

# **A Green Tapestry**

## **The Small Woodlands of Washington County**

### ***Results of a Survey***

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# A Green Tapestry

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### Executive Summary

Washington County, Oregon, is home to almost half a million people. Most of them feel fortunate to live in a green landscape of parks, farmlands, and forested hillsides. Washington County's 465,000 acres lie mostly within the Tualatin River watershed. Slightly more than half of the County—234,000 acres—is commercial forestland. Of that, 86,580 acres are in non-industrial private ownership, and 90,147 are owned by private industry. There are 11,700 acres in Bureau of Land Management ownership, 48,458 in state ownership (the Tillamook State Forest), and about 3,000 acres in the “other public” category. These could be city or county parks, or Bureau of Reclamation land, such as lies on the fringes of Hagg Lake.<sup>1</sup>

The Tualatin watershed is approximately 15% urban, 35% agricultural, and 50% forested. Five percent of this forested land is managed by the state of Oregon and 2% by the Bureau of Land Management. There are about 5,250 acres of public parklands in the Washington County portion of the watershed, and 2,000 acres of managed natural areas not currently accessible to the public. The rest of Washington County's forested lands are privately owned or municipal.

These forested lands provide a “green tapestry” that enhances and supports the lives of

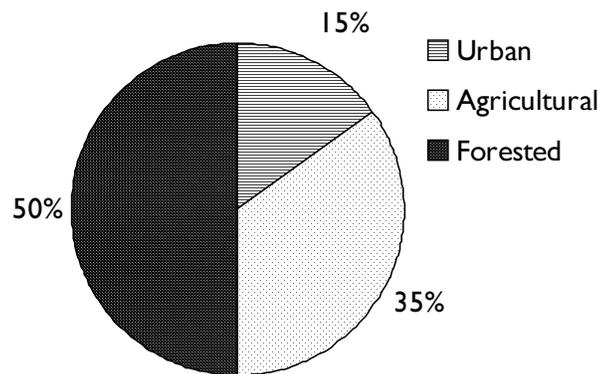
those in the county and surrounding areas. This green tapestry provides clean water, wildlife habitat, a livelihood for those who work in the forest, and scenic views that serve as the backdrop for the lives of the County's residents and visitors.

Private forestlands are divided into two broad categories: industrial and non-industrial. Industrial forests are those owned by companies in the forest products industry—generally defined as companies that also own wood processing facilities such as sawmills. Non-industrial forests are those owned by individuals, companies, and private organizations that do not own processing facilities.

In Washington County, 90,147 acres of forestlands are industry-owned. These are held by a few large, mostly corporate owners and tend to be concentrated in larger holdings. Non-industrial forestlands are smaller. In Washington County about 70,000 acres of non-industrial private forestlands—81% of the total—are in tracts of less than 5,000 acres. These forestlands are thus owned by many landowners. Parcels are mostly smaller than 50 acres, and some are as small as 5 acres.

Non-industrial forestlands are generally scattered in and around agricultural lands and urban developments and mixed in with the larger

Status of land in Tualatin watershed



<sup>1</sup> These figures are from a 1991 OSU Extension report and from the Oregon Department of Forestry.

private industrial forestlands. They are often referred to as “small woodlands.” As a result of settlement patterns in the past, small woodlands are concentrated on or near roads and highways, which makes them easily viewed by the public.

This mingling of small woodlands within the urban and agricultural landscape, and the visibility of these woodlands to County residents and visitors, make them very important to the social and economic fabric of the community. Small woodland owners are important members of rural communities, urban neighborhoods, and business and economic organizations. Many benefits accrue to the community from small woodlands: open spaces, wooded landscapes, and scenic vistas; clean water; a diversity of wildlife habitats; social values such as recreation; and economic values that derive from the productivity of the forest’s soil and vegetation.

These benefits are provided by private land-owners who take pride in good stewardship of their woodland resources. If we wish to maintain this “green tapestry” for the whole society’s benefit, it is important to encourage and support those who provide it. This report identifies areas where small woodland owners are missing opportunities to improve their stewardship, and areas where the energy and resources of the governmental, educational, and private-enterprise sectors could be more effectively focused in support of small woodland owners’ objectives.

### Acknowledgements

This Woodland Owner Survey and Report was the product of many people’s interests, skills, and efforts. Sincere appreciation is extended to:

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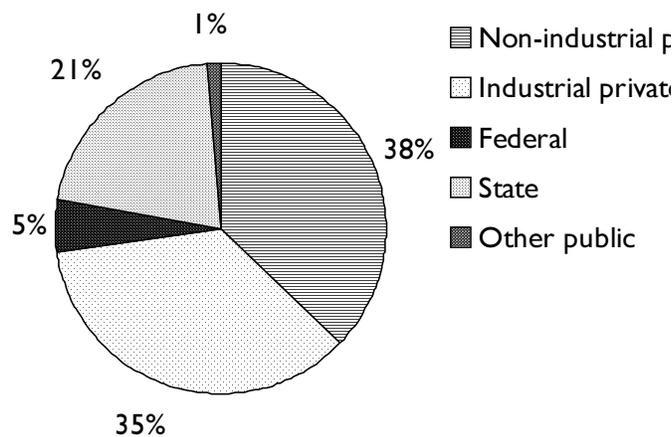
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The small woodland owners who consented to share their responses on the Survey

