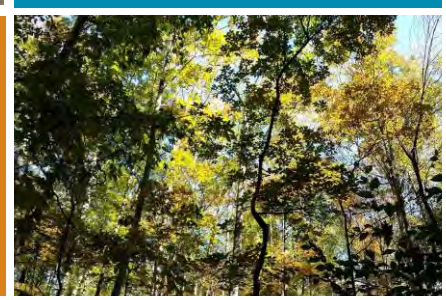
Woodland Owner Legacy Planning Benefits and Barriers

As part of Generation NEXT, a program of the Virginia Department of Forestry and Virginia Cooperative Extension



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Definitions

Below are definitions of common terms and acronyms used in this report.

CMI	Conservation Management Institute at Virginia Tech
Generation NEXT programming	A program designed and implemented by Virginia Department of Forestry and Virginia Cooperative Extension to assist landowners with legacy planning
Intergenerational land transfer	Refers to land that is inherited by the next generation because of death of an owner, or through other legal means while owner is still living.
Landowner	Individual who owns forested land: see *woodland owner*
Legacy planning	The ongoing process of engaging and educating the next generation to transfer the values of family and land stewardship associated with wooded property. It also includes preparing for a change in ownership using available legal, financial, and conservation tools.
Southside	17 counties in Southern Virginia: see map in *Methodology*
Underserved	Based on gender, race, capacity of providers to address needs and low participation in conservation programs relative to other parts of the state.
USFS	United States Forest Service
VA	Virginia
VCE	Virginia Cooperative Extension
VDOF	Virginia Department of Forestry
VFA	Virginia Forestry Association
WLP3	Woodland Legacy Planning Pilot Project: Virginia Program to assist landowners with legacy planning
Woodland owner	Individual who owns forested land: see *landowner*
Written legacy plan	A written document encompassing how land is passed down to the next generation: see *legacy planning*

Statistical abbreviations and meanings

M	Mean
n	Number of respondents
p	$p<.05$ is a statistical notation to signal that there is a statistically significant relationship between the tested factors – meaning that the relationships observed (e.g., respondents with X factor are more likely to rate Y factor higher) is likely not due to chance but a true relationship between the variables.
Standard Error	A statistical term that measures the accuracy with which a sample represents a population.

1: Executive Summary

The Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) and Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) both seek to assist woodland owners in Virginia to pass their land forward to the next generation intact and in forest. Southside Virginia was selected as the study area because it contains large unfragmented family forest ownerships, contains a large proportion of high forest conservation value forestland, and a higher proportion of underserved populations relative to other parts of the Commonwealth. This Benefits and Barriers Analysis was undertaken to identify the barriers to, and benefits from, intergenerational land transfer planning as perceived by family forest owners.

The analysis took a two-pronged approach. First, focus groups were conducted with both general landowners and two underserved demographic groups (female landowners and African American landowners) to allow for in-depth discussion of topics and inform the development of a broad mail survey. A mail survey was then sent to a sample of 1,450 landowners to gather quantitative data. The sample was selected from a larger list of landowners. Given the goal of understanding landowners who have parcels of land that represent significant conservation value, the large property owners (over 500 acres) were oversampled, consisting of 17% of the sample as compared to 3% of the population, while the smaller properties (under 100 acres) were under sampled, consisting of 34% of the sample as compared to 47% of the population. In total, the response rate for the mail survey was 23%. In this report, the findings and recommendations primarily focus on the results of the survey, but also incorporates the focus groups where relevant. A separate report on the focus groups is also provided (See Appendix A).

Throughout this report we use the terms woodland owner and landowner interchangeably. Also, we use the term legacy planning which is used by some in the forestry and conservation community to mean the "ongoing process of engaging and educating the next generation to transfer the values of family and land stewardship. It also includes preparing for a change in ownership using available legal, financial, and conservation tools." However, as the results of this report show, that may not be the term that currently resonates with the audience.

Below is a summary of key research findings and recommendations. Detailed findings and recommendations are available in the report.

