

Traditional and novel impact strategies employed by Extension natural resources programs

Most Extension programs serving adult audiences use one of three strategies to achieve meaningful impact. They may be designed to increase outreach or volunteer capacity, to increase learner competency leading to behavior change, or to generate new data to inform research and practice. For example, many Master Volunteer programs build volunteer capacity to disseminate information and educate peer learners. Shortcourses, web-based decision support tools, and webinars are primarily designed to build knowledge and competency leading to changes in target behaviors. Citizen Science programs generate new data to help researchers answer emerging questions.

In the context of a facilitated discussion about Extension program design, we'll explore these three common program strategies, with examples including both "traditional" and more novel programs. We'll also discuss recent innovation and evolution within these general models, including mashups and novel combinations of these strategies. A particular focus will be how emerging technologies have opened new avenues for innovation leading to rapid deployment and specific high-value impacts. These include early detection and mapping of invasive species and monitoring phenology and the status of rare wild populations. We will close with an open discussion of the learner perspective on these strategies in the context of the Master Volunteer Life Cycle.

Talks will be short, with at least 30 minutes for open discussion about participants' experiences and lessons learned from these strategies. The session will be of greatest interest to Extension professionals considering building new or renovating existing Extension programs to improve outcomes and impacts.



Eli Sagor

Eli Sagor is an Extension specialist based at University of Minnesota's Cloquet Forestry Center. Eli manages the Sustainable Forests Education Cooperative, which offers continuing education programs for professional natural resource managers. Eli also developed and manages the Great Lakes Silviculture Library, an archive of real-world silviculture case studies from across the Lake States and Ontario. He has degrees from McGill University, Yale University, and the University of Minnesota, where he has been employed since March 2000.



Angela Gupta

Angela Gupta is a University of Minnesota Extension Professor of Forestry who specializes in terrestrial invasive species. She's done invasive species early detection education and outreach for about 15 years. Angie's been a key leader of the UMN Extension's Invasive Species Community of Practice since its inception in 2016. Angie earned a MA in Organizational Management from Spring Arbor University and a BS in Forestry from the University of Kentucky.