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Landowner Perceptions of Protecting and Establishing Riparian Forests: A Qualitative Analysis

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Abstract

While the ecological importance of riparian forests is widely recognized, identifying the best policies for reforestation of privately owned stream lands also requires an understanding of societal perceptions. Forty semistructured interviews with riparian landowners in central Pennsylvania revealed a study population driven by competing considerations. On one hand, these landowners expressed a community obligation to consider the downstream consequences of their management styles. On the other, they often failed to appreciate their own contributions to water pollution and were reluctant to abandon the ordered landscapes to which they were accustomed. Possible implications of these findings are advanced.

Keywords:

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Notes

1 This approach parallels the grounded theoretical framework of Glaser and Strauss (1967). We thank the anonymous reviewer for providing this linkage.

2 The quantitative phase of the study involved the use of the information from the semistructured interviews to frame questions for inclusion in a mail, multiwave survey with streamside landowners on the study stream segments. The survey response rate was 76% (for details see [Dutcher 2000](#)).

3 The findings from the 40 semistructured interviews reported here were used to guide the development of a mail survey sent to the remainder of the sampling frame. Descriptive statistics generated by the mail survey provided additional direct evidence of the study population's perspectives, and inferential statistics were used to explain and predict relationships in the survey data. The results of the mail survey are reported by [Dutcher \(2000\)](#).

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