

**The Wisconsin Private Forestry Advisory Committee (WPFAC)
Recommendations to Wisconsin's Chief State Forester
for Non-Industrial Private Forest Landowner Engagement
for 2018-2022**

**Approved:
March 12, 2018**

Acknowledgements

WPFAC Membership

Jim Warren, WPFAC Co-Chairperson, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
R.J. Wickham, WPFAC Co-Chairperson, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Nancy Bozek, Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association
Bill Buckley, Genesis Forestry Consulting, LLC
Aaron Burmeister, Timber Professionals Association; Burmeister Logging
Ann Calhoun, The Nature Conservancy
Earl Gustafson, Wisconsin Paper Council
Shawn Hagan, The Forestland Group, LLC
Andy Hart, Natural Resource Conservation Service
Joe Hovel, Partners in Forestry Cooperative
Bill Klase, University of Wisconsin – Extension
Dennis McDougall, United States Forest Service
Al Murray, Wisconsin Towns Association
Brandon Soldner, Farm Services Agency
David Solin, Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association
Scott Walter, former representative of Ruffed Grouse Society

Ad-hoc Team Members

Bill Klase, Ad-hoc Chairperson, University of Wisconsin – Extension

Ann Calhoun, The Nature Conservancy
Ron Gropp, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Buddy Huffaker, Aldo Leopold Foundation
Kristin Lambert, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Carol Nielsen, Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association
Jen Simoni, Aldo Leopold Foundation
Steve Swenson, Aldo Leopold Foundation
Scott Walter, former representative of Ruffed Grouse Society
Darrell Zastrow, University of Wisconsin – Extension

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Summary of Recommendations

WPFAC recommendations to the Chief State Forester:

- Support the 5-year goal of connecting 20,000 new non-industrial private forest (NIPF) landowners with a resource professional to move 1,000,000 acres toward sustainable forestry in Wisconsin.
- Encourage Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) Division of Forestry and University of Wisconsin-Extension (UWEXT) to explore opportunities to align their public resources to achieve this goal.
- Encourage all stakeholders in the Wisconsin forestry community to adopt and embrace a landowner engagement model and strive to invest their unique resources and abilities towards this ambitious goal.

Justification for Recommendations

WPFAC is encouraging public and private partners within the forestry community to be ambitious in reaching new NIPF landowners and acres, judged not only by the number of woodland owners reached, but the extent of their engagement. Based on experience, landowners are significantly more likely to perform sustainable forestry actions when a forester is involved. Historically, WDNR Foresters have completed an average of 2,000 new NIPF landowner visits per year. WDNR has increased its investment in private forestry for a 50% increase in new NIPF landowner visits to 3,000 visits per year. Assuming an average ownership size of approximately 50 acres (based on National Woodland Owner Survey data), this equates to 150,000 acres visited by a WDNR Forester per year, or over the next five years, 750,000 acres of the 1 million acre goal.

The remaining 250,000 acres can be achieved by the forestry community. NIPF landowners are connected with resource professionals through many interventions, including NIPF landowner visits with private consulting foresters; attendance at workshops, conferences, and field days; and outreach by various initiatives throughout the state. Based on current accomplishments, the forestry community can connect 1,000 new NIPF landowners with a resource professional annually (5,000 NIPF landowners over the next 5 years), which will move another 250,000 acres toward sustainable forestry in Wisconsin.

The Vision: A comprehensive and systematic NIPF landowner engagement strategy for the forestry community

There are a wide array of organizations working to increase engagement of NIPF landowners locally and statewide. While individual efforts have realized success, results usually lack scale and depth of engagement. This is largely due to the fragmentation of outreach efforts and financial services exposing a lack of a cohesive statewide strategy utilizing cooperation and collaboration among outreach organizations.

Lasting improvements to NIPF landowner engagement need a statewide, integrated forestry community that successfully engages woodland owners to create greater constituency, more on-the-ground management, and strengthens Wisconsin's forest economy.

