



## Forest Land Enhancement Program Overview of the Education Program

FLEP was designed to encourage stewardship and the application of sustainable forestry practices on private forest lands. Educational assistance is one of three tools (including technical assistance and cost-share assistance) that FLEP uses to encourage these behaviors on private land.

As part of the theory of the adoption of innovations, a member of a target audience progresses through predictable stages before they reach a point where they actually adopt (or reject) the innovation or technology. These stages are: *awareness of the issue*, *interest in the issue*, *learn and evaluate the issues qualities*, *experiment with the different approach*, and finally *adoption* of the different approach. Thus, an educational program should provide opportunities for an audience to move through these steps. Because educational programs in Cooperative Extension may involve audiences as different stages of the adoption process, each stage should be available to the audience. Private forest landowners will need to develop an awareness of stewardship and sustainable forestry and then learn about tools (educational programs, professional foresters, cost-share programs) and technical skills to achieve their desired goals.



From: D. Decker, G. Goff, and J. Kelley. 1986. Program Philosophy and Evaluation in Extension. Natural Resources Research and Extension Series No. 24. Dept. of Natural Resources, Cornell University.

The FLEP Education program has been developed in a two-pronged initiative. The first prong is to generate an awareness and interest in issues and practices associated with stewardship and sustainable forestry. These efforts are largely funded through the USFS and in partnership with NYS DEC Division of Lands and Forests. The second prong is to help those with interest gain greater knowledge of desired behaviors and to experiment with new behaviors. These efforts are largely accomplished through cost-recovery of participants who have gained sufficient knowledge that they will cover the costs of further involvement in education.

## Awareness and Interest Campaign:

Objective 1 – create awareness among private forest owners for the value of sustainable forestry.

Objective 2 – let private forest owners know about the opportunity to use technical assistance, educational assistance, or cost-share assistance.

Methods: The following activities are funded through the US Forest Service in partnership with the NYS DEC Division of Lands and Forests. Most activities are undertaken through the Forest Resources Extension Program on the Ithaca campus and/or in cooperation with CCE and partners.

### Activities:

1. **Press Release:** Press releases related to FLEP and its implementation will be prepared and mailed three times per year. Foresters and state elected officials will also receive a copy of each press release. Press release content will be adjusted based on input from DEC and USFS.
2. **Master Forest Owner regional refreshers and fall training:** Develop and deliver regional MFO volunteer refreshers to highlight FLEP activities, make volunteers aware of resources and natural resource professionals (e.g., foresters) available to assist private forest landowners, and showcase successful FLEP practices.
3. **Mass mailing of audience-specific FLEP brochure:** Develop a brochure that describes the values and opportunities from the perspective of each target audience. Forester-specific brochures will be mailed to NYSAF and DEC Cooperating Forester Lists. An additional 2000 landowner brochures will be mailed by NYFOA for their use in outreach. All brochures will be available on the NY FLEP website.
4. **Instructions and updates for FLEP implementation:** Provide foresters with biannual updates on the FLEP program through mail and conference interactions.

5. **Conference presentations and poster:** Provide a presence for FLEP at conferences and public gatherings that attract members of the target audiences. Give presentations on NYS FLEP successes when possible; otherwise provide staffing with a poster highlighting the implementation and success of FLEP in NY.
6. **Township presentations (by NYFOA and MFO volunteers):** The public of NY, including those who do and don't own forestland, will benefit from exposure to knowledge of the benefits associated with FLEP and forest resource management in general. The diffuse nature of townships and the receptivity of opinion leaders to community-based knowledge suggest the greatest success will come from a grass-roots approach to increasing local awareness. Materials developed within the FLEP education program will be made available to NYFOA and MFO volunteers to use in presentations to their community during town meetings, such as town council meetings, Rotary Clubs, Boy/Girl Scout/4-H meetings, Fireman Field Days, county fairs, etc.

## Learn, Evaluate & Try:

Objective 3: Help private forest landowners gain specific knowledge about stewardship and sustainable forestry practices, especially those consistent with FLEP goals.

Objective 4: Provide direct and indirect opportunities for private forest landowners to trial (experiment with) stewardship and sustainable forestry practices.

Methods: The activities listed below are largely accomplished through a dependence on cost-recovery from program participants. Some funding for development of materials is provided through the US Forest Service and in partnership with NYS DEC. A reliance on cost share assumes that members of the target audience gain sufficient awareness and interest through other channels that they become willing to invest in additional knowledge.

### Activities:

1. **Woodswalks in key regions:** Through NYFOA chapters and MFO volunteers work with FLEP cost-share recipients, provide 4 woodswalks per year in counties that are important to highlight the successes of FLEP.
2. **Instructional webpage - Examples of FLEP practices in NY:** Develop a FLEP webpage with the primary purpose of illustrating examples of successfully implemented practices and providing links to DEC and USFS informational webpages. Use the webpage as a repository for downloadable copies of the brochures, press releases, etc.

3. **Educational materials:** Develop a variety of instructional materials for use by private forest landowners, CCE Educators, and foresters. Materials will help interested forest owners gain additional knowledge about sustainable forestry and the opportunities within FLEP to achieve sustainable forestry goals. Materials will include: (1) web page with FLEP relevant materials; (2) a landowner's guide to FLEP; (3) a chart that compares and summarizes the different FLEP cost-share practices; (4) a variety of power point presentations for different audiences on FLEP; (5) a compilation of forestry extension articles that relate to forest stewardship and sustainable forestry; (6) a FAQ guide to commonly asked questions; and (7) a list of recommended Cooperative Extension or USFS publications.
4. **Educational Events:** Through the Forest Resources Extension Program on campus, the Arnot Conservation Education Program, and CCE County natural resource programs, provide educational events throughout the year on FLEP related topics. The Forestry Extension web page calendar will be a central location to announce such programs [email announcements to [dlt5@cornell.edu](mailto:dlt5@cornell.edu)]. Examples of planned events include: tree planting, tree identification, forestry basics, forestry and wildlife interactions, amphibian conservation, water quality BMPs, deer management for forest regeneration, forest farming, and crop tree management.
5. **Master Forest Owner (MFO) Volunteer Program:** The MFO volunteers are trained to provide non-technical assistance on forest stewardship topics. They acquire knowledge on FLEP and can help other private forest owners they contact gain awareness and interest and help them accumulate knowledge and evaluate FLEP as an innovation. Volunteer interactions that achieve FLEP educational goals include: sharing of the value of stewardship; sharing of FLEP-specific brochures; discussion of eligibility and opportunities with FLEP; and distribution of forestry and wildlife bulletins, calendars of activities, and catalogs of educational events and materials.
6. **In-service Training for Professionals:** The state extension forester will work with colleagues to offer a variety of professional development opportunities to CCE Educators and foresters on topics relevant to the educational programs and technical assistance professionals will provide to private forest landowners.