

1 A NEW OUTREACH PARADIGM

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The Problem

Families and individuals own 36 percent of the forestland in the United States.¹ Their participation is essential to accomplishing any forest management or conservation impact on the landscape. They are, therefore, critical partners in maintaining America's woods and wildlands and in achieving national goals ranging from fire resilience, to clean water, to thriving rural economies.

Research on landowners suggests that most family woodland owners want to be good stewards of their land.^{2,3} But this stewardship value is often not translated into effective stewardship actions to help maintain the health and productivity of their land.

Despite a substantial investment in landowner-oriented programs, four in five landowners are not getting any management advice, and about two-thirds are not engaged in traditional forest management activities and programs.⁴ This suggests that both outreach programs and messages about land stewardship are out of step with landowners' needs, attitudes, and preferences. Natural resource professionals—federal and state forestry and wildlife agencies, conservation nongovernmental organizations, wildlife organizations, land trusts—need better ways to successfully engage landowners and promote good stewardship on private land.

The Solution: A Paradigm Shift

This book outlines a new way to conceive, design, and implement outreach to landowners. The main elements of the proposed paradigm shift are described below and summarized in the following table.

Although many public sector agencies characterize landowner outreach as an educational offering, in practice, information and services are usually offered with the goal of inspiring landowners to make good stewardship decisions. Therefore, it makes sense to design outreach programs with desired stewardship decisions and actions in mind. This *action orientation* starts with setting clear goals for what changes we want to see in the landscape and then translating them into desired landowner actions. It also demands that we think of our program results in terms of

meaningful *outcomes*, such as landowners' actions, rather than outputs (such as number of workshops conducted).

Education alone is not enough to get people to take action. Educational outreach provides direction; it tells people what to do and how to do it. It works well for the small proportion of landowners who are already oriented to taking action on their land, but it doesn't do enough to motivate the vast majority of landowners for whom stewardship actions are not such a high priority. This book uses techniques of *marketing* to help natural resource professionals engage with more landowners and motivate them to be good stewards. The main difference between educating and marketing is that marketing includes

1. Brett J. Butler, Jaketon H. Hewes, Brenton J. Dickinson, Kyle Andrejczyk, Sarah M. Butler, and Marla Markowski-Lindsay, "Family Forest Ownerships of the United States, 2013: Findings from the USDA Forest Service's National Woodland Owner Survey," *Journal of Forestry* 114, no. 6 (November 2016): 638–647, <https://doi.org/10.5849/jof.15-099>.

2. Kyle Andrejczyk, Brett J. Butler, Mary L. Tyrrell, and Judith Langer, "Hansel and Gretel Walk in the Woods: A Qualitative Examination of the Language Used by Family Forest Owners," *Journal of Forestry* 117, no. 1 (January 2016): 52–57.

3. Miriam L. E. Steiner Davis and J. Mark Fly, "Seeing the Landowner through the Trees: How Non-Participant Private Forest Landowners Experience Their Land—A Phenomenological Investigation" (Proceedings of Conference on Human Dimensions of Family, Farm and Community Forestry International Symposium, Washington State University, Pullman, WA, March 1–April 1, 2004).

4. Brett J. Butler, Jaketon H. Hewes, Brenton J. Dickinson, Kyle Andrejczyk, Sarah M. Butler, and Marla Markowski-Lindsay, "Family Forest Ownerships of the United States, 2013: Findings from the USDA Forest Service's National Woodland Owner Survey," *Journal of Forestry* 114, no. 6 (November 2016): 638–647, <https://doi.org/10.5849/jof.15-099>.

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motivation and persuasion. It calls on you—the communicator—to provide the needed motivation and support for the desired actions.

Marketers tap into people’s values and emotions to give them compelling reasons to take a desired action. Marketers then provide the needed support to reduce barriers and increase the probability that their audience will take action. Marketing requires the marketer to understand their audiences and be oriented to *their* needs and values. In this book, we show you ways to make your programs and your communications more *landowner centric*, i.e., aligned with landowners’ needs rather than your organizational priorities and processes.

The methods we describe are based on a *targeted marketing* approach, which involves designing programs to persuade a specific group of people to take a specific action. It differs from general, broad-brush outreach in that it seeks to reach and persuade

smaller groups of people with messages that are specific to their needs and preferences and feel more personal and relevant to them.

We also recommend organizing your outreach as a series of *planned, focused efforts* in a particular region and with a particular audience. Engaging landowners requires intensive effort, which most organizations are not equipped to maintain over long periods of time and across broad geographies. The best way to accomplish meaningful results with limited resources is to break up broad, complex goals into bite-sized objectives and address each of them in a focused manner.

The final change we recommend is using tracking and evaluation to improve outreach. We encourage you to adopt a learning mindset and think of every outreach effort—a workshop, a direct mail campaign, or a media placement—as an experiment that can guide and inform future efforts.

TABLE: ELEMENTS OF THE PROPOSED CHANGES IN LANDOWNER PROGRAMMING

FROM...	TO...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education orientation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action orientation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outputs-based planning and metrics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcomes-based planning and metrics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge-focused outreach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persuasive, motivational communication using principles of marketing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization-centered outreach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landowner-centered outreach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad-brush marketing: trying to reach everyone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted marketing: reaching specific groups of people in targeted ways
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repetitive, ongoing outreach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused efforts over a defined time period and geographic area
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accounting mindset: Post hoc evaluation of each outreach effort to report on outputs and outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning mindset: Integrating tracking and evaluation over multiple efforts to inform future work

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How to Use This Book

This book is designed to be a reference manual for practitioners. It consists of a series of short sections, each of which is an independent article that addresses a particular step or aspect of landowner outreach. You can read these sections in sequence to understand the whole process, or you can consult individual sections to get advice on a particular topic.

Throughout the book, concepts and principles are illustrated with examples, many of which are drawn from our work in the field. Since Tools for Engaging

Landowners Effectively (TELE) was initially developed for forestry professionals, many of these examples are drawn from forestry. However, TELE techniques can be applied to a much broader range of landowners and landowner actions. TELE has been used to promote Firewise actions in the wildland urban interface, agroforestry practices among farmers, and conservation easements. It has also been used to develop messages for coalition partners, legislators, and the general public.

