

Southern Utah Forest Landowner Education Programs

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Abstract

The amount of timber being harvested from private lands in Utah increased significantly in the 1990's. In 1998, 61% of timber harvested in Utah was extracted from private lands, which make up 20% of the commercial forestland base (Silviculture Activities 1998, C.E. Keegan III et. al. 1995, Annual Mill Operating Survey 1999). This is due to many factors including federal harvest reductions and an increase in out-of-state operators looking for timber in Utah. The Iron County area is one of the few areas of the state that has a high percentage of private forestlands located within its borders. This area is also experiencing many forest health concerns including a spruce beetle epidemic and serious aspen (*Populus tremuloides* Michx.) mortality. These factors have resulted in an increased need and interest in harvesting timber from private lands. Because some of the more valuable and biologically diverse lands were homesteaded and are now held privately, these lands are of great value and concern to their owners and the public. If we are to protect these ecological resources, timber must be harvested from private lands in a sustainable manner. This points out the need to inform landowners so they understand all the factors associated with proper forest management before engaging in harvesting timber from their lands. To address this situation, Chad Reid, USU Extension Agent, Jim Bowns, SUU/USU Professor and Clint Reese, FFSL Area Forester, in cooperation with the Utah Forest Landowner Education program coordinated by Mike Kuhns, USU Forestry Extension Specialist, setup and held two workshops, three field trips and one lab to educate landowners about the situation and proper forest land management. Landowner evaluations of these programs show they were overwhelmingly successful. Detailed descriptions of the educational events and results from participant evaluations will be discussed.

Figure 2. Question 1 and 2 results by activity

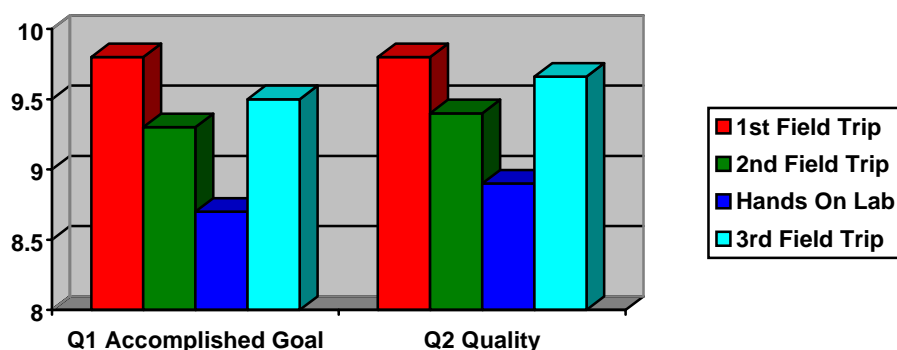


Figure 3. Overall ratings

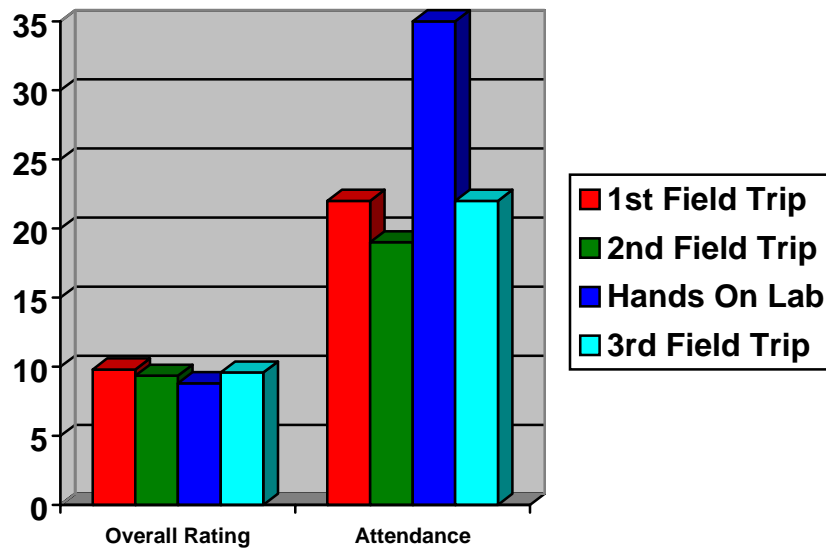
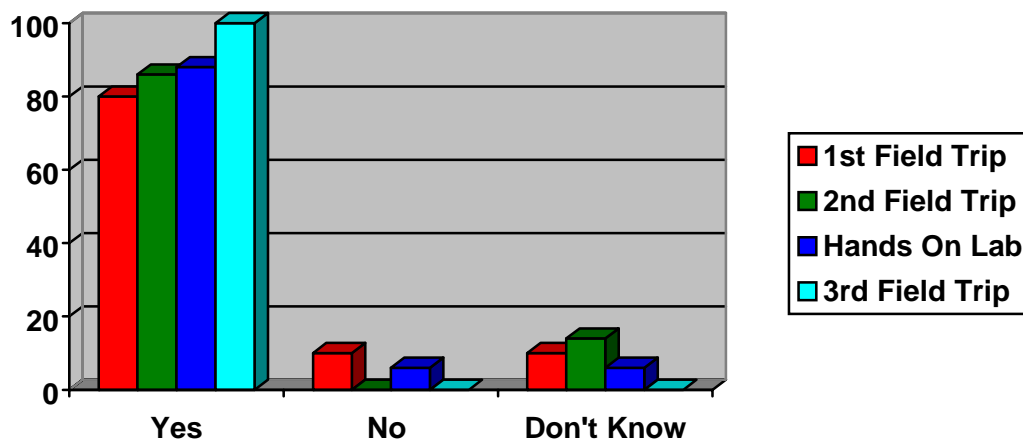


Figure 4. Percentage of landowners indicating whether educational activity will influence the way they manage their forested land



Discussion

Results from evaluations show this project was very popular and useful for landowners. It also demonstrates that in this case landowners preferred field trips to labs or lectures. The second field trip, which involved visiting sites outside the local area, had the lowest attendance. The lab had the best attendance of any activity, this is probably due to the fact it was held on a weekday night as opposed to the field trips, which were held on Saturdays. However the lab received the lowest rating overall.

It appears that a diverse array of educational activities will reach the greatest number of landowners. However our experience shows educational field trips should be an important component of any forest landowner education program. In our opinion, this was a very successful program that will improve management of over 20,000 acres of private forestland in Southern Utah.

