

Family Forest Stewardship: Do Owners Need a Financial Incentive?

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Abstract

This study assessed family forest owner interest in formally committing to the types of land use and management practices that characterize good stewardship if compensated for doing so, using Minnesota's Sustainable Forest Incentives Act (SFIA) as a proxy measure of forest stewardship. The SFIA provides an annual payment in return for obtaining and using a forest management plan and adhering to Minnesota's timber harvesting and forest management guidelines, among other requirements. Results of a mail survey indicate the typical Minnesota family forest owner has relatively small acreage, owns the land for a long time, lives in a rural area, is an absentee owner, considers hunting the most important reason for forestland ownership, and is not an active forest manager but supplies timber to the marketplace. Analysis of the survey data using a logit model found landowner interest in enrolling in the SFIA program was significantly influenced by the SFIA payment amount, acres of forestland owned, intention to obtain a forest management plan, opposition to the program's covenant requirement, and familiarity with the program. The model also estimated considerable compensation is needed to secure substantial participation of family forest owners in the SFIA program—nearly \$24/ac per year to enroll one-half of the owners surveyed. Marketing efforts to increase the program visibility and extolling the virtues of a forest management plan should be part of a strategy to increase family forest owner participation in the SFIA program.

[stewardship](#), [family forests](#), [financial incentives](#), [sustainable forestry](#), [willingness to accept](#), [certification](#), [economics](#)

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