The Charge: WPFAC and the ad-hoc team work

WPFAC is composed of representatives from the organizations involved in NIPF landowner outreach who have similar goals for private land management in Wisconsin. During the August 31st meeting of WPFAC, members identified desired outcomes for NIPF landowner engagement. An ad-hoc team was formed to address the broader issue of NIPF landowner engagement and the specific charge given to them, namely:

1. Define a prioritized list of strategies for engaging more private woodland owners.
2. Define what role partners (WPFAC members and non-WPFAC entities) could play in implementing those strategies.
3. Present the prioritized list of strategies to WPFAC for their consideration and recommendations to the Chief State Forester.

After reviewing the outcomes identified by WPFAC (Appendix A), the ad-hoc team organized the outcomes into logical, short- to long-term pathways (Appendix B). This work was the basis from which engagement outcomes and strategies were developed.

The Methods: Moving NIPF landowners toward engagement in sustainable forestry

NIPF landowners engage with their property in many ways, from reading about an insect that adversely affects their trees to conducting a commercial timber harvest. The forestry community conducts outreach activities to coincide with these different levels of engagement and promote the movement of NIPF landowners toward higher levels of engagement.

The ad-hoc team developed a model based on the steps NIPF landowners follow toward greater engagement, example activities, and outreach phases incumbent upon the forestry community to systematically advance landowners (Figure 1).

The outreach phases are:

Acquisition: The gaining of new NIPF landowner contacts and providing to them basic information on forests and forestry through mailers, social media, and/or classes.

Cultivation: Multiple social and professional interactions between NIPF landowners, professional forestry resources and peers towards greater engagement.

Implementation: Providing services for NIPF landowners to complete small and big actions.

Evaluation and Tracking: Measuring the progress all efforts are making towards meeting the identified outcomes, and the compiling and sharing of information among all stakeholders.

Many within the forestry community put forth effort in more than one of these phases, with some cooperation and collaboration taking place. However, there exists no set of overarching strategies for guiding these efforts towards shared outcomes. By developing and embracing an overarching strategy, there can be more opportunities for collaboration which will lead to more NIPF landowner engagement.

The Results: A prioritized list of outcomes and strategies for engaging NIPF landowners

The ad-hoc team developed a list of desired outcomes and example strategies within each phase of acquisition, cultivation, implementation, and evaluation and tracking (Table 1). For example, to achieve initial landowner awareness in the acquisition phase the team identified two critical outcomes. First, forestry community members or partnerships should maintain a constant presence and credibility with NIPF landowners, with a potential strategy of creating and maintaining a website. Second, forestry community members or partnerships would actively pursue unengaged NIPF landowners, through marketing of some variety. For each outcome, public agencies and private partners self-identified willingness to participate. Outcomes highlighted in yellow are considered highest priority. Outcomes not highlighted are initially lower priority work; however, demonstrate higher-order outcomes, requiring collaborative landscape planning and implementation. These non-highlighted outcomes are ones the forestry community can grow into with experience and success.

See Appendix C for the assumptions made associated with the model.

Figure 1. Intentional and Cooperative Approach to Private Forest Owner Engagement