**Ownership of forested land in Washington County**



# A Green Tapestry

## The Small Woodlands of Washington County

Whose woods these are, I think I know....” These familiar opening words from a poem by Robert Frost, “Stopping By Woods On A Snowy Evening,” imply that we know the small woodland owners in Washington County.<sup>2</sup> In the past, however, we have not really known them very well. Small woodland owners are a diverse group, and they own and manage a diversity of forestlands. Washington County Small Woodlands Association seeks to build a bridge to understanding small woodland owners in order to enable the Association and others to better serve their needs and to strengthen the ties between their interests and those of the larger community. The first step in building this bridge is to acquire a better knowledge of these lands and their owners. This step has been taken by the completion, in September of 2002, of the Washington County Small Woodland Survey. The Survey was financed by a grant from the State of Oregon Economic and Community Development Department, with funds provided also by the United States Forest Service Old Growth Diversification Fund. Mark Shibley, Ph.D., associate professor of sociology at Southern Oregon University, designed the survey form with assistance from the Washington County Small Woodlands Association.<sup>3</sup>

The Survey is a scientifically designed and administered study of small woodland owners in Washington County. The population of small

woodland owners was determined from the County Forestland Tax Assessment roll, which identifies woodland parcels classified as forestland by their placement in a special woodland taxing category. There are 70,000 acres of such forestland in Washington County between 5 acres and 5,000 acres. The upper limit was set at 5,000 acres because that is the threshold that the Oregon Small Woodlands Association uses to define small woodlands, and it is also commonly used in other states. Woodland owners in this category have “selected” themselves as small woodland owners by placing their lands in this category. As we have noted, there are other wooded lands in the county, in public or non-

**Table 1. Summary of woodland owners in population and sample.<sup>4</sup>**

	Wash. County (No.)	Sampled (No.)	Complete Responses (No.)	Return Rate for County (%)	Return Rate for Sample (%)
<10ac	579	250	67	12	27
1-<30ac	694	250	147	21	59
30-<50ac	327	250	105	32	43
>50ac	280	280	179	64	64
Unknown			7		
<b>Total</b>	<b>1880</b>	<b>1030</b>	<b>505</b>		<b>49</b>

profit ownership or mixed in with agricultural, industrial, or other categories. Lands growing Christmas trees are not counted as small woodlands, but rather classed as agricultural. Within the small woodland forestland category, there are

<sup>2</sup>Adapted from an analogy by John Bliss, Ph.D., Starker Chair in Private and Family Forestry, Oregon State University.

<sup>3</sup> Information from Washington County Woodland Survey (copyright WCSWA) by Mark Shibley, Ph.D., and Patricia Styer, Ph.D., was used extensively in this report.

<sup>4</sup>The tables show the estimated county-wide percentages for the group, or subgroup, indicated by the column heading. Responses have been weighted by acreage class. Respondents may have been asked to select all applicable responses, so the column entries will not necessarily add up to 100%.

1,880 ownerships of 5 to 5000 acres. About 60% of these ownerships, 1,030, were randomly selected within a stratification designed to achieve a statistically valid result in spite of the large variation in numbers of owners within each size class. The resulting stratification is shown in Table 1.

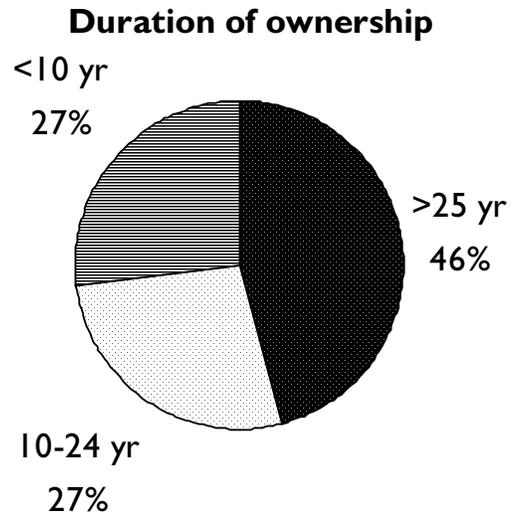
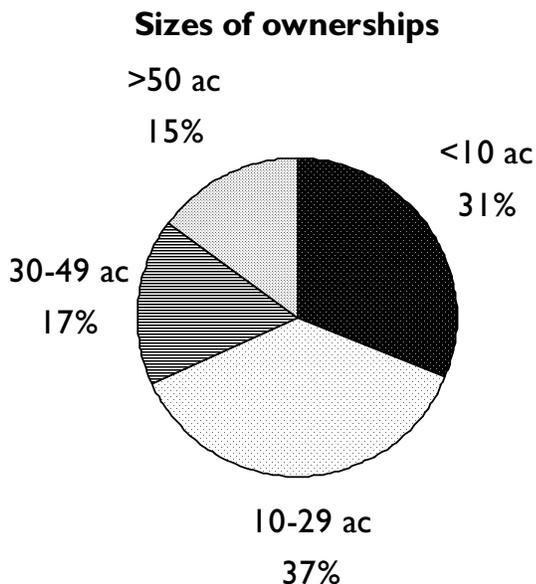
The Survey consisted of 33 questions, many of them requiring multiple answers. These questions followed four basic question lines:

- What are you managing for? What are your management objectives?
- What kinds of activities have you done on your property in the recent past? What do you plan to do in the future?
- What do you perceive to be the biggest management problems and needs that you face?
- Tell us a little bit about yourself.

Other questions were included to round out the picture of small woodland owners, including questions about certification, how the land was acquired and how long it has been owned, and how woodland owners believe their woodland association can serve them better.

