

IMPACT

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Variable density thinning: a forest management approach for private landowners

AT A GLANCE

A new workshop, *Variable Density Thinning*, was developed in 2016 for non-industrial private forest landowners who want to achieve multiple benefits from their forest lands.

The Situation

Many non-industrial private landowners seek to achieve multiple benefits from their forest lands. Biodiversity, wildlife, aesthetics, forest health, wildfire risk reduction, recreation, and economic return are all important to many landowners.

Variable density thinning and allied approaches are newer silvicultural methods sometimes referred to as “ecological forestry” that seek to mimic natural disturbance regimes and the structural heterogeneity that often accompanies natural disturbance. This approach can create forest landscapes that provide for biodiversity conservation, as well as greater resilience to natural disturbance events. It is a technique that can be adapted to particular forest/site conditions and landowner objectives producing a unique suite of treatments for each landowner.

Our Response

In 2016 a new forest management workshop was developed on forest thinning treatments to highlight the variable density thinning concept as an option for private forest landowners. While conventional forest thinning approaches were covered, the focus of the program was on variable density thinning and how various degrees of thinning, based on site conditions and landowner objectives, as well as the strategic location of “gaps” and “skips,” can be used to create a diverse forest landscape that is more resilient to fire and other disturbance, is aesthetically pleasing, has



Caption to go with the photo; identify people and programs.
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increased biodiversity and wildlife habitat potential, and provides an economic return.

Program Outcomes

Eight landowners, representing over 1200 acres of forest land, participated in the one-night workshop held in April. Attendees reported an 82% increase in knowledge, with 100% stating that they would be able to use the knowledge gained. *“Excellent workshop. Very helpful to the small private forest owner.”*

Based on the outcome of the first year’s offering, we plan to offer the workshop again on an every-other-year basis, as well as to hold field tours to view examples of various landowner applications of the concept, and how they tailored the approach to their own special circumstances and goals.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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