How Do We Make Habitat Happen?

The Massachusetts Keystone Program:
A Grassroots Effort to Provide Habitat Education
and Habitat Enhancement on Town and Private Conservation Lands

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70% of the forest is in “private” ownership, including trusts, families, and individuals.
Number of Family Forest Ownerships in MA
(Kittredge et. al. 2005)

- 46,554 people > 10 ac.
- Representing 86% of private woodland (2.2 million acres)
- 42.5 acres/ownership (>10ac)
- 17.9 acres/ownership (>3 acres)
Top Ownership Objectives
(preliminary findings Catanzaro et. al.)

1. To enjoy beauty or scenery (79%)
2. To protect or improve wildlife habitat (72%)
3. For privacy (70%)
4. To protect nature or biodiversity (66%)
5. To protect water resources (58%)
So...how do we make habitat happen?
The “Other” Science of Conservation
We don’t need to reach everyone!

- **Diffusion of Innovation** – Everett Rogers
  - Some people will adopt new ideas faster than other

- **The Influentials: How 1 in 10 Americans Tell the Other 9 What to Do**, R.J. Roper and Associates
  - Opinion leaders are highly influential in the decisions of their peers

- **Bowling Alone** – Robert D. Putnam
  - Social capital matters. Personal relationships provide access to information.
When decisions do arise, landowners often turn to friends and neighbors

Butler 2008
Why Friends and Neighbors?

- Trusted
- Unbiased
- First hand experience
- Know local information
- Know us
- Share our values
- Available for time sensitive decisions
Most significant predictor of openness to conservation: they knew their neighbors.

- UMass/University of Wisconsin Landowner Survey

Social Capital! Personal relationships matter!
As professionals, we can’t assume that we are the best or even most credible messenger!

However............
“I need the information (codified knowledge) AND a friend to talk to about it (tacit knowledge).”

Central MA Landowner


So.....how do we use social science to make habitat happen?
Background

- “Coverts” started in CT & VT in the ‘80s
- Initial funding from the Ruffed Grouse Society
- Massachusetts focuses training on:
  1. community opinion leaders
  2. strategic professionals
  3. promoting diverse projects
Keystone Species: A species with a disproportionate influence on its environment.

Keystone Cooperator: An individual with a disproportionate influence on his/her environment.
The Goal of Keystone

- Seed into each community, trained opinion leaders that help inform the forest conservation decisions of their neighbors, community, and organizations.

"Much better knowledge base and appreciation for the role of managing forests specifically for wildlife."  Keystone Cooperator
Recruitment & Selection

60 – 80 applications per year

- Acres
  - Impacts on land they owned
  - Impacts on land their involved with

- Potential to influence the decisions of others
  - Connectedness within a community
  - Evidence of past success
  - Unique knowledge or experience

- Diverse Perspectives
  - Male : Female ratio (50:50)
  - Statewide coverage
  - Different roles/perspectives

- Recommendations

Next Keystone training:
April 14th – 17th, 2016

Applications:

Applications Due:
March 7th, 2016
Program

Retreat Style: Thursday evening – Sunday afternoon

- Land use history
- Forest ecology
- Wildlife ecology
- Early and late successional habitats
- Elements of timber mgt.
- Land protection tools
- Invasive species
- Landowner decisions
- Landscape context
- UMass resources
- Outreach ideas
- Alumni success stories

"Every presenter was top notch!"

- Keystone Cooperator

Morning indoor sessions
John Scanlon and Trina Moruzzi leading field trips
Cooperators connecting at dinner
Expectations

- 30-hours of their time towards a forest conservation project(s) of their choosing
- Meet local needs
- Uses their skills and interests

“Thank you for a wonderful, educational, inspiring weekend. I come away with great motivation and courage to implement some new ideas!” Keystone Cooperator
The Keystone Network

- First training in 1988
- 25 classes of Keystone Cooperators
- > 500 people trained
- Communities across the state
- Periodic reunions
- Keystone list serve
- Updated resources
2013 Survey Results
*Over a 12-month period….*

- Average number of years since training >10
- Own or are involved with the management decisions on **143,840 total acres** of land.
- Total hours contributed: **44,635 (22 FTE)**
- Made contact with **15,033** people about forest conservation
- Referrals to people or resources: **1,742**

"Made me appreciate the range of possible decisions a landowner can take in managing a forest.” Keystone Cooperator
Keystone Influence

How many of the reported hours are due to Keystone?

- Planning educational events for woodland owners (92%)
- Harvesting timber on land with which they are involved (86%)
- Referring woodland owners to other sources of information resources (83%)
- Providing information to media about forest conservation (76%)
- Distributing forest conservation information (75%)
- Wildlife enhancement on land in which you are involved (49%)

“Of many meetings on conservation that I have attended, this was the best!” Keystone Cooperator
So.....how do we make habitat happen?
Paul Strasburg - Worthington

Land they own

- CR on 200+ acres abutting Fox Den WMA
- Early successional habitat creation in two different areas of the property
- Hosting research on restoring old-growth characteristics
- Hosts public outreach events

Neighbor Hattie Plehn (Keystone Cooperator)
Maintains grasslands – created shrub habitat
Colin Novick
Greater Worcester Land Trust

Land They Influence

- Early successional forest openings at Cascades West (Holden)
- Wildlife meadow maintenance at Cascades West (Holden)
- Wildlife Meadow restoration and maintenance at Sibley Farm (Spencer)
- Early successional forest openings at Sibley Farm (Spencer)
- Invasive exotics suppression at Nick's Woods (Worcester)
- Harvesting timber from Trust lands (Holden and Spencer)
- Drafting Forest Management Plans on Trust lands (Worcester, Holden, Spencer, & Leicester)
- Lead ALB volunteer monitoring effort
Michele Grzenda & Laurie Bent
Weston

In a position to influence

- Initiated conversations about deer control methods
- Con Com recommended hunting to BOS
- Selectboard approved hunting option
- Con Com developed and implemented a deer hunting program, including a hunter proficiency test
- In addition, hunters donated a total of 33 hours of land management work last year
- Shared their experience with other communities
- Town is now considering expanding the program

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<th>2009</th>
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<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
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<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>46</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>65</td>
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Conclusions

- Must reach landowners beyond WMAs to meet our overall wildlife conservation goals

- Focus on opinion leaders and people in a position to make a difference

- “I need information and friend to talk to”
Thank you!


Keystone Sponsors

- MA Div. of Fish & Wildlife
- MA Chapter of TNC
- MA DCR
- Harvard Forest