

PREFACE

If you're reading this, you already understand how important it is to engage family landowners in efforts to nurture and sustain our natural resources. Individuals and families own more than a third of the forestland and almost all of the farmland in the US. Persuading these individuals and families to be good stewards of their land is essential for sustaining rural communities, preserving biodiversity, keeping our air and water clean, and enhancing the natural beauty and recreational amenities that so enhance our quality of life.

This is not an easy task. While many government agencies and conservation organizations offer services to landowners, few are able to engage landowners in a way that leads to actions on the ground and sufficient impacts on the landscape.

The Sustaining Family Forests Initiative (SFFI) has been working on this challenge since its inception in 2004. SFFI is a partnership of the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies (FES), the Center for Nonprofit Strategies (CNPS), and the United States Forest Service's Family Forest Research Center. Our flagship program—Tools for Engaging Landowners Effectively (TELE)—is grounded in social science research and draws on marketing and program planning tools and techniques to develop outreach programs that yield meaningful results on the ground. To date, TELE techniques have been taught at more than 50 workshops to more than 1,400 professionals from 400 organizations. We have also worked directly with forestry, wildlife, and conservation organizations throughout the US to improve stewardship on the ground through better landowner engagement. We have learned a tremendous amount about how landowner outreach is done, what the challenges and pitfalls are, and how some of these challenges can be overcome.

We wrote this book to introduce you to the TELE approach and provide a detailed “how to” guide so you can implement these new ideas and approaches. Although it draws on the theory and principles of social marketing, it is primarily intended as a reference guide for practitioners. It will show you how to make small and large changes that will help you reach more landowners and compel them to take appropriate stewardship actions, even if you are strapped for time and resources. It will teach you how to create motivation, thus reaching beyond landowners who already take the initiative on conservation actions. Finally, it will help you change landowner behaviors at a scale that can bring positive changes to the landscape.

This comprehensive guide draws on the experiences and expertise of a number of different contributing authors who have been using, testing, and refining TELE techniques for years. Mary Tyrrell of FES, then program director of SFFI, inspired and instigated this book. Content was contributed by members of the SFFI team and staff of the Aldo Leopold Foundation. I deeply appreciate the enthusiasm, knowledge and thoughtfulness, each of the authors brought to this project, as well as their willingness to allow me to modify and adjust their chapters to construct a comprehensive and coherent guide. Finally, a big Thank You to Cassidy Dellorto-Blackwell of FES, who helped with reviewing and organizing the content and producing this resource.

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