

Background

The Woodland Advisor program Educates family woodland owners about forest management. To achieve this goal:

- Graduates complete 10 core and 5 elective classes, totaling about 45 hours, and receive a Woodland Advisor certificate.
- Classes have flexible content and schedules for participants to choose.
- Core class include Forest History & Ecology, Forest Health, Woodland Management, Non-Timber Forest Products, Timber Sales, Forest Wildlife, Tree ID, Forest Measurements, and Woodland Financial Management .
- Graduates help others learn about resources and opportunities for their forestland.

Each year we survey Woodland Advisors to learn about their volunteer accomplishments, but response rates were quite low. This year we revised our survey and methodology to obtain a higher response and more useful information.

Methods

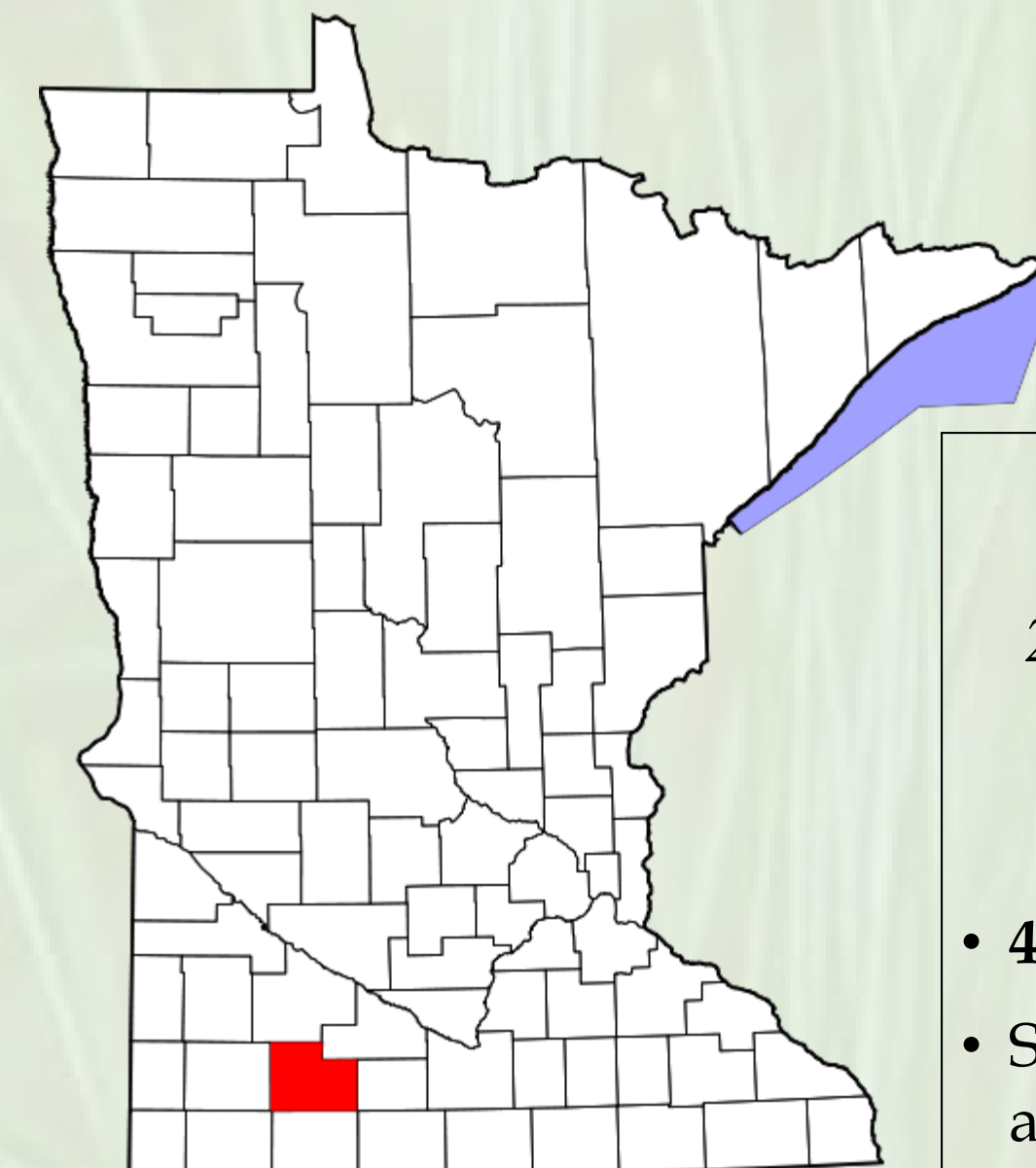
The Woodland Advisor Evaluation Team received funding from the Minnesota DNR's Forest Stewardship program to evaluate program impacts. The EFANS evaluation specialists provided advice on survey design and implementation.

