



U of I study: Up to one-third of family-owned forests likely to change hands in five years

MOSCOW, Idaho — April 25, 2018 — About 1.7 million acres of forest land in Idaho is family-owned, representing about 36,000 landowners and 56 percent of all privately-owned forest land in the state. As much as 560,000 acres, or 33 percent of family owned forests in Idaho, are likely to have new owners within five years, according to a [new survey](#) released today.

The [Policy Analysis Group](#) (PAG) in the University of Idaho's [College of Natural Resources](#) conducted an extensive survey in 2016 of Idaho's family forest landowners — forests privately owned by families, individuals, trusts, estates and family partnerships.

“The objective of the study was to better understand Idaho family forest owners’ management decisions and preferences, and to compare the management activities of landowners who participated in forestry assistance programs with those who haven’t,” PAG principal researcher Philip Cook said.

The Idaho Department of Lands (IDL), which provides planning, technical and educational assistance to landowners through its Forest Stewardship Program, contributed primary funding to the study.

“The survey’s findings will improve delivery of technical assistance programs that help landowners manage their forests to reduce fire risk and insect and disease infestations,” said Mary Fritz, IDL Forest Stewardship Program Manager.

The survey found a potential for many family forests to change ownership in the next five years.

“This change raises questions as to how new owners may use or alter management of these forests, which provide numerous benefits like timber for wood products, recreation opportunities, wildlife habitat and clean water,” said Dennis Becker, PAG director and one of the study’s authors.

Forests cover approximately 21.2 million acres of land in Idaho, or 40 percent of the land base. Privately owned forests make up 3 million acres, with family forests totaling approximately 1.7 million acres, about 8 percent of all the forests in the state.

Other findings of the survey include:

- Most family forests in Idaho are less than 50 acres and are in the northern part of the state.
- Idaho family forest owners actively manage their lands, with more than 60 percent of the estimated 36,000 owners taking actions to improve forest health.
- Owners with a written management plan are more likely to take actions to improve forest conditions.
- One-third of owners reported having commercially harvested timber.
- Over half of Idaho’s family forestlands are owned by someone at least 65 years old.
- A low percentage of all owners — around one-fifth — reported having received information or assistance from IDL or UI Extension, a figure that can be increased by designing programs to meet the future needs of forest owners.

The full report can be downloaded at www.uidaho.edu/cnr/policy-analysis-group/research/report-series/report-38. Additionally, the [U of I James A. & Louise McClure Center for Public Policy Research](#) has released a summary of the report in its latest “[Idaho at a Glance](#)” issue.

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About the University of Idaho

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About the Idaho Department of Lands

The Idaho Department of Lands administers Idaho's Forest Stewardship Program through the Forestry Assistance Bureau. To date, 1,113 Idaho forest owners have a Forest Stewardship Plan covering 262,000 acres. In addition, IDL manages more than 2.4 million acres of Idaho endowment lands, which are managed for the benefit of endowments, primarily public schools. The IDL also administers a number of regulatory and assistance programs. For more information regarding Forest Stewardship, please visit <https://www.idl.idaho.gov/forestry/service/index.html>.