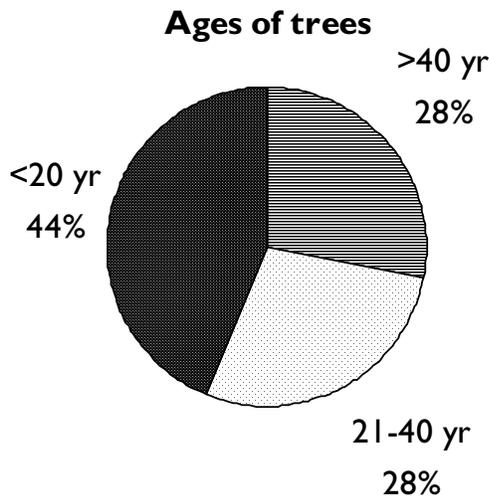
### What Do These Small Woodlands Look Like?

The first thing the Survey tells us about small woodlands is that most of them are indeed



small. Washington County small woodland ownerships of less than 50 acres account for 85% of all woodlands of less than 5,000 acres in the county. More than two-thirds of the small woodlands in the county are 30 acres or less, and almost half of those are between 5 and 10 acres in size. In Oregon as a whole, 71% of the ownerships are less than 10 acres in size, and in the United States, 61% are less than 10 acres. The state and national survey data cannot be broken out for 30 acres or less, but small woodland ownerships 50 acres or less in Oregon amount to 92% of all woodland ownerships. For the United States the figure is 89%<sup>5</sup>. About one-half (44%) of small woodlands have been owned by the same owner for 25 or more years, and the remainder are divided between owners who have owned them for 10 to 25 years and owners who have owned them for less than 10 years.

The primary forest tree species on small woodlands is Douglas-fir—90% of respondents reported having Douglas-fir growing on their property. Western redcedar was reported by 36% of respondents, bigleaf maple by 32%, and red alder by 32%. On most woodlands, several species occur on the same site, though one species may be most common. Many of the trees are young—44% are less than 20 years old. The remainder of the trees are evenly split between those that are 20 to 40 years old, and those that are over 40 years old (28% each).



Most owners live on their woodlands (70%), and have acquired the property by purchase. About half of the ownerships are in some form of joint ownership, usually family related; 32% of the ownerships are held by individuals, and the remainder are held corporately, in trust, or by a non-profit organization.

About one-third of the landowners report they understand the term “certified.” A certified forest is one that has received some form of outside review of its management. The two most common systems of certification are the American Tree Farm System (ATFS), which is the oldest (established in 1945) and the less restrictive of the two, and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). FSC certification goes beyond that of ATFS by requiring third-party review of forestland management and chain-of-custody tracking for the forest products from stump through the manufacturing process. Five percent of the small woodland owners in the County have their lands certified. Most of these woodlands are certified under the ATFS system.

### Meet Your Small Woodland Neighbor

Small woodland owners in Washington County are a diverse group, but they have some characteristics in common. As a group, woodland owners are better educated than the average citizen. Only 4% do not have a high school education, while 53% have a bachelor’s or gradu-

ate-level degree. According to U.S. census figures for 2000, almost 15% of Oregonians lack a high school diploma, and about one-fourth have a bachelor’s degree or higher. Nearly 20% of Americans lack a high school diploma, and fewer than one-fourth have a bachelor’s degree or higher.

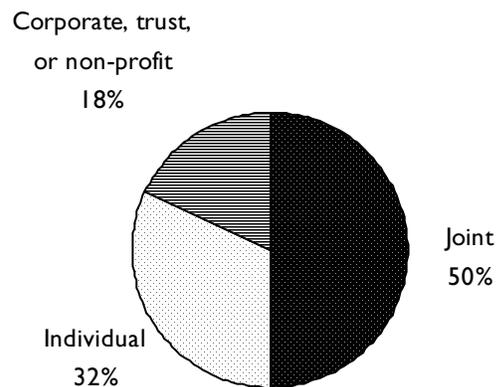
Small woodland owners also have relatively high income: only 7% earn less than \$25,000 annually; 26% are in the \$25,000-\$50,000 range, 38% are in the \$50,000-\$100,000 range, and 29% earn \$100,000 or more.

There is a relatively even distribution of ages among woodland owners: 19% of the owners are under 45 years of age, 22% are 45-54 years, 27% are 55-64 years, 18% are 65-74 years, and 14% are over 75 years. Although 32% are of conventional retirement age—65 or older—38% are actually retired, perhaps indicating, as mentioned above, that small woodland owners are financially more comfortable than the average.

