



# What Are Idaho Forest Landowners' Top Ten Concerns?

Family Forest Landowners and Managers Conference  
Moscow, Idaho

# Disclaimers

- ▶ Before I begin, I want to offer a brief disclaimer. The perspectives and challenges I will discuss today are based on conversations I have had with forest landowners, partners, and forestry professionals across Idaho. These observations reflect common themes and concerns that have been shared during meetings, field visits, and informal discussions with landowners.
- ▶ To broaden this perspective, I also consulted colleagues in the southern part of the state to better understand what issues their landowners are experiencing as well. While many of the points I will mention are widely discussed within the forestry community, none of the information presented today comes from a formal survey or statistically sampled dataset that I have conducted. Rather, it reflects recurring feedback and insights gathered through ongoing conversations with landowners and practitioners working on the ground.
- ▶ My goal in sharing these observations is to highlight the challenges that landowners themselves are raising and to encourage discussion about how we, as a forestry community, can continue to address them together.



# 1. Keeping Forests as Forest

## ‡ Development Pressure

- ‡ Increasing Migration into Wild Urban Interface (WUI)
- ‡ Houses are being built in historically undeveloped forestland
- ‡ Parcel sizes are shrinking
  - ‡ 160-acre family forests are becoming 10–20-acre homesites
  - ‡ Growth of subdivisions in forestland areas

## ‡ Shifting Land and Timber Value

- ‡ Rising land values outpacing timber value
- ‡ Forestland increasing valued for development potential not timber
- ‡ Loss of past practices
  - ‡ Mills once helped to finance land purchases and retained timber rights until compensated back



# 2. Markets

## 🌲 Market Capacity and Workforce Constraints

### 🌲 Industry Capacity Trends

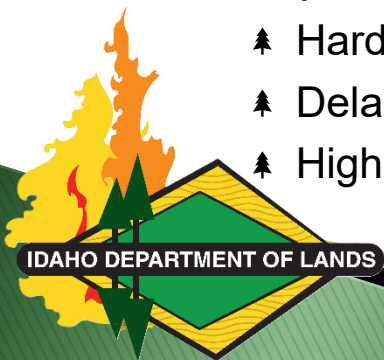
- 🌲 Significant decline in processing infrastructure
- 🌲 Loss of 113 mills between 1979-2019\*

### 🌲 Workforce & Access Challenges

- 🌲 Reduced logging and forestry workforce
- 🌲 Increased competition for loggers, truckers, and natural resource professionals
- 🌲 High mobilization costs (low volume and high cost per acre)

### 🌲 Impacts to Landowners

- 🌲 Harder to implement active forest management
- 🌲 Delays or inability to complete projects
- 🌲 Higher costs for management



\*Source: Simmons, Eric A.; Scott, Samuel G.; Morgan, Todd A.; Townsend, Lucas P.; Shaw, John D. 2024. Timber basket of the Interior West: Idaho's forest products industry and timber harvest, 2019, with trends through 2021. Resour. Bull. RMRS-RB-38. Fort Collins, CO: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station. 51 p. <https://doi.org/10.2737/RMRS-RB-38>.

# 3. Small Diameter & Biomass Mills

## ↑ Utilization Challenges

- ↑ Declining markets for small-diameter and low value material

- ↑ Reduced utilization of:

  - ↑ Tree Tops, Slash, and Small diameter logs

- ↑ More Material ending up in:

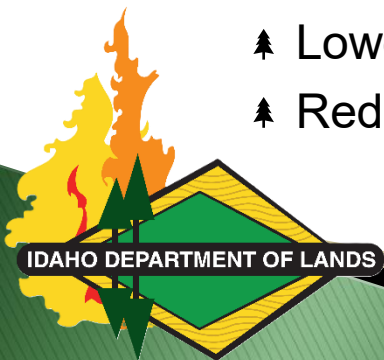
  - ↑ Slash piles for burning

  - ↑ Not being transported to mills

- ↑ Resulting Impacts

  - ↑ Lower revenue from timber sales

  - ↑ Reduced incentive for active management



# 4. Rising Cost of Management

## ↑ Increasing Costs

- ↑ Higher expenses across key management activities:
  - ↑ Fuels reduction, roads maintenance and access, logging
- ↑ Driven by rising cost of doing business
  - ↑ Labor increasing, equipment costs, fuels costs

## ↑ Impacts to Landowners

- ↑ Management becoming less affordable
- ↑ In some cases
  - ↑ Cost exceed revenue from timber sales
- ↑ Results in
  - ↑ Delayed, reduced, or no management



# 5. Forest Health

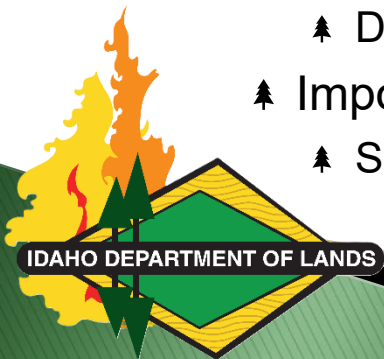
## 🌲 Forest Health & Environmental Stressors