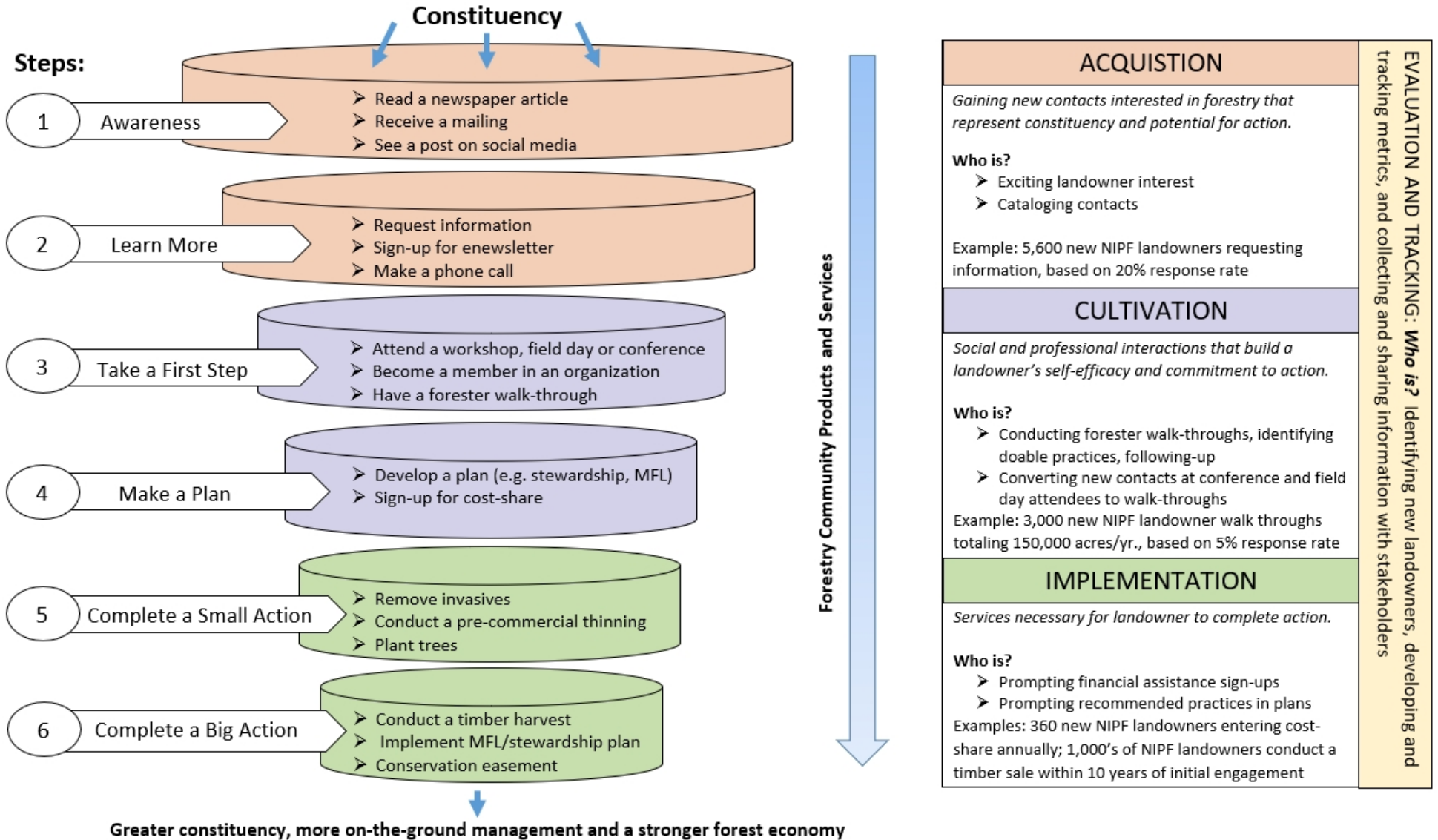


Table 1. A prioritized list of outcomes and strategies for engaging NIPF landowners.

	Outcomes	Example Strategies	Public Responsibilities	Public & private partners ready to participate
Acquisition - Awareness	Constant Presence and Credibility: Increase woodland owner awareness of the benefit of sustainable forest management	Online presence for private woodland owners to raise awareness - passive strategy Landowner property self-assessment	UWEXT/WDNR	WDNR, RGS, WWOA, WCF, TA, TNC, AFF, WYFP
	Active Pursuit: We outreach to unengaged woodland owners in WI	We actively market unengaged woodland owners to activate learning.	UWEXT/WDNR	FSA, NRCS, RGS, WWOA, COOP, WCF, DFN, WYFP, FED AGENCY
	Many Messages Under One: Create simple "on-boarding" for curious and new woodland owners with ability to market individual/regional issues and initiatives	Establish statewide presence with nested initiatives and regional issues/opportunities		
	Local Knowledge and Service Area: Build constituency while addressing negative perceptions of WDNR (statewide regulator/enforcement)	Rebrand WDNR forester as local, county forester		
Acquisition – Learn More	Activate Learning: We have activated and served their desire to learn more	Answer their question well and earn their trust sufficient for permission to market	UWEXT	WDNR, COOP, WCF, WWOA
	They Raised Their Hand!: We have acquired a contact, we know them by name, self-identified	Get them to self-identify as a target we can pursue with more information	UWEXT	WDNR, RGS, DFN, WCF, WWOA, MWW, WYFP
	Demonstrated Value: Link public agency outreach to private sector / community benefit	Quantified the value of our effort to increased benefits to the private sector / greater community	FSA	TA
	Regional Messages/Calls To Action: Link broad public outreach to more specific and targeted regional initiatives/partnership or landscape issues	We actively market issue-based information along with/instead of general messages with a breadth of values.		
Note: Highlighted rows are a higher priority				
Key: RGS = Ruffed Grouse Society, WWOA = WI Woodland Owners Association, WCF = WI Consulting Foresters, TA = Towns Association, TNC = The Nature Conservancy, AFF = American Forest Foundation, WYFP = WI Young Forest Partnership, FSA = Farm Services Agency, NRCS = Natural Resources Conservation Service, COOP = landowner cooperative, DFN = Driftless Forest Network, MWW = My Wisconsin Woods, GLTPA = Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association, ALF = Aldo Leopold Foundation				