### What Do Woodland Owners Value?

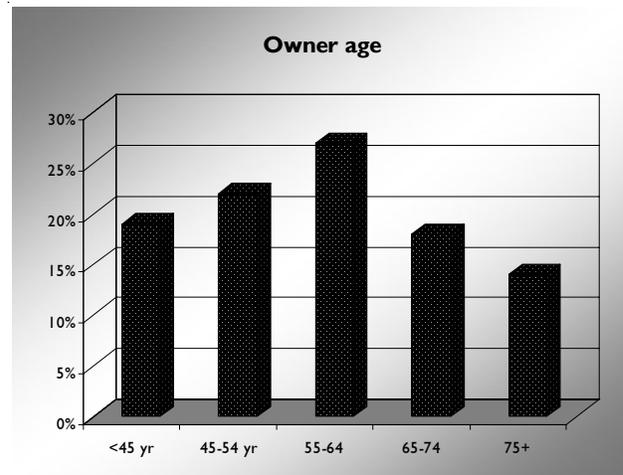
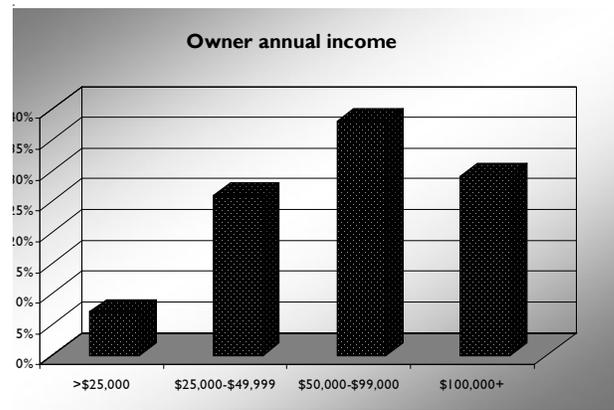
Small woodland owners in Washington County appreciate a rural lifestyle, and most (70%) live on their land. In contrast, only one-third of woodland owners nationally live on their land.<sup>5</sup> Washington County small woodland owners like the beauty of their woodlands and the surrounding countryside. Appreciation of

### Ownership status



the country lifestyle and the aesthetic beauty of the countryside is the most frequently cited primary reason for owning forestland (Table 2). Owners of smaller acreages and those who have more recently acquired their forestland place a higher value on the aesthetics and rural nature of their property than do larger landowners and those who have owned their forestland for longer. Over half the owners who own less than 30 acres and who have owned their land for less than 25 years said the appreciation of lifestyle and scenery was the primary reason they owned their forestland. These qualities ranked lower among those who own over 50 acres and those who have owned their land more than 25 years. The more-recent owners of small woodlands tend to own the smaller acreages, which points to one possible explanation for the difference: Washington County's rapid urbanization over the past 25 years. Owners who have moved to the country to avoid the rapid increase in population, traffic congestion, and expansion of subdivisions are probably more likely to say they appreciate the rural countryside than are those who have been there all along. Nationally, and at the state level, these qualities were also important, but they received a much lower level of response (<20%).<sup>5</sup>

The second most cited primary reason for owning forestland was in order to gain income



and investment return. Eighteen percent of respondents identified this as their main reason for owning forestland. The importance of financial benefits increased as the size of ownership and length of ownership tenure increased (Table 2).

Although small woodland owners place a high value on obtaining a financial return, only 6% of the larger ownerships (50 acres or more) provide a primary source of income for their owners. No ownership smaller than 30 acres provides the primary income source, but

**Table 2. Primary reasons for ownership (%).<sup>4</sup>**

	All	By Acreage Class				By Years Owned		
		<10	10-<30	30-<50	50+	<10	10-25	25+
Nature/wildlife	9	11	8	7	9	9	11	6
Investment/income	18	10	14	29	30	15	9	28
Home/lifestyle/scenery	47	55	52	43	23	53	60	33
Timber	9	5	6	10	21	6	5	11
Family/heritage	7	7	5	8	9	6	4	9
Other	12	13	15	4	8	10	11	13

<sup>4</sup>The tables show the estimated county-wide percentages for the group, or subgroup, indicated by the column heading. Responses have been weighted by acreage class. Respondents may have been asked to select all applicable responses, so the column entries will not necessarily add up to 100%.

<sup>5</sup>Birch, Thomas W. 1997. Private Forest-Land Owners of the Western United States, 1994. Resource Bulletin NE-137. USDA Forest Service, Northeastern Forest Experiment Station, Radnor, PA.

woodland parcels of all sizes do provide a supplemental source of income. Small woodland owners in Oregon valued investment and income at the same rate as those in Washington County (18% identified these as their primary reason for owning forestland), but at the national level, fewer small woodland owners (9%) offered investment and income as their primary reason.<sup>5</sup>

Enjoyment of nature and wildlife tied with timber for the third most cited main reason for owning forestland. While most respondents expressed appreciation for the naturalness of the countryside, fewer than 10% identified it as a primary reason for ownership. As might be expected, owners of smaller acreages tended to have a higher appreciation for these qualities than did owners of larger acreages. The 9% rating for timber production among Washington County small woodland owners is higher than that for Oregon—4%—and much higher than that for the country as a whole. National surveys show that only 1% of small woodland owners cited timber as their primary purpose for owning forestland.<sup>5</sup>

No one of the categories in Table 2 was cited by the majority of respondents as the primary reason for owning forestland. In answering these and many of the other questions in this Survey, respondents were asked to select all applicable answers. Thus, percentages in this table reflect a range of choices on the part of respondents and therefore a range of respondent values. Among owners with large parcels and those who have owned their forestlands for longer periods, the positive values placed on “nature/wildlife,” “home/lifestyle/scenery,” and “timber” suggest that these values are not mutually exclusive for this group. The way respondents selected the three options indicates the set of values they place on their woodland. This suggests that, if forest stewardship is defined by reference to a balance of these three values, then the idea of stewardship resonates strongly

among this segment of small woodland owners. The situation appears different, however, for newer owners and for those who own smaller parcels, whose responses showed they put greater value on “nature/wildlife” and “home/lifestyle/scenery” than on “timber.” This difference may be explained by the fact that the newer owners of smaller parcels may not perceive as many opportunities for timber production and so rate it lower as a value.