Research Findings

Landowner Profile

- The average respondent age was 67.1 years old.
- Three-fourths of the respondents (77.7%) were male, and 22.3% were female.
- Almost three-fourths of the respondents (72.9%) attended college, with 53.9% of them receiving some degree.
- Of the 95.7% of respondents who chose to report race, the majority were white (96.2%), 3.1% were Black or African-American, and fewer than 2% reported any other race.
- Respondents were fairly split between making under $75,000 (48.5%) and over $75,000 (51.5%).

Property-Related Demographics

In all questions, respondents were asked to consider all the properties they own in Virginia, so percentages will not necessarily add to 100%, and may not be contiguous or all in the Southside focus area. For wooded acres, respondents were asked to not include Christmas tree farms, orchards or nurseries, or land that is mowed for lawn.

- The average number of acres owned was 564, with 24.8% reported owning 100 acres or less and 11.6% reported owning 1,000 or more acres.
- The average number of wooded acres owned was 428.4.
- Over one-third of respondents (36.4%) owned their property as individuals and 56% owned jointly with someone else.
- Property was purchased by 71.4% of the respondents, with the average length of ownership at 28 years. Over half (54.8%) reported that they had inherited property. The average length of time a family had owned inherited property was 102.7 years.
- Almost half of the respondents (47.8%) make property decisions alone and 52.5% make decisions with at least one other person.

Conservation Intentions

- Respondents across the board expressed strong positive conservation intentions when asked to rate their desire for the land to stay intact, in forest, and in their family.
- Respondents who inherited their land had higher mean rating scores for wanting their land to stay in the family than those who did not inherit their land.

Barriers to Legacy Planning

- A fifth of respondents (20.8%) reported having a completed written legacy plan.
- A higher percentage of women reported completing a legacy plan (37.3% versus 16.6%).
- The top reported barrier to planning by far was that landowners *do not want to lose control of decision making on their land*; followed by *tax laws keep changing, figuring out fairness issues with heirs, not ready to act, do not know where to start,* and *more urgent matters to attend to*.
- In lieu of rating the significance of a barrier to legacy planning, respondents could also choose the option “don’t know” if they didn’t know if the statement was a barrier. Over half of the respondents selected the response “*don’t know*” for *no qualified advisors near me* (55.9%) and *too expensive* (54.3%), and nearly one half selected *don’t know* for *lack of educational programs to help me* (46.9%) and *tax laws keep changing* (44.6%).
- Women were significantly less likely to feel that *not ready to act* and *there are more urgent matters to attend to* were barriers to legacy planning.

Benefits to Legacy Planning

- All benefits to planning were rated equally highly by those who rated them, with no benefit more highly valued than others.
- Respondents with a written legacy plan had significantly higher mean rating scores for *providing overall peace of mind* and *reducing family disputes* than those who did not have a written plan.
- Women placed a higher value on *ensure my woodland will be managed according to my wishes*.
- Again, in lieu of rating the significance of a benefit to legacy planning, respondents could also choose the option “don’t know” if they don’t know if the statement was a benefit. More than a third of respondents responded that they didn’t know if any of the benefits would be realized by completing a woodland legacy plan. Respondents were most unsure if planning would *decrease taxes* (63.5%).

Planning Activities

- *Write a will, write an advance medical directive, clear title*, and *create a power of attorney document* were completed by more than half of respondents.
- Nearly half of respondents had not heard of a forest management plan (47.4%) or a forest property overview (48.7%).
- One-fourth of respondents had not heard of a conservation easement (25.1%) or a land use tax program (27.5%).
- Nearly half of respondents reported no plan to participate in a conservation easement (45.6%), and about a quarter had no plan to get a forest stewardship management plan (24.8%) or write a forest property overview (26.8%).
- Respondents that reported having a written plan were more likely to have completed more planning activities, but most had still not completed all listed activities, with approximately a third or less having completed documents such as a *list of who does what* or *a Forest Stewardship Management* Plan.
- Less than 10% of respondents without a written plan had completed any of the documents not related to legal or taxes.

