

Identifying barriers to forest management for small private forest landowners in California

Approximately 9 million acres of forestland in California are family-owned parcels 500 acres or less in size with 87,000 landowners owning >/10 acres. As a group, these landowners face many barriers when trying to manage their forests. The California Forest Practices Act requires expensive analysis and environmental review of any commercial project. Practices for fuels reduction (usually non-commercial) can be expensive and contractors who can complete forest management projects are in high demand or limited in numbers in parts of the state. Additionally, private landowners may not have the capacity to harvest trees because their property is too small or there is a lack of local forestry infrastructure. Because of recent intense wildfire seasons, the state of California is increasing funding to assist private forest landowners with managing their forestlands for health and fire resiliency. However, the most effective ways to spend these state funds to best help private forest landowners are not well understood. The Forest Stewardship Education Initiative, hosted by the University of California Cooperative Extension, funded by Cal Fire, and with cooperation of local RCDs, is a workshop series providing education and skills needed by landowners to start developing a California Cooperative Forest Management Plan and prepare them to work with a Registered Professional Forester who can help implement forest management activities. We conducted a participant interview project to identify the most common barriers faced by these motivated landowners when trying to manage their forestlands and the strategies they are using, or not, to overcome them.



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Susie Kocher is an extension forester for the University of California Cooperative Extension in the central Sierra Nevada. She has focused on prevention and response to wildfires in the Sierra Nevada by offering post-fire recovery workshops as well as pre-fire mitigation resources. She has current projects on disaster preparedness, prescribed fire education for private landowners and starting prescribed burn associations in her region. Susie is a co-founder of the California Fire Science Consortium (<http://cafiresci.org>) and part of the Small Landowner Assistance working group of the California Governor's Wildfire Resilience Task Force. She found the Forest Stewardship Education Initiative in 2019 which has provided comprehensive forestry education through online and field workshops for 250 private landowners across the state, to date. She is a California Registered Professional Forester.