## How Do Woodland Owners Manage Their Land?

### **Timber Management**

Small woodland owners in Washington County have been actively managing their woodlands for timber products. Two-thirds of Washington County owners have harvested forest products since owning their property, compared to fewer than half nationally.<sup>5</sup> Half of Washington County owners have harvested in the last 5 years. The primary reasons given for timber harvest were to improve the quality of remaining trees or remove damaged trees (50%), to remove mature trees and meet management targets (35%), or to get wood for personal uses, such as firewood. The need to acquire income immediately or to take advantage of favorable markets influenced the timing of their decision to harvest (Table 3).

Though timber is the primary product harvested on small woodlands, half the owners do not perceive that they are growing any forest products for sale. This may be because owners regard any products harvested as incidental to their primary reasons for ownership. This view may be especially prevalent among newer owners of smaller parcels, most of whom, as we have seen, do not list timber as a primary reason for ownership. These owners may not see themselves as growing forest products, while those who have owned larger parcels for a longer time

<sup>5</sup>Birch, Thomas W. 1997. Private Forest-Land Owners of the Western United States, 1994. Resource Bulletin NE-137. USDA Forest Service, Northeastern Forest Experiment Station, Radnor, PA.

do. Lack of information about product potential may contribute to the perception on the part of the first group that they are not growing forest products to sell.

Laws, regulations, and the physical character of the land make a difference in owners' ability to manage for timber. Small woodland owners who manage for timber products perceive that their ability to produce them is affected by current laws, regulations, or the physical characteristics of their property. More than one-third of landowners (35%) reported that portions of their property are affected by laws and regulations. Owners with larger acreages were more likely to report being affected.

past 5 years. The most common method used is application of herbicides.

- Small woodland owners maintain roads and trails on their property. Access is important to them, and 42% of owners reported that they had maintained roads or trails or both in the past 5 years. Twenty-eight percent also disposed of slash, created fire lanes, or used some other method to reduce fire hazard. An additional 10% of landowners practiced some form of wildlife habitat improvement on their woodlands.

The likelihood that small woodland owners will practice the above activities is strongly correlated with the size of their property but not necessarily with the length of time owners have

**Table 3. Reasons for trees harvested or removed (%). More than one reason could be chosen.<sup>4</sup>**

	All	By Acreage Class				By Years Owned		
		<10	10-<30	30-<50	50+	<10	10-<25	25+
In the management plan	34	23	28	37	58	43	33	32
Trees were mature	35	18	39	41	49	32	25	45
Clear land for other use	14	26	11	10	9	12	17	15
Needed the money	22	10	18	32	35	21	19	28
Needed wood for self	26	23	28	32	22	29	18	35
Price was right	20	10	16	26	36	11	20	24
Improve hunting	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1
Scenery/recreation	6	3	8	8	8	8	5	5
Remove damaged trees	47	59	45	37	42	46	46	49
Improve remaining	50	46	45	56	62	71	46	49

### Other Management Activities

In addition to timber harvest, small woodland owners are active managers in other ways:

- Small woodland owners are tree planters—47% of them report planting trees in the last 5 years. The difference between the percent of owners who have harvested (67%) and of those who have planted (47%) reflects the fact that many harvests are thinnings, where replanting is not legally required.

- Small woodland owners practice weed and brush management. Newly planted trees usually require some form of vegetative competition control to reduce the stress for moisture and light that herbaceous growth and invasive species such as Scotch broom and non-native blackberry have on newly planted seedlings. One-fourth of small woodland owners engaged in some form of vegetative control during the

owned their property. Owners of 50 acres or more are twice as likely to engage in other management activities as owners of less than 50 acres (Table 4).

### Management Plans

Thirteen percent of Washington County woodland owners have a written management plan. While this may sound like a small number, only 7% of woodland owners both in Oregon and in the United States have a written management plan.<sup>5</sup> As with the management activities such as tree planting, the larger the property owned by the woodland owner, the more likely he or she is to have a written management plan. More than one-third of owners with over 50 acres (38%) have a written plan, whereas only 5% of owners of less than 10 acres have one. Those landowners who have a written plan generally report that their plan includes goals

**Table 4. Other activities that have occurred in the last 5 years (%).<sup>4</sup>**

	All	By Acreage Class				By Years Owned		
		<10	10-<30	30-<50	50+	<10	10-<25	25+
Prepared land for trees	26	25	13	31	51	33	25	19
Planted trees	47	39	42	53	66	52	48	43
Thinning	33	19	31	43	53	33	36	32
Reduced fire hazard	28	28	25	28	36	37	30	22
Herbicides, pesticides	25	25	21	23	41	33	29	18
Road/trail maintenance	42	40	35	42	62	50	45	36
Wildlife improvement	10	10	7	7	21	10	16	7

and objectives and a map; but then, nearly all owners, even those who do not have a written plan, state that they have goals and objectives and a map. The other important components of a management plan—an inventory of the resources on their property and a current appraisal of the value of those resources—generally exist only on the larger acreages, 30 acres or more (Table 5).