Trust and Communication

- VDOF was rated highest on trust (and higher than any others by 15%), followed by the USFS, VFA, and VCE/University.
- Respondents had a strong preference for written materials.

Terminology

- The highest preferred term for passing down land was *Landowner estate planning* (selected by 54.7% of respondents) and was also the preferred term in the focus groups.
- *Asset protection planning* received the next highest term chosen (only 10.9% of respondents).

Recommendations

We provide below nine recommendations that address the key themes the analysis has identified. Overall, these recommendations utilize the positive intentions landowners have for legacy planning, and address the key barriers including a fear of losing control and lack of awareness on how legacy planning activities, when completed, can achieve the very benefits landowners want. The recommendations are not listed in a specific order, but generally start with topics that had more significant and clear findings.

1. **Increase Clarity on Legacy Planning Steps and Definitions**. Clarify specifics of what legacy planning is and what steps it entails to address what may be the large amount of confusion suggested by the items that were answered “don’t know” and sense of being overwhelmed. The audience prefers written material, so considering creating an infographic or a checklist of steps.
2. **Address Barriers: Prevent the Feeling of Losing Control of Decision-making**. Provide clear steps on how legacy planning supports maintaining control and consider additional efforts to understand what control means to landowners. Discuss control through workshops and materials that connect benefits of legacy planning with control.
3. **Address Barriers: Provide Assistance to Families.** Address how planning can be used to assist with fairness and orderly transfer of land to heirs without subdividing land using a guide that links legacy planning tools to specific fairness challenges. Recommend mediation services to families or provide a written how-to guide for having family conversations.
4. **Increase Clarity on Benefits**. Increase motivation by demonstrating specifically how landowners will benefit from increased control, asset protection, and other benefits through this planning

process. Landowners who had completed the process of having a written plan were more likely to value *providing overall peace of mind* and *reducing family disputes*, and while this relationship is not necessarily causal, these may be benefits to emphasize. Utilize peer landowner testimonials and stories to highlight the results of planning on control.

5. **Leverage Positive Conservation Intentions for Outreach.** Focus on reducing barriers and enhancing benefits – leverage the existing positive conservation attitudes (keeping land intact, in forest, and in their family) to generate responses to legacy planning messages.
6. **Leverage Women's Existing Motivation.** Women may be more motivated to complete a legacy plan, may be more likely to prioritize planning, and can be further motivated through women-focused events.
7. **Consider if Legacy is the Right Terminology**. Consider using the term "landowner estate planning" or conduct additional message testing to determine how to best connect with landowners in a clear and understandable way.
8. **Consider Leading with Taxes and Legal**. Employ a "foot-in-the-door" technique by leading with the areas of greatest initial interest and comfort (wills, taxes) to start landowners on the path to other components of legacy planning.
9. **Use State and Federal Government, VFA, or VCE as Messengers**. Use messengers that were rated as trustworthy when communicating with landowners or giving presentations.

2: Project Background and Goals

The Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) and Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) both seek to assist woodland owners in passing their land on to the next generation intact and in forest. Throughout Virginia, one of the greatest threats to forestland retention is the increasing parcelization of family-owned woodlands. Overall, the literature indicates that FFO land is at greatest risk to parcelization at the time of intergenerational land transfer and is therefore the focus of this work.[1] The Benefits and Barriers Analysis was conducted as a part of the WLP3 pilot project to increase the impact of intergenerational land transfer programming efforts. The 17-county Southside was selected as the focus area, and as a proxy for the rest of Virginia, for the following reasons:

1. Large, intact and unfragmented forestland remain;
2. High proportion of high forest conservation value forestland;
3. Ownerships remain relatively large; and
4. Underserved populations.

This Benefits and Barriers Analysis was undertaken to identify the barriers to and benefits from intergenerational land transfer planning to inform future Generation NEXT programming. The Barriers and Benefits Analysis took a two-pronged approach. First focus groups were conducted with both general landowners and two underserved demographic groups – female landowners and African American landowners. Next, a mail survey was broadly conducted throughout the Southside of Virginia. The questions for both of these efforts were derived based on a review of relevant literature and the expertise of the project team.

