



PROSPERING FROM NATURE: HELPING LANDOWNERS PROTECT AND ENHANCE ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

FACT SHEET ONE • SPRING 2013

This fact sheet series highlights innovative ways that family forest and ranch owners are prospering from protecting and enhancing ecosystem services on their land. Ecosystem services are the benefits people receive from nature such as water quality, wildlife habitat, and carbon sequestration.

Around the country, ranchers and family forest landowners face complex challenges that threaten their ability to stay on the land and maintain their operations. These include high demand for competing land uses, an aging population, pressure from environmental regulation, and shrinking profit margins. While landowners strive to keep their operations intact, they are increasingly recognizing the natural benefits, or ecosystem services, that their private working lands provide. At the same time, a growing number of mechanisms for compensating landowners for these services and their conservation is emerging.

To keep working lands in operation and improve ecosystem health, many family forest and ranch owners are diversifying their operations through stewardship-based opportunities. These programs provide financial and other benefits to landowners in return for the ecosystem services they provide through sound land and water management practices, and are called payment for ecosystem service, or PES, programs. This fact sheet series tells stories of PES in action—real projects, real people, and innovative approaches.

PARTNERSHIPS AND PROGRAMS

PES programs require a connection between landowners and program administrators. Often, nongovernmental and other organizations help make this connection. In different landscapes, groups are using programs such as:

Government funded programs: e.g., Farm Bill conservation incentive and cost-share programs

Voluntary and regulatory markets: e.g., carbon markets, water rights leasing, and wetland mitigation banking

Certification schemes: e.g., Forest Stewardship Council, Salmon Safe, and Predator Friendly products

Land conservation: e.g., conservation easements and other mechanisms to protect land from development

These and other PES programs are helping landowner prosperity through good stewardship of land and water resources. In many cases, the approaches are varied and unique. They come with real challenges, and encourage original paths to success for both land and landowner.



THE PES FACT SHEET SERIES

The following is a brief description of the fact sheets in this series. Included are examples of success stories along with challenges and opportunities, and a road map of useful online PES resources. Topics include:

#1: Prospering from nature: Innovative stories about helping landowners protect and enhance ecosystem services. Describes PES project goals, programs, partners, and each fact sheet in the series.

#2: Coordinated salmon habitat restoration on private lands. Examines how a federal agency and a local nonprofit have teamed up to bridge landowners with funding sources and enhance river restoration outcomes in north central Washington.

#3: Paying the water bill: Community support for agriculture and river restoration in Central Oregon. An example of how a water utility, a nonprofit, and local landowners are helping restore water flows for fish habitat in a once-dry creek bed while benefiting agricultural water rights owners who may be able to conserve water.

#4: Certification rewards stewardship and assures future markets for Montana timber. Shows how a Montana sawmill is using timber certification to encourage healthy forest management by ensuring forest landowners with sustainable practices a market for their timber.

#5: Ranch combines programs for long-term sustainability. Shows how one working ranch family in southeast Oregon has navigated a variety of PES programs, working with many partners to improve the ecological quality of their land while increasing long-term profitability.

#6: Enhancing the effectiveness of conservation easements through trust building, partner coordination, and cooperation. Explores how conservation easements in parts of Montana and Idaho are used as strategic, landscape-scale, cross-boundary tools to maintain ecosystems as well as agricultural and forestry land uses.

#7: Beer, fish, and water restoration certificates: A new way to restore rivers in Montana. Shows how two non-profits, a beer brewery, and an "eco-asset broker" partnered to restore water for native fish and local economies while compensating landowners for conservation.

#8: Bad goat, good business: Byproducts bring big gains for watershed restoration. Shows how a restoration contractor in western Montana has developed a successful business model to enhance ecosystem services on private lands while offering services to landowners.

#9: Farm Bill evolution to increase landowner and ecosystem service benefits. Examines how a 2008 Farm Bill program targeted at landscape scale outcomes helped agricultural landowners, conserved water, and enhanced habitat for endangered species.

#10: Ecosystem services online: An overview of web-based resources. Focuses on the different types of online resources that are available to learn about PES and link landowners with PES programs.

#11: Matchmakers, evaluators, libraries and networks: Online resources for landowners and practitioners. Highlights useful examples in each resource category, accompanying a full catalog of resources.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

As a whole, this project seeks to provide recommendations to shape PES programs so that they work for landowners, helping them to prosper while enhancing land and water resources with strong conservation outcomes. These examples of innovative PES approaches help lay the foundation for success in current and emerging PES programs across the west.



LEARN MORE

To read the full fact sheet series, go to: www.tinyurl.com/SNWEcosystemServices, or contact:

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