A postcard announcing the survey was mailed to all Woodland Advisor program participants from 2009 plus all previous program graduates. Several days later Woodland Advisors were sent a survey in the mail. Two days later an e-mail message was sent to participants for whom we had their e-mail address. It provided a link to Survey Monkey. Participants were free to use the mail survey or online survey to record their responses. Three weeks after the initial survey was mailed, a follow-up letter and survey was mailed to those that had not yet returned the survey.

A four page paper survey asked both qualitative and quantitative information and asked participants to express if their practice or experience was improved by their Woodland Advisor program participation. After about three months the survey was closed and data were tallied.

Results

- 458 respondents for a **64% response rate**
- 35 (8%) returned via Survey Monkey, 423 (92%) returned via US mail
- 62% owned or managed a total of 413,814 acres (647 mi²) of forest land, an area the size of Cottonwood County and almost **10 times the size of the District of Columbia**



Cottonwood County is about the same size as the forest land owned or managed by Woodland Advisor participants.

2009 Woodland Management

20% of respondents performed a management action. Of those 27% had their experience improved because of the Woodland Advisor program.

- **4,368 acres** were managed
- Spending 18,107 hours on management = to almost **9 FTE**
- WA participants got **49 forest management plans;** **76% reported this was improved** by the program
- **Planted 44,163 trees**
- Protected 16,563 trees
- Managed **40 miles of trails**
- **51% said their practice was improved** after taking a WA class in 2009 specific to their management
- 17% said their practice was improved by the WA program even though they did not take any WA classes in 2009