The focus groups allowed for in-depth exploration of themes, as well as data collection on audiences that may have different experiences from the typical landowner, but who would likely not complete the survey in a sufficient sample for targeted analysis, given a smaller population size. A separate report was completed on the specific themes and results from the focus groups (see Appendix A). This report aggregates the findings from the survey with the focus group themes and concludes with holistic recommendations drawn from both the qualitative and quantitative efforts.

Throughout this report we use the terms woodland owner and landowner interchangeably. Also, we use the term legacy planning which is the typical language used by the forestry and conservation community to mean the "ongoing process of engaging and educating the next generation to transfer the values of family and land stewardship associated with your property. It also includes preparing for a change in ownership using available legal, financial, and conservation tools." However, as the results of this report show, that may not be the term that currently resonates with the audience.

VDOF and VCE plan to use this work to inform workshops, tools, and other specific services offered to landowners to motivate them to successfully initiate and complete legacy planning.

[1] Wear, D.N. and Greis, J.G. 2013. The Southern Forest Futures Project. *United States Department of Agriculture: Forest Service.* Retrieved from https://www.srs.fs.fed.us/pubs/gtr/gtr_srs178.pdf

3. Methodology

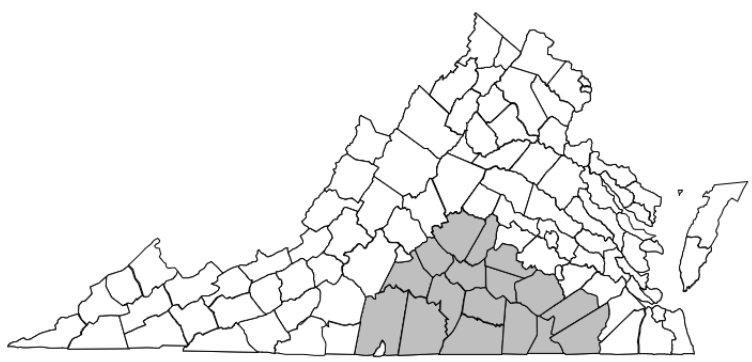
Data were collected using both qualitative (focus groups) and quantitative (survey) methods. The focus groups with landowners preceded the mail survey to provide a breadth of potential questions for measurement using the mail survey. The focus groups also provided a depth of understanding of specific landowner issues, especially among African-Americans and women that could be missed if relying only on the mail survey.

Landowner Address List

CMI was hired to build a landowner list from 17 Virginia counties known as the "Southside" to use in recruiting focus group participants and administer the mail survey. A 50-acre minimum was required to be included on the list. In this report, the counties considered "Southside" include (see Figure 1).

1. Amelia
2. Appomattox
3. Brunswick
4. Buckingham
5. Campbell
6. Charlotte
7. Cumberland
8. Dinwiddie
9. Greensville
10. Halifax
11. Lunenburg
12. Mecklenburg
13. Nottoway
14. Pittsylvania
15. Prince Edward
16. South Hampton
17. Sussex

Figure 1: VA Map of Analysis Focus Area



In addition, lists of Virginia landowners who had had some contact with either VDOF or VCE (i.e., attended a workshop or on a mailing list) was made available.

A list of 23,568 addresses was provided to Action Research for refinement.

List Challenges

Action Research refined the landowner list prior to appending telephone numbers for focus group recruitment and mailing of the survey. Addresses were first reformatted for consistency and correction of invalid formatting, as well as adding missing information and correction of misspellings where possible. Overall, roughly 12,500 addresses were removed, leaving a final count of 11,068 addresses. The primary reasons for removal included:

1. Commercial, industrial, or other non-residential address
2. Not within the 17 Southside counties
3. Missing key information (e.g., street number)
4. Duplication, especially once misspellings/formatting was corrected (e.g., Road, Rd, Rd., and misspellings, and E Name Rd, Name E Rd, East Name Rd, and Name East Rd), including both between the CMI and VDOF/VCE lists duplication, and duplication within each list.

