



TELE CASE STUDY

SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND HERITAGE FOREST

Key Takeaways

- More than one event per Ambassador is not realistic. Partner teams (e.g. husband and wife) of Ambassadors worked well.
- Many people did not complete the back of double-sided follow-up surveys. Keep it to one side of the paper!
- Woodland Ambassadors can help reach the intended audience, especially through direct communication.
- A combination of outreach methods produces the best results. Website postings and social media did not seem to be significant factors in attracting attendees.
- People respond well when listening to peers; the Woodland Ambassador model of having an “expert” landowner lead a walk is well-received.
- Small, super-targeted follow-up events worked well and helped landowners who were ready to take the next step.

TELE (tools for engaging landowners effectively) is an approach and planning methodology that emphasizes understanding landowners’ perspectives and interests and tailoring outreach messages to be more persuasive. TELE case studies showcase projects that have used the TELE methodology to engage more landowners in land stewardship and conservation. TELE is a project of the Sustaining Family Forests Initiative.

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Introduction

The Southern New England Heritage Forest (SNEHF) is one of four Regional Conservation Partnerships (RCPs) working across state boundaries to achieve three main goals: landscape conservation, stewardship, and economic development across the region. The SNEHF landscape encompasses lands in south-central Massachusetts, northeastern Connecticut, and western Rhode Island. The partnership is led by staff of the MassConn Sustainable Forest Partnership, Northern Rhode Island Conservation District, Rhode Island Forest Conservators Organization, Inc., and The Last Green Valley with support from several other nonprofit and governmental agencies. SNEHF organizers used TELE's six-step process to develop communications and outreach plans to first identify and train "Woodland Ambassadors". These committed forest owners then worked with SNEHF partners to develop a second stage of communications to reach neighboring landowners through Woods Walks and Woods Forums. This case study will highlight the use of TELE to reach landowners in southern Massachusetts and northern Connecticut, or the "MassConn" area.

STEP 1: SET OBJECTIVES

The project goal for all focus areas was to encourage previously unengaged Woodland Retreat landowners to take the first step towards forest management and conservation by working with experienced, knowledgeable, and committed forest owners (Woodland Ambassadors).



STEP 2: DEFINE YOUR AUDIENCE

Landowner databases were obtained for each of the 22 towns within the project area. GIS maps were developed for each focus area and each town, and they depict forest cover, permanently protected open space, and some parcel and landowner attributes. SNEHF's audience included landowners from these 22 towns who own between 5 and 50 acres of forestland.

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STEP 3: PROFILE YOUR AUDIENCE

The target audience for this project includes previously unengaged Woodland Retreat landowners within the project area who own between 5 and 50 acres of forestland. These landowners are likely to feel a strong emotional connection to their land and use the land more for recreation and enjoyment than economic reasons.

STEP 4: CLARIFY YOUR MESSAGE

The over-arching message, developed after the TELE training, was designed to attract Woodland Retreat owners. The phrase, “You Love Your Woods—What’s Their Future?” was used throughout the course of the project. This message successfully taps into Woodland Retreat owners’ emotional connection to their land and their desire to preserve it into the future.

STEP 5: CHANNELS AND MATERIALS

MassConn area organizers realized the value of utilizing multiple channels and materials to invite their target audience to events in the woods. They used a combination of direct mail, electronic communications (e-mails, listserv postings, and social media postings), and personal communication. The project coordinators worked with each Woodland Ambassador to develop an outreach plan specific to each event. All materials included the message “You Love Your Woods—What’s Their Future?”. Woodland Ambassadors’ connections were used strategically, and they personally called or talked to landowners within their own networks.



**You Love Your Woods,
What’s Their Future?**

**Do you own woods and want to learn
how to keep them healthy?**

Come for a walk with West Brookfield’s Tree Warden Jim DiMaio and talk with other people who care about the woods and are knowledgeable in practices to keep them healthy. Jim will share his experience in dealing with invasive plant species and show easy ways you too can identify and combat invasive species in your woods.

If you own woods, this is a great chance to share information & ask questions!

WHEN: August 22, 6-8PM (rain or shine)

WHERE: Jim’s home, West Brookfield, MA directions upon RSVP

RSVP required: Call East Quabbin Land Trust at 413-477-8229 or email chenshaw@eqlt.org

Light refreshments will be served

Please wear sturdy shoes and long-sleeved shirts & pants for the walk

This event is sponsored by the Town of West Brookfield, MassConn Sustainable Forest Partnership and the Southern New England Heritage Forest (SNEHF) Partnership. SNEHF is a 3-state working group of public and private partners combining efforts to ensure the future of our woods. This program is funded by a USDA Forest Service grant through the Northeast Association of State Foresters.

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STEP 6: EVALUATION

Challenges and Solutions

- Since the project involved multiple partners from three states that had never worked together, the coordinators spent considerable time planning, which left less time for implementation and made mid-project course corrections difficult.
- Because of the shortened implementation window, there were not enough trainings scheduled for Woodland Ambassadors.
- Ambassadors have busy schedules. Coordinators spent a considerable amount of time helping them design mailings, flyers, and advertisements. Ambassadors held one event each instead of 2-4 as hoped.



Assessment of Woodland Ambassador Efforts to Engage Landowners (MassConn)

Landowners who committed to becoming a Woodland Ambassador during first outreach campaign	19
Landowners contacted by Woodland Ambassadors	3356 (direct mail) 797 (emails) 42 (personal communication) 4 (social media)
Programs and events held by Woodland Ambassadors	12
Participants at programs and events	218
Landowners who contacted a consulting forester	7
Landowners who initiated forest management plans	3
Landowners who enrolled in current use programs	1
Landowners who contacted a land trust to learn about conservation options	3
Landowners who consulted estate planning professionals	5