

# MANAGEMENT BY NIPF LANDOWNERS IN EASTERN WASHINGTON

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## INTRODUCTION

Nonindustrial private forest (NIPF) owners control 1.38 million acres of timberland or about 19% of the eastern Washington total. Forty-six percent of NIPF ownership is in the Douglas-fir type and Douglas-fir totals about 4.8 billion board feet or 45% of total volume, International 1/4 inch rule, when all softwood types are considered (Bassett and Oswald, 1983)

A 1988 random mail survey of Washington's NIPF owners resulted in a statewide 60% response or 910 useable questionnaires. Although there was little difference between eastern and western Washington NIPF owners, this paper focuses on attributes, attitudes, and practices of eastern Washington owners. The findings are based on 498 useable responses.

For additional details, the reader is referred to *NIPF Landowner Characteristics and Their Use of Assistance and Education Programs in Washington State* by Keith A. Blatner, David M. Baumgartner, and Lanny R. Quackenbush (Western Journal of Applied Forestry 6(4) 1991). Other NIPF studies of eastern Washington owners and their management practices include:

Baumgartner, D. M. 1978. Private Nonindustrial Forest Landowners of Okanogan County, Washington. EM4397. Coop. Ext. Washington State Univ. 23 pp.

Baumgartner, D. M. 1980. Nonindustrial private forest landowners: Stevens County, Washington. *In: Proceedings of the 1979 Convention of the Society of American Foresters.* p. 266-268.

Weatherhead, D. J., R. C. Chapman and W. H. Kelso, Jr. 1982. Characteristics of NIPF Ownership of Spokane County, Washington. Washington State Univ. Agric. Res. Ctr. Res. Bull. XB 0928. 32 pp.

## RESPONDENTS

The 498 eastern Washington respondents owned 174,000 acres of forestland in total. The median respondent ownership size was 100 acres. The median length of ownership was 20 years.

Eighty-five percent of the respondents were male and 97% were white. The median age was 58 years. Fifty-five percent had completed some education beyond high school. Median income in 1987 was \$30,000.

Employment was:

- 41% self-employment (26% farmers/ranchers)
- 27% employed fulltime
- 27% retired
- 5% other

Residence was:

- 46% on forest property
- 22% in same county
- 21% elsewhere in Washington
- 10% other state or country

In the previous year, the absentee owners spent a median of 13 days on their property with 24% having not visited their property at all in that year. Absentee owners lived a median distance of 25 miles from their properties. Twenty-eight percent lived over 100 miles away.

Forty-six percent of the properties are part of a farm or ranch that produces commercial agricultural products such as wheat, cattle and apples. Livestock grazing on forest land was reported by 61% of the respondents.

## REASONS FOR OWNERSHIP

Eastern Washington NIPF owners represent a diverse cross-section of society with a wide array of individual land use objectives (Table 1). Over 80% of respondents expressed that aesthetics, sentimental attachment, privacy, ownership satisfaction, wildlife habitat, and keeping it natural were important factors in their ownership. Income from timber was important to 59% of the owners. Reflecting the diversity among owners, all reasons for ownership were very important to some owners and very unimportant to others.

Table 1.—Reasons for Ownership of Eastern Washington NIPF

Reason	Very Important/ Somewhat Important
1. Scenic beauty or aesthetics	87
2. Personal/sentimental	86
3. Privacy	84
4. Satisfaction from owning land	83
5. Wildlife habitat	82
6. Keeping it natural	81
7. Legacy for my children	77
8. Place to practice conservation	74
9. Income from timber	59
10. Source of firewood	59
11. Income from farming or grazing	50
12. Place to hunt	42
13. Investment for resale	38
14. Place to camp	38
15. Access to nearby recreation	29
16. Place to fish	28
17. Place to ride motorbikes, snowmobiles, etc.	20
18. Income from leasing land	19
19. Commercial development or subdivision	16
20. Income from Christmas trees	6
21. Income from recreation	6

## FOREST MANAGEMENT

When asked which statement described the way in which the owner would like his/her timber to be managed, responses were as follows:

	%
	Owners
1. High interest in timber management—wants timber to be intensely managed on continuing basis.	14%
2. Some interest in timber management—may use occasional practices.	69%
3. No interest in timber management—own land for non-timber purposes and have no intention to harvest timber.	17%

Those showing no interest in timber management were predominantly owners of smaller acreages and held only about 5% of the forest acreage. Twenty-five percent had plans to harvest within 5 years and another 12% plan to harvest within 6-10 years. It appears that forestry professionals have the potential for plenty of work as only 9% have a written forest management plan, 31% have had an inventory and 28% reported having had the advice or help of a forester.

Owners reported having completed one or more of different management practices in the past 10 years (Table 2). The most frequent involved wildlife habitat (42%) and feeding wildlife (41%). Thinning trees (37%), road construction (30%) and pruning trees (24%) were other frequent practices. Eighteen percent reported having built ponds in the past 10 years.

Table 2.—Management Practices of Eastern Washington NIPF.

	Done in Past 10 Years
1. Feed deer, birds, or other wildlife	41
2. Leave snags or trees uncut for wildlife habitat	42
3. Thin trees (other than Christmas trees)	37
4. Construct a road	30
5. Prune trees (other than Christmas trees)	24
6. Build a pond	18
7. Use herbicide to control unwanted or competing brush, grass, or undesirable trees	17
8. Plant trees for reforestation	15
9. Plant vegetation for wildlife	10
10. Fertilize forest trees	1

## CONCLUSIONS

NIPF lands in Eastern Washington are important for their contribution to the region's economy and environment. These lands are also important for the financial and personal returns they provide to their owners. Owners' objectives reflect a high conservation or stewardship ethic in addition to a relatively high interest in some level of timber management.

Although owners have completed many management practices, it appears that there is room for improvement as reflected by the low number having a written management plan, having an inventory, or having had the advice or assistance of a forester.

Timber management is compatible with objectives of most owners; however, foresters will be most effective if they recommend or practice silviculture which helps landowners accomplish their individual ownership/management objectives. NIPF lands should not be viewed simply as tree factories.

## LITERATURE CITED

- Bassett, P. M. and D. D. Oswald. 1983. Timber Resource Statistics for Eastern Washington. USDA Forest Service Pacific Northwest Forest and Range Exp. Sta. Res. Bull. PNW-104. 32 pp.
- Baumgartner, D. M. 1978. Private Nonindustrial Forest Landowners of Okanogan County, Washington. EM 4397. Coop. Ext. Washington State Univ. 23 pp.
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- Blatner, K. A., Baumgartner, D. M. and Quackenbush, L. R. 1991. NIPF Landowner Characteristics and Their Use of Assistance and Education Programs in Washington State. *W. J. App. For.*, 6(4).

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