This significant and unusually high number of address removals demonstrates one of the primary challenges in data collection in rural regions. It is very difficult to find high quality lists that are representative of the population of landowners and have up-to-date information. Action Research took significant efforts to ensure that data collected in this effort is meaningful and important for informing research – however, we want to note these limitations both for context of these results, as well as for future efforts.

Focus Groups

Three focus groups were held, one with landowners recruited from a general landowner list, one with landowners recruited by the Black Family Land Trust, and one with landowners recruited from a list of Women and Land (a VDOF program) workshop participants. The groups discussed:

1. General values and benefits around being a woodland owner;
2. Current legacy planning actions and motivations;
3. Challenges around legacy planning; and
4. Available resources.

The groups also included short surveys about preferred terms for passing on land, current completed legacy planning steps, words associated with legacy planning, and future intentions for their land. More methodology detail can be found in the focus group report (see Appendix A). The goal of these groups was to learn more about specific underserved groups, as well as to inform the mail survey questions and response options.

Survey

A total of 1,450 landowners were randomly selected from the address list. The sample size was selected assuming a response rate of 25 to 30% to achieve a final sample size of 300. A sample size of 300 will achieve a sampling error of +/- 5.62% at the 95% confidence level. This sample was selected based on the acceptable level of error in survey research. The large property owners were oversampled, consisting of 17% of the sample as compared to 3% of the population. The oversampling was completed to address the goal of understanding landowners who have parcels of land that represent significant conservation value, meaning larger landowners. Comparatively, a smaller portion of small properties were sampled. Within the property size, the landowners were randomly selected. Random selection allows the results to be generalizable to the full population.

The sample was divided into landowners with large (more than 500 acres), medium (100 to 499 acres), and small (under 100 acres) properties. The final proportion of sample per property size is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Survey Sample by Property Size

	Small Properties <100 acres		Medium Properties 100-499 acres		Large Properties 500+ acres		Total
Sample	5,191	47%	5,588	50%	289	3%	11,068
Mailing	500	34%	700	48%	250	17%	1,450
Response	69*	23%	151	50%	82	27%	302

*15 respondents (5%) were 20 – 49 acres. The list was not intended to have any properties under 50 acres, but survey responses demonstrated this was not accurate.

The survey employed the Dillman four-touch method[2] to increase the number of responses:

1. Pre-notification postcard (mailed May 21, 2018) letting woodland owners know a survey is coming
2. Survey packet (mailed May 28, 2018) which included a cover letter from VDOF and VCE and the 4-page survey
3. Reminder postcard to non-respondents (mailed June 4, 2018)
4. Second survey packet to non-respondents (mailed June 11, 2018)

The surveys were also placed into the postal system in Northern Virginia to garner an in-state postmark and reduce mail errors, and completed surveys were returned to the VDOF office to increase credibility. The pre-notification and reminder postcards, and cover letter can be found in Appendix B.

4. Focus Group Summary Results

The full focus group results are available in a separate report (see Appendix A). The critical themes are summarized here to allow for holistic analysis of both efforts.

Several short surveys were given before and after the focus group. The pre-focus group surveys revealed generally positive attitudes for keeping land intact, in forest, and in their family, and toward planning for an orderly transfer, and that the top terms associated with legacy planning were asset protection (58%), a family trust/LLC (46%), family/heirs (46%) and future generations (46%).

Themes:

1. **Family is Critical** - family relationships are an important component in the success or failure of legacy planning, and there is no one-size-fits-all way to address the variety of different family situations.
2. **Legacy Planning Leads with Legal and Taxes** – the most top of mind and initially thought-of legacy planning activities related to legal documents and taxes.

[2] Dillman, D. A., Smyth, J. D., Christian, L. M., & Dillman, D. A. (2009). Internet, mail, and mixed-mode surveys: The tailored design method. Hoboken, N.J: Wiley & Sons.