Table 1. A prioritized list of outcomes and strategies for engaging NIPF landowners (continued).

	Outcomes	Example Strategies	Public Responsibilities	Public & private partners ready to participate
Cultivation – First Step	Reaching Out: Unengaged woodland owner made an intentional step	Get them to self-identify as a target we can pursue with our limited staff capacity		
	Professional Connection: They made a connection with a natural resource professional e.g. a local, county forester	Interest by landowners is turned into a site visit with a forester (or other resource professional)	WDNR	WCF, RGS, WWOA, WYFP
	Taking Stock: Landowner committed time and money	Create reporting structures that are collaborative and mutually beneficial to all major partners		
Cultivation - Planning	Informal Plans: Unengaged woodland owners have intention to do something	Professional foresters prepared to write follow-up letters and maintain communications that inspire woodland owner commitment to action	WDNR	WCF
	Formal Plan: Unengaged woodland owner has a plan	Professional foresters prepared to facilitate plan completion	WDNR	WCF
	Financial support: Unengaged woodland owner has a contract/financial assistance to act	Professional foresters prepared to encourage financial assistance programs	WDNR	FSA, NRCS, RGS, WYFP
	Referrals: Woodland owner is connected to public to private sector service providers	Professional foresters prepared to make referrals	WDNR	FSA, WWOA, COOP
	Community of Practice: Broker connection between public and private sector, both NGO and private business	A public-private partnership operating outside state bureau, creating community of practice, validating effort, and possibly securing resources		
	Unengaged MFLers: MFL woodland owners are active on their recommended practices	Outreach regarding MFL recommended practices		WWOA
Note: Highlighted rows are a higher priority				
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Table 1. A prioritized list of outcomes and strategies for engaging NIPF landowners (continued).

	Outcomes	Example Strategies	Public Responsibilities	Public & private partners ready to participate
Implementation - Action	Action! : Action completed; more acres under management	Survey woodland owners or otherwise understand success on small actions	UWEXT	WWOA
	Management Plan Actions! : Start implementation of plan	Woodland owner follow-up, encouragement and mentoring	WDNR	WWOA, WCF
	Referrals for Commercial Practices! : Referrals are made from public to private sector	Make referrals of private consultants that can help woodland owners achieve their goals	WDNR	GLTPA, WWOA
	Woodland Owner Self-efficacy! : Increase unengaged woodland owners' self-efficacy to harvest trees	Increase self-efficacy of woodland owners to harvest trees to support their values	UWEXT	WWOA, RGS, WCF, COOP
	Commercial Forestry! : Big actions completed	Woodland owner follow-up, encouragement and mentoring	WDNR	WCF, WWOA, GLTPA
	Model Woodland Owners! : They take a leadership role	Model woodland owners are cultivated, celebrated as models for their peers.	UWEXT	WWOA, ALF, TNC
Evaluation and Tracking	Tracking the Work! : Tracking UWEXT and WDNR contacts	Create a database capable of holding woodland owner records and metrics for tracking and evaluation	UWEXT/WDNR	
	Tracking All Our Work! : Tracking partners contacts or contacts in aggregate	Involve/incorporate data from partners and collaborators	UWEXT/WDNR	AFF
Note: Highlighted rows are a higher priority				
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Appendix A. WPFAC outcomes as a result of NIPF landowner engagement.