**Table 5. Written management plan for any portion of woodland (%).<sup>4</sup>**

	All	By Acreage Class				By Years Owned		
		<10	10-<30	30-<50	50+	<10	10-<25	>25
% with plan	13	5	10	15	38	8	16	16
<b>Components:</b>								
Goals/objectives	71	100	66	60	72	73	71	72
Map	77	100	61	74	85	72	85	80
Inventory/ volume cruise	49	0	27	40	79	56	52	46
Current appraisal	28	0	0	47	44	38	32	20

**Sustainability Certification**

National and international efforts to certify forestland are reaching small woodland owners. Almost one-third (31%) of Washington County small woodland owners are aware of certification, which consists of independent review by qualified experts to determine and attest that forestland is being managed in an environmentally responsible and sustainable manner. Only 5% of woodland owners report that they are currently certified, but 9% of those aware of certification say they are planning to obtain certification.

Almost two-thirds (65%) of owners who

know about certification say they would consider obtaining certification. The great majority of woodland owners who report being certified are in the American Tree Farm System, the oldest certification system in the United States.

Most small woodland owners in Washington County say they do not plan to harvest forest products (59%), but when offered a choice, almost half indicated that they do plan to sell sawlogs (25%), poles and pilings (6%), export logs (13%), chipped wood (3%), or cut firewood (10%). The apparent conflict in their choices may be related to how they define the term “forest products.” Regardless of this seeming inconsistency, it appears that there may be harvesting of timber in some form on over half of the small woodlands in the county during the next 5 years. As could be expected, more owners of larger woodlands plan to harvest than do owners of smaller woodlands (Table 6). Nationally there appears to be more interest in timber harvest—74% of small woodland owners report that they intend to harvest at some point.<sup>5</sup> In Oregon, 48% say they intend to harvest at some point.

Small woodland owners are faced with many choices in managing their woodlands. While the decision to harvest forest products may be the most significant, there are other important management choices, ranging from a “hands-off,” minimal-management approach to intensive management involving large investments and much activity designed to achieve a monetary or resource purpose. There is also a choice to be made in the eventual disposition of the property beyond the owner’s lifetime. Given all

<sup>5</sup>Birch, Thomas W. 1997. Private Forest-Land Owners of the Western United States, 1994. Resource Bulletin NE-137. USDA Forest Service, Northeastern Forest Experiment Station, Radnor, PA.

these choices, woodland owners show the diversity of their objectives across ownership size and tenure categories. Two conclusions come across clearly, however: about half of the woodland owners do not plan any significant changes in managing their property in the next 5 years, and woodland owners are generally not interested in selling their property or converting it to another use.

More woodland owners of larger parcels indicate they plan timber harvest than do owners of smaller parcels. On the other hand, more owners of smaller parcels state they plan some

## What Role Does a Woodland Owners' Association Play?

The mission of associations such as the Oregon Small Woodlands Associations (OSWA) and its chapters, such as Washington County Small Woodlands Association (WCSWA), is to provide information and assistance to small woodland owners. An association can give landowners a voice in decisions made in the community, state, and nation that affect them. Most small woodland owners in Washington County do not belong to a woodland owners'

association (77%). For owners of less than 10 acres, the figure is 89%; for owners of more than 50 acres, it is 46%. Of the 23% who indicated they did belong to an association, 12% said they belong to WCSWA, while 10% said they belong to OSWA. Since all WCSWA members must also be OSWA members, these groups probably contain essentially the same people. Three percent of owners reported belonging to the American Tree Farm System. This figure may be slightly low, because it would put the number of ATFS-certified tree farms in the county at 56, and in fact there are 64 ATFS-certified tree farms in the county. (Some respondents may have answered this question without fully understanding what it means to belong to the ATFS.) As might be expected, owners of larger

woodlands had a higher membership response than did owners of smaller woodlands. However, tenure of ownership did not have a significant relationship.

**Table 6. Plans for selling forest products in next 5 years (%).<sup>4</sup>**

	All	By Acreage Class				By Years Owned		
		<10	10-<30	30-<50	50+	<10	10-<25	>25
No plans	59	69	65	51	32	57	67	51
Domestic sawlogs	25	14	19	31	56	18	22	35
Poles and pilings	6	3	4	7	16	5	4	9
Export logs	13	3	10	16	41	11	9	19
Chipped wood	3	0	2	3	9	2	2	4
Cut firewood	10	5	10	13	19	8	12	10

wildlife habitat improvement and that they plan to sell property (Table 7). Overall, however, the largest number of owners are planning only minimal activity.

**Table 7. Plans for woodland in next 5 years (%).<sup>4</sup>**

	All	By Acreage Class				By Years Owned		
		<10	10-<30	30-<50	50+	<10	10-<25	25+
No plans	25	26	28	24	17	17	25	29
Leave as is	22	22	27	20	13	16	31	18
Minimum activity	44	43	45	41	46	50	47	36
Improve for wildlife	18	25	19	10	13	25	22	11
Non-timber products	3	2	3	3	7	7	2	1
Harvest timber	19	11	12	23	44	16	16	25
Sell some or all	7	14	4	6	5	7	10	7
Give some/all to heirs	12	14	5	17	20	1	9	24
Subdivide and sell	1	0	0	2	2	1	0	1
Convert to other use	3	2	4	3	4	6	2	2

<sup>4</sup>The tables show the estimated county-wide percentages for the group, or subgroup, indicated by the column heading. Responses have been weighted by acreage class. Respondents may have been asked to select all applicable responses, so the column entries will not necessarily add up to 100%.

The Survey posed an open-ended write-in question about how woodland owners felt their association could better serve their interests. This question received a 39% response. Respondents suggested such potential areas of service as education (24%), technical advice/training (20%), and improving management climate by advocating for small woodland owners in the areas of taxes, regulation, and community support (20%).