3. **Overwhelming Process –** getting started and going through legacy planning felt overwhelming.
4. **Life Events are a Leading Motivator** – a big life event, from a health scare to a child's marriage, often prompted planning.
5. **Woodland Owners Enjoy Learning from other Woodland Owners** – participants enjoyed sharing and learning in the group setting.
6. **In Search of Trustworthy Experts** – participants were looking for legacy planning experts, especially those who understand about owning land.
7. **Fitting all the Pieces Together** – participants wanted to understand the path from where they are now to a completed legacy plan.
8. **"Plans" Tend to Stay Static** – participants who have plans tend not to update them.
9. **Cost is Not Top of Mind as a Barrier** – participants had to be prompted by the facilitator to discuss the cost of legacy planning.
10. **Benefits of Planning** – landowners did see benefits to planning.

There were also unique themes in the African-American landowner group:

1. **Vital for Land to Stay in the Bloodline** – family was critical to all groups, but the frame of keeping land in their "bloodline" was mentioned specifically.
2. **Trusted Community Leader** – the Black Family Land Trust is a recognized leader in their community and will be instrumental in engaging African-American woodland owners in a meaningful way.
3. **Large Number of Heirs** – the issue of heir properties and significant numbers of joint owners in the land (or heirs of small parcels of the larger property) was more common in the African-American community.

There were also unique themes in the women landowner group:

1. **Women Want to Listen to Other Women** – women seemed to be interested in sharing their stories and hearing from others, and even spoke openly of how empowering it was to hear how one group member had succeeded in taking control of her land.
2. **Pride in Their Own Land** – one of the most meaningful aspects of being a female woodland owner is having something that was their own.
3. **Navigating a Male-Dominant Sector** – all the women acknowledged that they were trying to succeed in a male-dominated context and noted a greater need to prove themselves.
4. **Owner as Outsider** – women may have more likely married into a woodland-owning family, and face challenges because they are not blood relatives.

Both women and African-American landowners saw the land as their life support. The focus group results suggested it was important to meet them where they were and engage their community leaders.

The post-focus group surveys showed that most participants had completed a significant number of the legacy planning steps. In addition, the preferred term for legacy planning by woodland owners was *landowner estate planning*, the second most preferred term was *intergenerational transfer planning*, with *asset protection planning,* and *legacy planning* tied for third.