2009 Woodland Volunteering

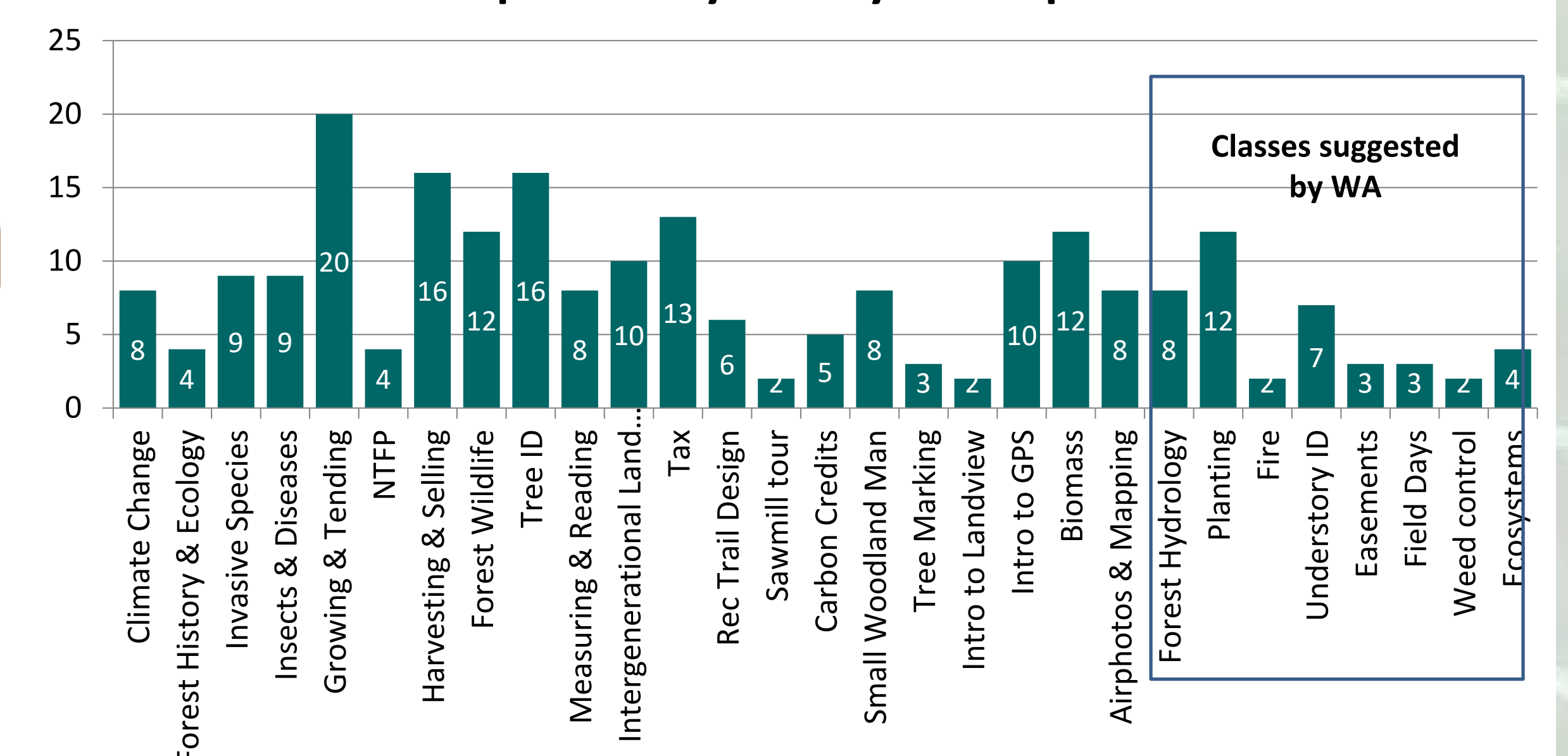
- 3836 hours (1.8 FTE) = **\$74,822***
- **Drove 1633 miles = \$229****
- **Helped manage 776 acres**
- **Taught 1611 kids** plus 63 people
- **Planted 3600 trees**
- **Donated \$30,000**



*Based on \$21.16/hour from independentsector.org
**Based on Federal volunteer mileage of \$0.14/mile



Additional Forestry Knowledge Requested by Survey Participants



Conclusion

As a result of this survey the Woodland Advisor program has more reliable and valid outcomes and impacts information. Additionally, program organizers can more accurately gauge the usefulness of specific topics and how they impact specific outcomes and impacts. We can link the level of improvement a specific class had on the forest management practices implemented by the Woodland Advisor participant. This can offer further insight into areas that can be improved.

Woodland Advisor team members are using this information to make programmatic decisions, establish goals, and as a contribution to the program's strategic plan.

Woodland Advisor Team

- Angela Gupta, Team Leader & Evaluation Team Member
- Mike Reichenbach, Leadership Team
- Diomy Zamora, Leadership Team
- Mel Baughman, Team Member & Evaluation Team Member
- Charlie Blinn, Team Member
- John Geissler, Team Member
- Julie Miedtke, Team Member
- Eli Sagor, Team Member
- David Wilsey, Team Member
- Gary Wyatt, Team Member & Evaluation Team Member

Acknowledgements

- Background photo by Eli Sagor
- Funding from the Minnesota DNR Forest Stewardship Program
- Special thanks to Tom Bartholomay, EFANS Evaluation and Research Specialist
- Map from Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_Minnesota_highlighting_Cottonwood_County.svg
- Word shape graphic from Wordle: <http://www.wordle.net/>