NIPF Landowners are educated and engaged

NIPF landowners make informed decisions with professional assistance
NIPF landowners consult with an educated and experienced peer
NIPF landowners have a broadened understanding for natural resource protection
NIPF landowners have a broadened understanding of forestry
NIPF landowners are aware they have a Wisconsin DNR forester available to them
NIPF landowners are aware they have financial assistance available to them
NIPF landowners are educated to provide assistance to their peers
NIPF landowners pass stewardship ethic to the next generation
NIPF landowners stay engaged and move along “continuum of engagement”
NIPF landowners cooperate with other LO towards shared goals
NIPF landowners share their success stories with their peers
There exists a contact pipeline from public agency to private industry and consulting
The foundation for strong local communities is a land ethic
NIPF landowners are accountable
Complete woodland outline for NIPF landowners, like the tree ID book

Sustainable forest management at the landscape level

More forestland being sustainably managed
Collaboration among partners
Quantifiable progress in fighting invasives, disease, etcetera
More action on the ground
Healthier, resilient landscapes
Ecosystem services become a highlight of managed forest (public support)
Improved wildlife habitat
Property tax and land carrying cost are maintained at low levels (land retention)
Managed forest becomes a mainstream land use
Landscape scale impact on privately held lands
Forests are resilient to climate change

Sustainable forest economy

Increased timber supply chain
More forestland being productively managed
Improved economy
Small business growth
Predictable, reliable flows of pulpwood and sawlogs

Appendix A. WPFAC outcomes as a result of NIPF landowner engagement (continued).

Expanded support for forestry in society Increased investment in forestry

Coordinated efforts – leverage public/private investments; utilize expertise and capacity in efficient and effective ways

