

# impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

## Hundreds of panhandle loggers learn more about sustainable forestry in 2022-2023

### AT A GLANCE

UI Extension helps loggers practice sustainable forestry which supports Idaho forest product companies access to markets that require certified wood products.

### The Situation

Loggers are a critical link in forest management, particularly on lands whose owners are less active in directly managing their property. Since most loggers work on many forest properties in a year, they also provide another vehicle to communicate with a larger number of family forest owners.

Unfortunately, if communication between landowners, loggers or foresters is inadequate, the resulting harvests may not meet expectations. State forest practice laws remedy this somewhat, but they are designed to provide minimum standards. If loggers understand the “spirit of the law” in forest practice act regulations, they can often modify their activities to reach forest management goals more effectively. That is particularly critical with use of mechanized harvesting tools that give loggers more responsibility in the woods.

The more loggers know about forest management, the better they can communicate with forest owners, foresters and others involved in managing forests. Participating in education programs can simultaneously improve demand for their services and document their commitment to forest stewardship.

A growing number of forest products retailers want to sell forest products that can be certified as harvested



Loggers participating in LEAP field exercises near Bonners Ferry, Idaho.

from sustainably managed forests. The Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI), the forest certification program that most Idaho mills participate in, requires loggers who are trained in forestry best management practices. To the extent forest certification programs require trained loggers, UI Extension logger training efforts are vital to helping Idaho forest product companies maintain or increase Idaho’s share of global markets for certified wood products.

### Our Response

Logger Education to Advance Professionalism (LEAP) is a national Extension program piloted in Idaho and several other states. LEAP features over 20 hours of training designed to increase loggers’ understanding and skills related to forest ecology, silviculture and

water quality. LEAP is instructed by University of Idaho Extension faculty, with additional presentations from Idaho Department of Lands personnel on state forestry laws, insects and disease.

Partially stimulated by SFI, the Idaho logger education committee developed the Idaho Pro-Logger program, administered through the Associated Logging Contractors of Idaho. The Idaho Pro-Logger credential requires LEAP and 12 credits of continuing education annually.

With growing enrollment in the Idaho Pro-Logger program, more loggers are looking for ways to meet credit requirements. Based on logger recommendations, we developed LEAP Update, an annual program where loggers learn about current forestry best management practices.

Thirty-four people attended LEAP in 2023 and 185 people attended the two LEAP Update sessions offered in the panhandle in 2023. Loggers also attended other 2022-2023 UI Extension forestry programs in the panhandle on topics such as fire, family forestry, backyard forestry, biochar, tree identification, forest health and silviculture. In total, UI Extension provided 1520 continuing education hours for 195 panhandle loggers in 2022-2023.

### Program Outcomes

One thousand, one-hundred and eighty-four loggers have attended the 48 LEAP sessions offered annually in the Idaho Panhandle since 1994. Participants in the 2023 LEAP session indicated knowledge increases of 31% regarding forest ecology and silviculture, and 31% regarding forest water quality and streams.

As a result of Idaho Panhandle loggers' participation in the LEAP Update sessions held in the 2023:

- 148 panhandle loggers will communicate pending forest practices rule changes,

- 139 will improve forest road maintenance,
- 137 have a better understanding of advances in steep slope logging,
- 118 will communicate among generations: about their logging business,
- 118 will communicate about forest health issues,
- 113 will communicate about pruning forest trees,
- 102 will communicate about the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI),
- 107 will identify/reduce noxious & invading weeds and,
- 54 will communicate about forest carbon markets.

As of October 2023, 594 loggers are enrolled in the Idaho Pro-Logger program. Training in programs offered by UI Extension helps loggers apply better land stewardship. Through communication from these loggers, this knowledge will also reach landowners, who will ultimately increase wood and biomass to support Idaho's economy, while maintaining water quality, improving forest health and enhancing biological diversity.

### The Future

UI Extension will continue to provide LEAP and other educational opportunities guided by Idaho loggers.

### Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

- Associated Logging Contractors of Idaho
- Idaho Sustainable Forestry Initiative State Implementation Committee
- Idaho Department of Lands

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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