



HOW TO

STEWARD YOUR FOREST

Your woods are part of a network of over 22 million acres of an iconic range of ecosystems. Follow these tips to get to know your forest better.

LEARN THE LAND USE HISTORY

Walk your property. Observe whether trees are similar in size or equally spaced, suggesting trees were planted. Look for stumps from previous cuttings and flat areas that may have been old log roads or landings. Back at home, use an online platform like Google Earth or visit your local museum's archives to view historic aerial photos and see the changes in the land over time.



DISCOVER SOIL & SPECIES

Soils determine what species of trees and shrubs thrive, and which ones struggle. Learn more about your soil with the Natural Resources Conservation Service Web Soil Survey, the nation's largest online public soils database. Design a customized soil report at websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov.





ENGAGE IN ACTIVE LEARNING & MANAGEMENT

The Washington State University Extension Forestry program offers a wide variety of forest stewardship classes, publications, videos, and other resources at forestry.wsu.edu. You can also schedule a free site visit with forest planning staff at your local conservation district or the Washington State Department of Natural Resources Small Forest Landowner Office. Visit betterground.org and dnr.wa.gov/sflo for additional information.

DEVELOP A VISION & PLAN FOR YOUR FOREST

Following your research and observations, consider what this forest means to you. Take an honest look at what time, energy, and resources you have available. Develop a list of three short-term and three long-term goals. Starting with the longest-term goal first, work your way backwards to develop a broad timeline for implementation.

EVALUATE HEALTH & HABITAT

Walk your property again, this time observing signs of wildlife and their habitat. Count the number of shrub and tree layers as your eye moves from forest floor to canopy. Look for animal scat, tracks, and burrows. Notice signs of decomposition—a natural part of a forest ecosystem. Snags, brush piles, and nurse logs are especially important for a variety of wildlife species.



WANT HELP GETTING STARTED?

Conservation districts serve thousands of landowners a year and provide free services on private property. Find your local district at www.betterground.org.