Enthusiasm for caring for woodlands

Increase in Conservation Reserve

Program Positive perception of forestry

Improved forest health Healthier forests

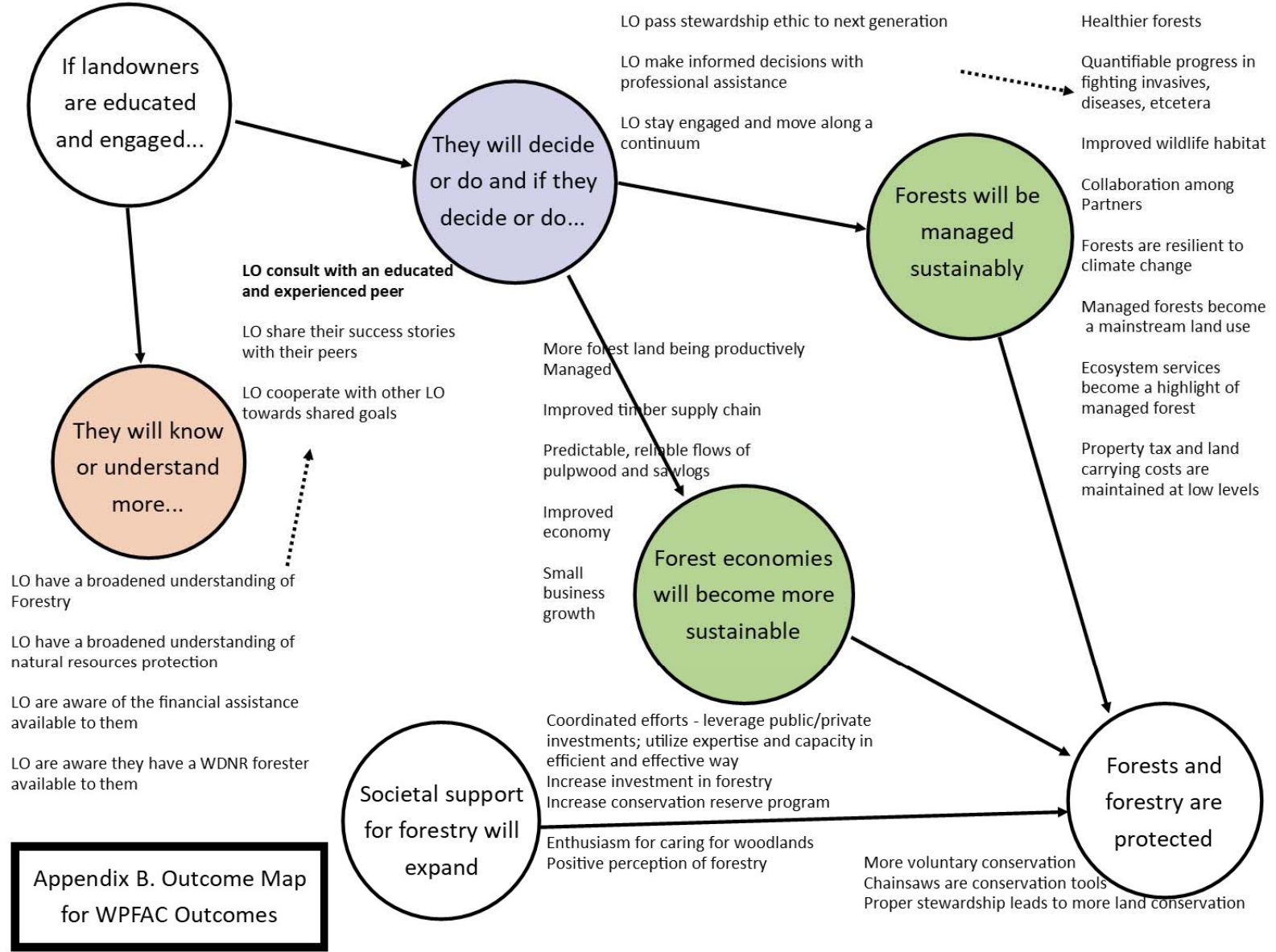
Less invasives

Control of invasive species

Permanent land protection for forestry More voluntary conservation

Chainsaws are conservation tools

Proper stewardship leads to more land conservation



Appendix C. Assumptions associated with Figure 1. Intentional and Cooperative Approach to Private Forest Owner Engagement.

To achieve woodland owner action at scale:

1. **Standardization is justified:** We assume landowners are more similar than dissimilar when it comes to the formative stages in their relationship to land.
2. **Behavior change is a science:** We assume our desire to create behavior change among landowners should draw from behavior change social science and theory.
3. **Distinct but related bodies of work:** Each step of the behavior change model is a separate, though inter-related, body of work with their own measurable and valuable outcomes.
4. **It only happened if you can measure it:** Measurable outcomes at each step in the continuum simultaneously acknowledge steps toward behavior change and proof of progress, if not actual action on the ground.
5. **Recognized value gets priority:** If each step has outcomes of value to the professional community it has a better chance of being priority work.
6. **Give me the good leads:** Our best audience targets (most readiness) for any step are the woodland owners from the previous step (e.g., the vast majority of those conducting timber harvests had previous actions on their property).
7. **Theory is not practice:** We assume at the individual woodland owner level:
 - a. Stages may be skipped or so quickly completed they appear skipped (e.g., direct mail with forester offer)
 - b. Stages may need to be repeated (further demonstrates the importance of the step)
 - c. Rates of progression will vary dramatically among woodland owners
 - d. We assume this progression could/should recycle by topic landowner

Partner involvement, collaboration, coordination

1. **Business as usual isn't working:** We assume woodland owner outreach can be greatly improved. Woodland owners are not aware of the products and services offered by agencies and organizations and how they relate.
2. **Service providers are specialized:** We assume that while individual agencies and organizations are capable of serving woodland owners through all steps, they specialize along the steps continuum.
3. **Shared outcomes should equate to collaboration:** Where outcomes per step or the ultimate outcome is valued and mutually beneficial, aligning these specializations in time and space makes sense.
4. **Most agree on the ultimate outcome:** We assume most agencies and organizations, regardless of where they are positioned, value more action on-the-ground.
5. **Critical to success:** We assume anchor agencies, UW Extension, WDNR, and NRCS, are necessary for success and provide an opportunity for stability, uniformity, longevity, consistency, and familiarity.
6. **Space and role for everyone:** We assume any organization or agency could find ways to benefit and be of benefit to other agencies/organization as well as landowners moving along the continuum.