

Foresters for ForestHER: Why NCFS supports a new educational initiative for landowners

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By Forest Health

In 2019, a new outreach initiative brought together partners across North Carolina, including the North Carolina Forest Service (NCFS), to offer ForestHER NC. NCFS is proud to be a part of this effort as our mission is to assist forest landowners in North Carolina through a variety of technical assistance and outreach opportunities. ForestHER NC is just one of many projects on which our agency collaborates to serve the diversity of forest landowners in our state.

Jennifer Roach, NCFS District 11 District Forester, currently serves on the Executive Committee for ForestHER NC and was fortunate enough to be one of many women involved in getting this initiative off the ground. Here, she answers some questions about ForestHER NC after the second set of "Managing Your Woodland" workshops in November.



Landowners are able to talk one-on-one with natural resource professionals. Here, Kelly Oten, NCFS Forest Health Monitoring Coordinator, speaks with a landowner about a defoliating insect the landowner took a picture of in her woodlands.

What is ForestHER NC? An outreach effort to offer educational workshops for women landowners. With 60% of private forestland in NC being owned jointly or individually by women, women are influencing the decision making for managing forestland for timber, wildlife, water quality, alternate sources of income, aesthetics and recreation. However, natural resource professionals have noticed that women are less likely to attend local educational programs. ForestHER NC is an opportunity for women landowners to come

together with other women landowners who may share the same goals and interests. It is also an opportunity for women natural resource professionals to come together and learn from each other.

Is it exclusively for women? No. ForestHER NC workshops are open to everyone. However, the workshops are geared specifically toward women. We have had a small group of men at each workshop, and we encourage families to attend together. What better way to prepare the next generation of forest landowners?

In fact, at the workshop held recently in Pittsboro, one of the women landowners stated, "we are stuck with my husband at future meetings as he learned too much!"



Jim and Hercule Clark attend ForestHER events together, taking workshop resources back home to Virginia to share with their daughter and grandchildren.

Another male participant stated, "I felt encouraged to come to ForestHer NC because I want my wife to have her own knowledge and **networks** when I'm gone."

What is the difference in attending a ForestHER NC workshop compared to attending a local county workshop? The information and goals are the same. The NCFS and our natural resource partners want private landowners to become informed about their land and how their decisions can impact their families' future, their neighbors and ultimately their communities. However, we have found that some women have enjoyed, or are more comfortable, learning in a room with other women. ForestHER NC workshops provide that learning environment.

At the recent Piedmont workshop in Pittsboro, I met a female landowner who told me she was there to learn everything she could to help keep her family property that had been in the family for over 250 years. While I would encourage this landowner to attend any local

workshops that helped her in this mission, I suspect she saw the ForestHER NC workshops as an opportunity to learn from fellow women going through the same thing.

What really happens at these events? Interacting, laughing and learning. We just finished our second workshop series. The workshops so far have been lecture style with activities throughout the day that encourage participants to move around and meet each other. Our participants are asking a lot of questions to each other and of the speakers.

Are the speakers always women? No, we seek out experts, male or female, for each topic. However, one goal of ForestHER NC is to highlight women professionals in the natural resource field.



Questions welcomed and encouraged! Laura Hendrick, NCFS Assistant Regional Forester, answers a forestry question during the Q and A panel at the Coastal "Managing Your Woodlands" workshop.

How can I learn more about similar programming in North Carolina?

Joining our email list (foresthernc@gmail.com) is a great way to learn more about upcoming ForestHER NC events! But beyond ForestHER NC, there are many other opportunities geared toward women landowners and women in the outdoors. We encourage you to explore any program that might be right for you.

- Women Owning Woodlands Network (National Woodland Owners Association and the USDA Forest Service)
- Women in the Outdoors (National Wild Turkey Federation)
- Becoming an Outdoors-Woman (NC Wildlife Resource Commission)
- Lady Landowners of Lenoir (Contact Lenoir County Ranger Rhonda Howard at 252-520-2400)
- NC State Cooperative Extension
 - Women in Agriculture
 - Women Owning Woodlands: Contact Jennifer Fawcett (or Laurel Kayes (lekays@ncsu.edu)
 - Women Owning Woodlands: Contact Jennifer Fawcett (jennifer_fawcett@ncsu.edu) or Laurel Kays (lekays@ncsu.edu)
 - Women Chainsaw Safety Training: Contact Jennifer Fawcett (jennifer_fawcett@ncsu.edu) or Laurel Kays (lekays@ncsu.edu)
 - NC Leadership and Cattle Handling for Women: Contact April Shaeffer (April_shaeffer@ncsu.edu)
- FarmHer



ForestHER workshops are designed to be interactive. At the Piedmont "Getting to Know Your Land" workshop, participants shared how land ethic quotes related to their views on land ownership.

Jennifer Roach has served with the North Carolina Forest Service for almost 19 years. As a District Forester, Jennifer oversees all NCFS programs of Forest Management, Forest Protection, Information and Education, and Administration in an eight-county area that consists of Alamance, Caswell, Durham, Granville, Orange, Person, Vance and Wake counties.