### 🌲 Key Factors

- 🌲 Trees experiencing stress from environmental conditions
- 🌲 Stressors can include
  - 🌲 Drought, storm events (wind, snow, ice), competition and stand density
- 🌲 Stress Trees become susceptible to:
  - 🌲 Insects, disease, physical damage

### 🌲 Impacts & Considerations

- 🌲 Increase in:
  - 🌲 Dead and dying trees, windthrow and damage, fuels buildup
- 🌲 Important balance:
  - 🌲 Some dead and dying provides wildlife habitat



# 6. Wildfire Management

## ↑ Wildfire Risk and Changing Conditions

### ↑ Fuels Loading

- ↑ Forest Composition is shifting overtime

- ↑ Increased fuels due to:

  - ↑ Insect and disease, overstocking, dead and down material

### ↑ Changing Fire Seasons

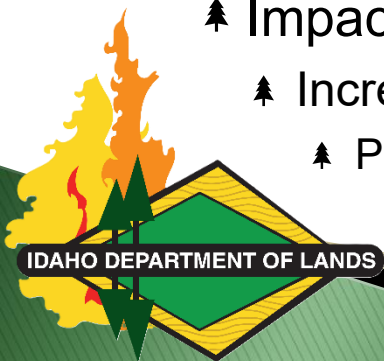
- ↑ Longer Fire Seasons Across the regions

  - ↑ 50-80% normal snowpack statewide

### ↑ Impacts to Landowners

- ↑ Increased wildfire risks to:

  - ↑ Property and Longterm Management Goals



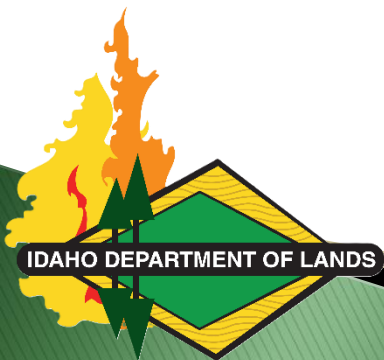
# 7. Estate Planning and Generational Transfer

- ‡ Generational Transfer and Succession
  - ‡ Key Challenge
    - ‡ Next generation to manage their property
  - ‡ What Were Seeing
    - ‡ Some Successful Transitions
    - ‡ Facing an uncertain future ownership
  - ‡ Outcomes
    - ‡ Next of Kin
    - ‡ Conservation Easements
    - ‡ Sale-often leading to development



# 8. Public Understanding of Forest Management

- ‡ Changing Ownership
  - ‡ Increase in new landowners in the WUI
  - ‡ Backgrounds with limited exposure to active Forest Management
- ‡ Common Misunderstandings
  - ‡ Harvesting is often perceived as clear-cutting
  - ‡ Limited understanding of:
    - ‡ Thinning
    - ‡ Prescribed Fire



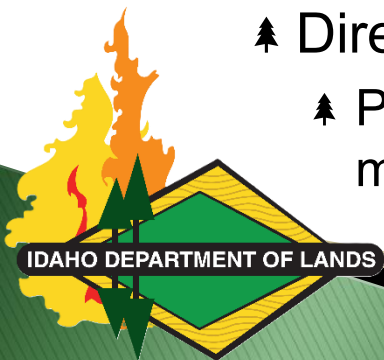
# 9. Technical Assistance

## ↑ Information Overload

- ↑ Wide range of programs and resources available
- ↑ Can be overwhelming
  - ↑ Identify Options, Understanding Eligibility & Know Where to Start

## ↑ Available Support

- ↑ Multiple Pathways for assistance
  - ↑ Private Forestry Consultants (IDL)
  - ↑ Consulting Foresters
  - ↑ Direct access to programs (e.g. NRCS)
    - ↑ Professionals can help navigate programs, develop management plans, connect landowners to resources



# 10. Lack of Time

## ⌚ Time Constraints

### ⌚ Limited Time for Management

- ⌚ Some landowners are absentee owners
- ⌚ Some landowners are balancing a full-time job and other family commitments
- ⌚ Forest management requires ongoing attention, planning, & on the ground work

### ⌚ Impacts

- ⌚ Limited time leads to:
  - ⌚ Delayed management
  - ⌚ Reduced acres of implemented projects
  - ⌚ Missed opportunities for proactive care



# Conclusions

## ♣ Bringing It All Together

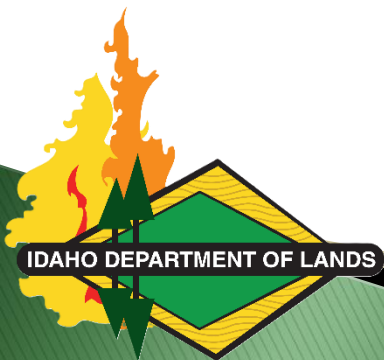
### ♣ What We Are Seeing Across Idaho

- ♣ Challenges are not isolated-they are interconnected
- ♣ Some issues are national

### ♣ Why It Matters

#### ♣ Impacts The Ability To:

- ♣ Actively manage forests
- ♣ Maintain Forest Health and Resilience
- ♣ Keep Forest Forests



# Questions/Stories?

**Thank you!**

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