5. Survey Results

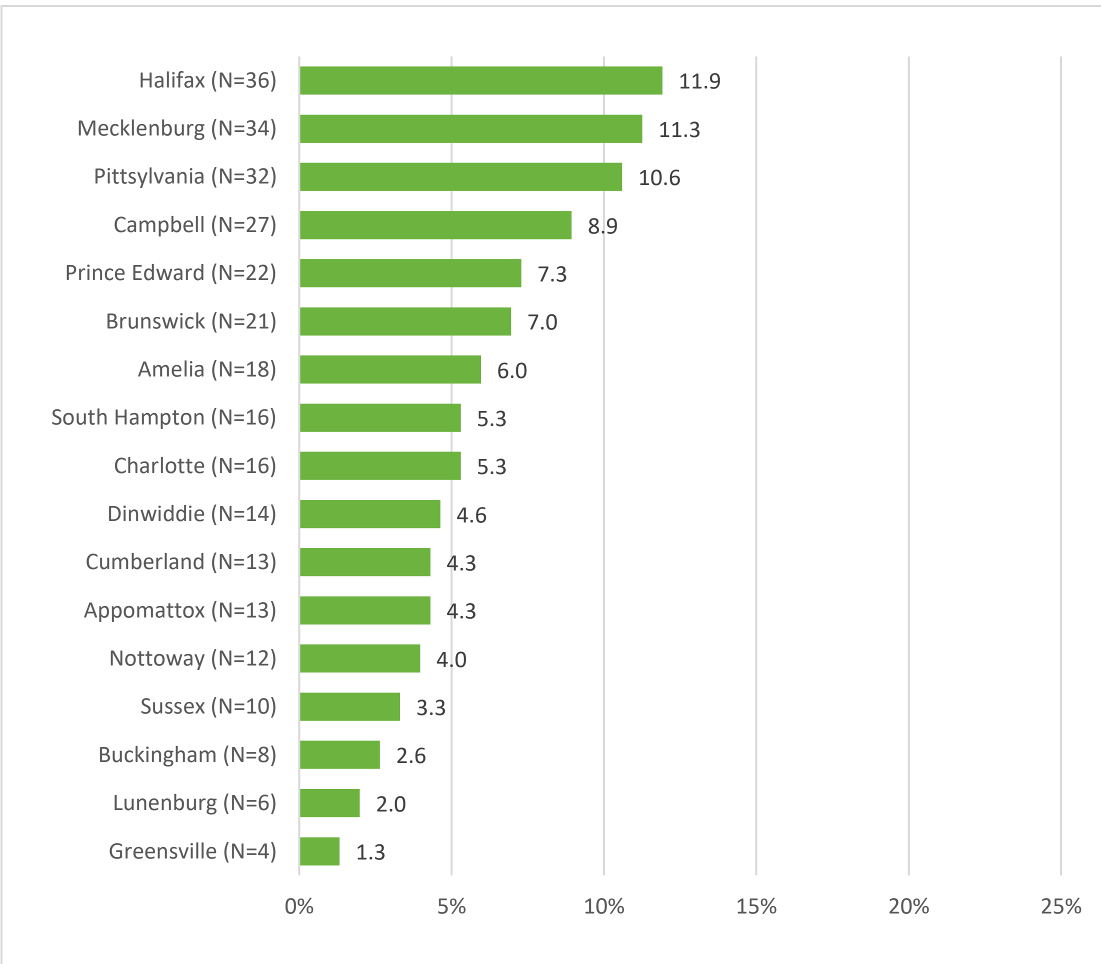
A total of 1,450 surveys were sent to woodland owners. A total of 302 valid, qualified responses were received (21%). However, 64 surveys were returned as bad addresses, 55 had fewer than 20 wooded acres, and 20 reported that they were not woodland owners. Therefore, the valid sample was 1,311 respondents, or a 23% response rate.

Descriptive (percentages, means) and bivariate analyses (cross tabulations, analysis of variance, and correlations) were conducted to examine relationships between variables. Descriptive data for each survey item is displayed in Appendix C.

Sample Demographics

The sample was randomly selected from the total population list. Prior to selection, a lookup was done for each address to verify that it was within one of the 17 Southside counties. The distribution of survey responses by county is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Distribution of Completed Surveys by County



Age

The average respondent age was 67.1 years old, with ages ranging from 31 to 97. Less than one-fourth of the respondents (22.7%) were under the age of 60.

Gender

Three-fourths of the respondents (77.7%) were male, and 22.3% were female.

Education

Almost three-fourths of the respondents (72.9%) attended college, with 53.9% of them receiving a degree (Associate's = 9.5%, Bachelor's = 26.4%, Advanced = 18.0%).

Race

Respondents could choose more than one category to allow for accurate reporting of racial background. Of the 95.7% of respondents who chose to report race, the majority reported their race was white (96.2%), 3.1% were Black or African-American, and fewer than 2% reported any other race. Given the small number of non-white respondents, no statistical analysis was conducted on race.

Income

Respondents were fairly split between making under $75,000 (48.5%) and over $75,000 (51.5%).

Property-Related Demographics

Total Acreage

Respondents were asked to consider all the properties they own in Virginia, which were not necessarily contiguous or within the focus area of the Southside. The average number of acres owned was 564.3, with totals ranging from 23 to 20,000. One-fourth of respondents (24.8%) reported owning 100 acres or less and 11.6% reported owning 1,000 or more acres.

Total Wooded Acreage

Respondents were asked to report the wooded acreage of their land, again considering all the properties they own in Virginia. The instructions specified not to include Christmas tree farms, orchards or nurseries, or land that is mowed for lawn. The average number of wooded acres owned was 428.4, ranging from 20 to 20,000 acres. Of the total average acreage owned in Virginia, 76% was wooded, showing that wooded land makes up a significant portion of privately owned acreage.

