

2008 Southern S&PF Redesign Competitive Process Proposal

Applicant (Agency) Contact Information

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Project Information

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Abstract of Project Proposal

The intent of the Woodland Owner Short Course (WOSC) is to bring innovative forest management concepts and approaches to small landowners in slo p.4395 555.2sof1.78258.6-4.35041((t)0.89126.2s)3.4576e t lczervofvit sme(-)-3.01205((

Woodland owner needs in North Carolina are well documented. The state is undergoing rapid change due to shifts in landowner priorities and demographics, urbanization and development, changes in forest industry, increases in eco-tourism and other recreational sectors, and concerns related to natural resource management. The intent of the Woodland Owner Short Course (WOSC) is to bring new and innovative ideas and approaches to the stakeholders so that they will in turn apply new ideas and improve the management and utility of their natural resources.

WOSC provides a means to inform and educate woodland owners about managing natural resources on private lands. Landowners participating in WOSC engage with natural resource and land management experts both in the classroom and with hands-on opportunities in the field. Course topics include: land management planning and understanding your land; managing for wildlife and plant communities; "Woodscaping" - Forest management methods and techniques that focus on amenities; site planning and design; fire management and defensible space; baseline inventory and analysis; forest health and invasive species; conservation easements; trails, pastures, ponds, and rain gardens; liability of land ownership; and recreational opportunities (income producing potential).

The WOSC has been offered in Western North Carolina since 2003. The key planning partners are NC Cooperative Extension, NC Division of Forest Resources (DFR), USFS Cradle of Forestry in America and National Forest in North Carolina. To successfully accomplish the WOSC workshop series, government and non-government collaborators worked together to deliver the course in western North Carolina. There were over 19 collaborators working together in 2007. From 2003 through 2007 WOSC had 894 registrants participate in 42 workshops, with a total of 91 graduates of the course. Seventy participants completed the self-assessment and development of goals and objectives related to the management of their property. This course reached participants from North Carolina, South Carolina, and Florida who own and/or managed over 8600 acres of forestland.

This three-year project will expand the current curriculum of the WOSC to the North Carolina piedmont and coastal regions, Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee, all of which are experiencing similar forest fragmentation and development pressures. The current WOSC curriculum will be modified to suit region specific forestry issues and management techniques. The first year will focus on delivering the course to the western portion of the state, the second year to deliver to all three regions within North Carolina and developing partnerships with surrounding states in order to expand WOSC during the last year of the grant to the neighboring states. Ultimately, the hope is to distribute WOSC curriculum nation-wide.

A course template and train-the-trainer workshop series will be created in order to facilitate the expansion of WOSC outside of North Carolina. Individuals from surrounding states will be invited to attend a workshop series that will introduce them to the course agenda and topics, as well as give examples of how the information is relayed to the audience. After completing the train-the-trainer seminar, they will be invited to attend one of the WOSC courses within the North Carolina seminar series.

The overall goal of WOSC is to encourage landowners to manage their woodlands to promote healthy forest within the ecosystem of which it is a part, through increased awareness, experience and access to resources. A secondary goal is to educate DFR field staff on small woodlot management techniques and opportunities that can then be utilized in developing management plans for landowners in their respective counties. DFR field staff from each region will participate in the course, teaming with a local participant who has completed the course, to develop a management plan for the participant's property.

Evaluation Criteria Discussion:

1. National and Regional Relevance

National themes addressed by this proposal are:

Conserve Working Forest Landscapes - According to the latest census information the Southern region is the second fastest growing region in the nation, adding more than 1.5 million people. The South now accounts for 36 percent of the nation's total population. The South is also the national leader in forest products, producing 60 percent of the Nation's timber products, almost all of that is from private forests. With increasing urbanization and loss of forested land, there is increasing pressure being put on fewer acres of forest to produce our Nation's forest products. The forecast predicts that timberland will be lost primarily to urban and residential land uses. This project promotes the use of sustainable forest management through the education of small woodlot owners about the different management practices that could be used on their property, from rural forestry to backyard habitats. The Woodland Owner Short Course introduces the small woodlot owner to land management planning and forest management techniques.

Enhance Benefits Associated with Trees and Forests – The goal of this project is to educate target audiences about the many benefits of working lands so they will become advocates for managed forests in their community. Many of the landowners involved in the course are new landowners or are landowners new to this region of the country and are unfamiliar with the ecosystems of the South.

Regional priority issues addressed by this proposal are:

Water Quality and Quantity – Through hands-on education and field examples, landowners are shown the ways in which properly managed forests benefit water quality. Topics such as storm water runoff management, riparian buffer management, road and trail design, pond management, and BMP's will be covered throughout the course.

