

Vital Forests | Vital Communities

Growing Minnesota's Advantage in a Global Economy

Project Update

July 1, 2005

Family Forest Land Management Planning Project: Applying Information Technology

Contractor: University of Minnesota Extension Service St. Paul, Minnesota

Purpose: To research and identify effective Internet-based resources that inform family forest owners of the benefits of forest management. The results and recommendations of this research effort are intended to advance a key Vital Forests/Vital Communities objective; to increase the number of acres of family owned forests in Minnesota under the guidance of actively implemented formal forest management plans.

Objectives:

- To conduct a detailed review of existing and developing Internet-based resources designed to reach family forest landowners and encourage active management of those lands.
- To assess existing Internet models, technologies and practices and developing concepts.
- To develop and test recommendations for successful Internet models for application in Minnesota based on review results and input from family forest owners, consulting foresters and other stakeholders.

Progress to date: The project is on schedule and going well. University researcher Tim O'Brien, based in Grand Rapids, has completed a click-through data form for about 35 websites from the US and Europe, and has begun interviews with the site managers. As expected, impact evaluation will be a challenge for internet-based resources—the attenuated connection to the ground and the nature of the medium make it difficult to document impacts. However, researchers are learning about some exciting and innovative approaches that appear to have great potential for Minnesota.

Jessica Halvorsen, a Duke University graduate student, is heading up the parallel effort to gather input from Minnesota stakeholders. Jessica has been conducting structured conversations with a range of professionals involved in private forestry in Minnesota. These contacts include DNR Private Forestry Management foresters, Private Woodland Council leaders, Minnesota Forestry Association members and others.

A final research report is expected to be completed by mid-summer. The Foundation is exploring opportunities to share the results with the public.



BLANDIN FOUNDATION™