New Audiences in New Ways

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## INTRO

Women forest owners are playing an increasingly important role in forest management decisions and succession. Recent evaluations from University of Idaho Extension Forestry educational programs indicate that women typically make up approximately 30% of attendees. Research shows that there is a need to employ unique tactics and leverage women-centric knowledge to improve engagement with female forest landowners. In recent years, efforts to connect women in forestry have gained momentum through establishment of organizations, forums, and training opportunities. These efforts aim to provide resources, mentorship, and advocacy for women working in forestry related roles and decision-making capacities. Through networking, women can share experiences, learn from peers, hone their skill sets, and address common challenges in their roles. To reach and engage Idaho's women forest owner and manager audience, University of Idaho Extension Forestry and Idaho Department of Lands teamed up to offer a women-centric forestry series entitled "Women in the Woods."

## METHODS

- 1** This two-part series focused on networking and skills building for women forest owners and managers and their families. We utilized mixed model instruction techniques by incorporating a classroom day and a field day.
- 2** Workshop Day: This program consisted of connecting women forest owners with women professionals from multiple public and private agencies. A classroom setting was utilized to teach participants about resources available to landowners. The day concluded with a forest owner panel discussion, where they shared about projects they had completed by utilizing the resources highlighted throughout the program.
- 3** To include families in this event and reach a broader audience, we partnered with the local 4-H STEM Center to offer kids programming in conjunction with the workshop program. Kid programming utilized Project Learning Tree curriculum and was forestry and natural resources focused.
- 4** Field Day: The field day consisted of getting participants out in the forest to learn new skills and hone existing practices. The same women presenters from the workshop day led field activities such as tree identification, forest measurements, seedling planting, white pine pruning, tool identification and usage, and more.
- 5** Program evaluations were conducted at the end of each program, to help gauge learning outcomes and garner ideas for future program efforts to ensure we are meeting the learning needs of individuals.



## RESULTS



- 91% of all participants evaluated indicated that they would likely employ forest management practices on their property after attending this series.
- 100% of participants evaluated indicated they would complete a forest management plan for their property.
- This series influenced the management decisions of 21 family forest owners covering 633 forested acres.
- 81% of evaluation respondents reported that they would continue to connect with a peer network of women forestry professionals and forest owners moving forward.
- No children participated in the kids programming offered by our 4-H STEM Center.

## DISCUSSION

In our first offering of this program series, we gained a significant amount of valuable insight and feedback. Women forest owners of Idaho have a strong basis of forestry knowledge. Yet they are willing to learn and implement new or different practices. Having no children participate in the kids programming was surprising. This suggested that childcare was not as large of a barrier for women and families seeking educational programming like we had originally hypothesized.

## SUMMARY

This event proved to be a valuable addition to the University of Idaho Extension Forestry and the Idaho Department of Lands educational offerings. We are in the planning phases for the 2024 Women in the Woods Event and have included more partners. We hope this event will continue to grow, to best serve the wants and needs of Idaho's women and family forest owners and managers.