### Whom Do Woodland Owners Consult For Advice?

Many woodland owners do not have all the information they need to manage their woodlands to meet their objectives. Forty-one percent sought advice about their woodlands in the last 5 years; owners of larger acreages sought advice more often than owners of small ones.

Landowners most often consulted service foresters from the Oregon Department of Forestry—45% of those seeking advice sought it from an ODF service forester. About one-third of the landowners went to other landowners, loggers, or forestry consultants to get advice. Oregon State University Extension and industry foresters were consulted by about one in five landowners.

### What Are the Most Pressing Information Needs of Woodland Owners?

One-half of the Survey respondents believe they have “pressing information needs” on a wide range of information topics which they identified in response to the open-ended question. The three most often cited information needs were:

- Marketing forest products (16%)
- Pruning and thinning information (13%)
- Other timber management activities such as logging (5%)

Many other topics were listed, but not in sufficient numbers to be categorized. These topics included forest health, wildlife habitat,

reforestation, economic returns, tax and estate planning, land restrictions and regulations, vegetative competition, watershed protection/enhancement, and road access and maintenance.

Generally the owners of larger woodlands and those who have owned their property longer are more interested in marketing, timber management, and tax- and estate-planning information. Those with smaller woodlands and those who have owned their land for a shorter period of time are slightly more interested in thinning or pruning information and in a variety of other management topics such as wildlife and watershed management. However, the information-needs responses are highly variable, and the other categories of responses were not far behind marketing, pruning, and thinning in frequency of response. This is not surprising, considering the wide diversity in woodland owners’ management goals.

**Table 8. Marketing obstacles and requested assistance (%).<sup>4</sup>**

<b>Primary obstacles selling timber</b>	
Market condition/price	51
Log size/quality	30
Government regulation/access	19
<b>Would welcome assistance regarding</b>	
How to market trees	10
Logging contracts	7
How to locate markets	7
Finding reliable logging contractors	4
Timber too small	4
Timber too large	3

### Marketing Information: A Closer Look

Even though marketing was the most often cited information need, most landowners did not report that they had trouble marketing their logs—only 8% said they had marketing difficulties. When this smaller group was asked to name their primary marketing obstacles, over half (51%) reported market conditions and price. About one-third (30%) said log size and quality were obstacles, while about one-fifth (19%) said government regulation and access were obstacles (Table 8).

As discussed earlier, as many as 25% of

woodland owners plan to harvest timber in the next 5 years. For the larger woodlands, the number anticipating harvest is even higher, up to 44%. About half of respondents said they rely on their logger to do the marketing for them. A small number of woodland owners said they “would welcome assistance” with various marketing topics—the number ranged from 3% to 10% depending on the topic. These low percentages may indicate either that woodland owners have enough previous experience in marketing to have confidence in their knowledge, or that they do not understand, because of a lack of experience, the nature of problems they may yet face. The heavy reliance on loggers to do their marketing may point to a weakness in landowners’ access to information about forest products marketing opportunities.

### **Cooperative Organizations**

In several other parts of the United States there has been significant interest in landowner cooperative organizations that assist in marketing forest products. These cooperative organizations range from highly structured, professionally managed organizations with manufacturing capability, to more-focused and less-structured groups that are member-managed and without capital investments. Small woodland owners in Washington County were asked if they were interested in learning more about cooperative marketing, and 35% said they were. Landowners with larger woodlands are significantly more interested (over 50%). The length of time the woodland owners owned their property did not seem to affect their responses.

### **What Trends Affect Small Woodlands?**

Washington County small woodlands and their owners are significantly affected by the societal trends that surround them. These trends may help explain some of the obvious and not-so-obvious relationships between woodland owners and their woodlands. Increasing population, the desire of people to live in spacious rural settings, the subdivision of large parcels into

smaller ones, and an increasing appreciation of the natural environment, all influence the trend toward an increase in the number of owners of smaller parcels, owners who derive satisfaction not necessarily from owning and managing timber, but from enjoying a wider variety of natural resource benefits.

The changing composition of Washington County small woodlands reflects the urbanizing influence of the metropolitan Portland area. The large number of small ownerships (one-third of the landowners own fewer than 10 acres, and another third own 10-30 acres) reflects a trend toward subdivision of larger parcels. This trend is only slowed, not stopped, by current land-use laws.

Owning a homesite in a pleasant, scenic, and rural atmosphere is a major value among many small woodland owners. Almost half reported it as their primary reason for woodland ownership. Very few small woodland owners rely on their woodlands as their primary source of income. For one-third of owners, woodland income is important, but mainly as a supplement to other, primary income sources.

Size of ownership and length of ownership seem to be the most important indicators of whether a small woodland owner is likely to engage in active (i.e., income-focused) woodland management. These mark a dichotomy among woodland owners in the degree to which they seek information, assistance, economic returns, and other features of active management. Owners of larger acreage, particularly those who own 30 acres or more, seem to have less need for information and assistance in marketing their timber and management of their woodland. They are more active in planning and carrying out management practices, more likely to belong to a woodland owners’ association, and more interested in managing their woodland for investment return and income.

Owners of smaller parcels, less than 30 acres in size, are less likely to seek information, have management plans, or engage in management practices. They are less likely to see income and investment return as important, and more inter-

## A Green Tapestry

ested in enjoying scenic surroundings and appreciating and protecting natural values.

