

NWOA Position Statement:

Forestry Extension and Service Forestry

**Adopted 2018 by the Board of Directors,
National Woodland Owners Association on the second reading.**

The value of forestry Extension and service forestry is appreciated by landowners, especially those with a hands-on attitude toward managing their land. Through personal visits, workshops, field day presentations, and the development of educational materials such as fact sheets, videos and online resources, these front-line forestry professionals have averaged a \$9 return for every \$1 invested (2018 RREA Fact Sheet). Since its founding in 1983, the National Woodlands Owner Association (NWOA) has been an active and outspoken advocate of forestry Extension with the byline: “Forestry Education Beats Forest Regulation”.

NWOA however has witnessed a major decline in the number of Extension and service forestry professionals at the state and local levels due to attrition, declining budgets and shifting priorities. NWOA has also witnessed a shifting of responsibilities, which has impacted the number of Extension forestry professionals working with forest landowners. State level Extension forestry positions for example are now hired with additional responsibilities in teaching and research; this can limit their ability to get out into the field to work on forestry issues with stakeholders. In addition, university requirements for conducting innovative and scholarly work can impede traditional forest management Extension programming. These additional requirements have come at the most inopportune time as poor markets, climate change and forest health issues are having adverse effects on applied forest management.

Therefore, NWOA strongly supports full funding of Extension and state forestry agency requests at the national level. NWOA also encourages state affiliates to maintain regular contact with their state university Extension Directors and forestry deans, and state foresters because much of Extension funding is from state budgets, and the allocation is determined by administrators at those levels. The leadership of the landowner associations voting on these issues agree with these concerns and recommendations and have raised the issue of forestry education for landowners to the top 5 forestry issues in each of the last several years. Finally NWOA encourages all affiliate state landowner associations to work closely with Extension and state forestry agencies to document the value and impact of forest owner education.

The National Woodland Owners Association Advocates:

- Forestry Extension is one of the more successful governmental programs yet developed. NWOA is strongly in favor of strengthening the overall Extension program through increased funding at all levels of administration. NWOA also supports the federally funded Renewable Resources Extension Act (RREA) mission and goals of enhancing the impact of state forestry and natural resources Extension programming, and desires to see RREA appropriations more closely match the amounts authorized by Congress.
- Professional foresters employed by state forestry agencies often provide a first point-of-contact for resource managers interested in forest planning and management. NWOA believes this is a critical role for state agencies and encourages the development of more service forestry positions at the area/district and county levels for educational and field assistance opportunities.