Fractured Forests – Through exposing landowners to new ideas and options, more forestland will be managed sustainably across the state and the South.

Forest Health – The Piedmont region is the most rapidly urbanizing region of the South, limiting the forest management practices that can be used. This project seeks to find creative ways to maintain and reintroduce forest management practices into the urban interface by inviting small woodlot owners to the table, showing them the many options that exist for managing their woodlots. The course offers insight into the benefits of planting native species, timber stand improvement methods, and non-timber forest products.

Wildland Fire and Forest Fuels – As cities expand into the rural landscape and forests become less managed in the urban interface, there is an increased potential for fuel load build-up and therefore fire occurrence. This course covers topics which include how to manage your land to prevent property loss from fire and how to encourage a healthy ecosystem through the inclusion of fire.

2. Prioritization

This project is a high priority for DFR. It is ranked #6 out of the 24 proposals prepared by DFR. North Carolina is the 7th fastest growing state in the Nation, increasing by almost 200,000 people in the last year. Over the last 15 years, this state has experienced an increasing influx of new landowners buying 20 acres of land or less with little or no land management experience or knowledge of natural processes and components in NC. Many of the state's incentives programs are not appropriate for small landowners and DFR staff is unsure of what options these landowners have. This program will compile the latest information on small woodlot management and relay these options to landowners and land managers throughout the Southern Region.

3. Meaningful Scale

Initially, this project seeks to connect landowners and land managers in North Carolina and its neighboring states of Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee in order to educate small landowners of the benefit of managing their woodlands and develop more comprehensive management plans. Upon completion of the grant, WOSC can be easily expanded into other areas of the south and the nation.

4. Collaboration

The key planning partners are NC Cooperative Extension, NC Division of Forest Resources and the USFS Cradle of Forestry in America (FSCFA), and the Cradle of Forestry Interpretive Association. To successfully accomplish the WOSC workshop series, numerous government and non-government collaborators will work together to deliver the course to the state and southern region including: NC Division of Soil & Water Conservation, Carolina Mountain Land

Conservancy, NC Arboretum, USFS Southern Research Station, Soil and Water Environmental Technology Center, and USDA-NRCS.

5. Outcomes

Immediate outcomes and long-term impacts will be measured through post evaluations of participants.

Immediate outcomes for the participants in the course are:

- Through hands-on learning, participants will develop skills necessary for sustainable management of their land.
- Participants will develop networks with natural resource professionals and other landowners. These networks will be a valuable resource as landowners work toward the sustainable management of their land.
- Participants who complete the series will complete a self-assessment of management priorities for their forestland.
- Participants will develop goals and objectives for the management of their forestland based on the self-assessment.

Expected long-term impacts are:

- Program participants will complete a management plan for their land based on assessment of management priorities
- Program participants will implement practices that will achieve landowner goals.
- Program participants will increase their quality of life and the sustainability of their lands through integration of appropriate opportunities and management practices.
- Program participants will improve the economic and environmental sustainability of their forest resources.
- Program participants will be effective constituents and ambassadors for the sustainable management of public and private lands through their increased knowledge and understanding of land management practices.

Regional Expansion

- Template for expansion of course to other regions will include learning outcomes for each topic offered, course assignments, course agendas, course programs, sample media releases, sample budget, list of resources

6. Technology

Various land management data layers that are available through NC-OneMap, Southern Risk Assessment, and other sources will be incorporated into presentations and demonstrations.

7. Integrated Delivery

Partnerships for this project are assembled to maximize its effectiveness. Within the Division of Forest Resources, the Urban and Community Forestry Program, Forest Protection, and other various Forest Management Programs will combine their knowledge to educate participating landowners about management options. Outside of DFR, we are partnering with NC Cooperative Extension and US Forest Service to help with organization of and statewide delivery.

8. Leverage

In-kind contributions will come from NCDFR, NC Cooperative Extension, and our partnering organizations. In addition, the Cradle of Forestry Interpretive Association has agreed to seek additional funding to support the project.

9. Influence Positive Change

Several primary deliverables are designed to ensure that the knowledge attained and developed through this project is maintained past the completion of this grant. In particular, participants will be surveyed at the beginning and end of the course to evaluate any change in the level of knowledge about sustainable land management. Also, participants are asked to complete a self-assessment of management priorities for their forestland in order to develop goals and objectives for the management of their forestland. As participants, NC Division of Forest Resources field staff will then work with these landowners to create a forest management plan that incorporates the newly developed landowner objectives.

10. Timeliness

This project will begin implementation soon after the grant is awarded. All project deliverables (listed in 'outcomes' above) will be documented within the three-year timeframe of this grant.