### The Green Tapestry—Values and Relationships

In the half-century since the second World War, in many parts of the United States people have migrated from the cities to the suburbs and then to the countryside. This trend helps to explain the dichotomy this study has revealed within the population of small woodland owners in Washington County. The urban-to-rural migration has strained transportation systems, educational systems, and other social support systems, but it has also created a new rural fabric that weaves rural residents with urban and suburban newcomers into a new community. Small woodland owners are an important component of this community because their lands provide many benefits to their rural, suburban, and urban neighbors—scenic vistas, wildlife habitat, clean water, wood products, and recreational opportunities. These lands provide much of the color and texture of the “green tapestry” that makes Washington County such an appealing place to live. Small woodlands, intermingled with agricultural, urban, and rural community lands, are an important asset to all the members of the larger community. They are provided by private landowners who take pride in good stewardship of their woodland resources.

If we wish to maintain this “green tapestry” for the whole society’s benefit, it is important to encourage and support those who provide it. The growth of the high-technology sector in Portland—the so-called “Silicon Forest”—has been an enormous boon for the Washington County economy in the past two decades. A recent study of the economy of Portland’s west-side communities,<sup>6</sup> including Washington County, named quality of life and livability of the area as factors responsible for drawing the highly skilled “knowledge workers” needed for

the success of the region’s high-tech industry. These workers are well paid and extremely mobile; they are able to be quite selective about where they live and work. The abundance of open spaces and woodlands were cited as key elements of quality of life and livability in the region.

For these amenities to remain, owners of agricultural and wooded property must have sufficient incentive to maintain their lands in those uses. Property taxes and other costs associated with land ownership and management may prove burdensome for some of these owners, especially if the land does not produce income to cover these expenses. For these owners, owning woodlands might eventually carry a financial disincentive that would encourage conversion of these lands to higher-intensity uses and thereby lessen a major quality-of-life factor that draws people to Washington County.

### How Can We Support and Assist Small Woodland Owners?

Small woodland owners face many pressures, resulting from the societal trends affecting the broader community, that could make ownership of woodlands less attractive in the future. For example, woodland owners may find that their new neighbors from the city do not appreciate their timber harvest, and seek to have them either not harvest or modify their harvest in a way that is less financially rewarding. As stewards of these lands, small woodland owners hold the key to maintaining and enhancing the forestlands closest to the people of Washington County. This Survey identifies areas where small woodland owners are missing opportunities to improve their stewardship, and areas where the energy and resources of the governmental, educational, and private-enterprise sectors could be more effectively focused in support of small woodland owners’ objectives. Washington

<sup>6</sup>The Westside Consortium for Economic Health commissioned Impresa Inc. to study the economy of Portland’s west-side communities. The study began in 2001 and concluded with the Westside Economic Summit in April of 2002 and with three technical memoranda issued in June of 2002.

County Small Woodlands Association offers the following recommendations to address these gaps:

### **1. Improve the Dissemination of Information**

**Traditional Providers.** There are good sources of information and assistance available to small woodland owners. However, current budgets of the agencies that have traditionally met landowners' needs, such as the Oregon Department of Forestry and the Oregon State University Extension Service, are shrinking. Until and unless the budget situation improves, other sources of information will play a more significant role.

**Underutilized Sources.** Some agencies and organizations that have not traditionally provided direct assistance, such as the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Washington County Soil and Water Conservation District, could be useful, particularly for those landowners who are interested in such non-timber values as wildlife protection and watershed enhancement. Landowner and forestry-related organizations could take on a larger role as information providers. Oregon Small Woodlands Association and its chapters, such as the Washington County Small Woodlands Association, have a great potential to serve small woodland owners more than they have done in the past.

**New Sources.** Nonprofit organizations may be an untapped but useful future information source. Possible candidates are environmental organizations, such as Defenders of Wildlife and The Nature Conservancy, that support maintaining open space and other rural values. Another possible information source is trade and product organizations that anticipate a market connection with small woodland owners. New "tools" such as conservation easements can help both landowners and nonprofit organizations achieve their objectives in some cases.

### **2. Work Together and With Others**

Develop and use cooperative organizations to meet small woodland owner needs. These

organizations could help small woodland owners secure capital for forestry investment; share specialized forestry-related machinery; develop forest products marketing mechanisms, niches, and tools; and develop facilities to overcome the marketing disadvantages of managing small woodlands, such as small quantities, minor forest species, etc. Such assistance could include cooperative log sorting and concentration yards, marketplaces for non-timber forest products, and "break-down" mills to make cants or other product forms that can be marketed to secondary manufacturers.

### **3. Use Landowners' Associations to Better Advantage.**

Utilize Washington County Small Woodlands Association and its parent organization, Oregon Small Woodlands Association, to initiate and provide training opportunities. Landowner associations such as these also provide an opportunity for woodland owners to learn from their peers through meetings, newsletters, special forums on topics of interest, and other forms of outreach. Perhaps even more important than these planned events and information sharing methods is the feeling of shared experiences and connectedness that can motivate members of an association to learn and improve the management and stewardship of their land.

Finally, landowner associations can be the catalyst for initiating and sustaining contact with other members of the rural and urban communities in Washington County. Through educational forums open to the public, participation as an association in community events, and sharing the triumphs and tragedies that small woodland owners experience, landowner associations can further weave and strengthen the bonds between woodland owners and their County neighbors. The result is a strong and vibrant "green tapestry" enhancing the quality of life for all in Washington County.