Residence

Again, respondents were asked to consider all the properties they own in Virginia, so percentages do not equal 100%, as respondents could check multiple options. Over three-fourths of respondents (77.3%) reported living on their property, 24.0% live within one mile of their property, and 39.5% live more than a mile away from their property.

Ownership

Most respondents have the land in some form of informal ownership (as opposed to a family partnership or LLC (8.3%), a family trust (6.0%), or a corporation (1.7%)), with over one-third of respondents (36.4%) owning their property as individuals, 38.1% owning jointly with their spouse, and 17.9% owning jointly with other family members or friends.

Land Acquisition

Respondents were asked whether they purchased or inherited their wooded land in Virginia. They responded in consideration of all the properties they own in Virginia, so many respondents checked both options (percentages will not add to 100%). Property was purchased by 71.4% of the respondents, with the average length of ownership being 28 years, ranging from under a year to 69 years. This demonstrates there are a substantial number of landowners who are fairly new to the property they own. Over half of the respondents (54.8%) reported having inherited land, and that the average length of time their family had owned inherited property was 102.7 years, but ranged from 5 to 373.

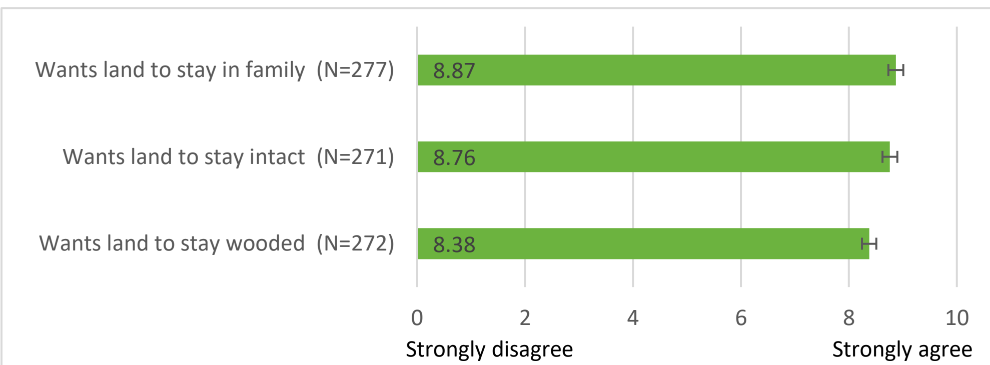
Decision-making

Almost half of the respondents (47.8%) make property decisions alone and 52.5% make decisions with at least one other person, demonstrating a near even split in decision-making.

Conservation Intentions

Respondents were asked to rate three statements on a scale of 0, *strongly disagree*, to 10, *strongly agree*, about their conservation intentions. The number of respondents who provided a response and the mean rating scores are presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Mean Rating Scores for Conservation Intention Items



Overall, respondents had high conservation intention mean scores, meaning they wanted their land to stay intact, in forest, and in their family.

- Respondents with a forest property overview plan had higher mean rating scores for wanting their land to stay wooded than those who did not have a plan (*Mean (M)*=9.3 versus 8.3, $p<.05$[3]). No other planning activities had significantly different intention ratings.
- Respondents with a power of attorney document had higher mean rating scores for wanting their land to stay in the family than those who did not have power of attorney document (*M*=9.2 versus 8.6, $p<.05$). No other planning activities had significantly different intention ratings.

[3] p<.05 is a statistical notation. It is used to signal that there is a statistically significant relationship between the tested factors – meaning that the relationships observed (e.g., respondents with X factor are more likely to rate Y factor higher) is likely not due to chance but a true relationship between the variables

- Not surprisingly, respondents who inherited their land had higher mean rating scores for wanting their land to stay in the family than those who did not inherit their land (*M*=9.2 versus 8.5, *p*<.01).
- There was no relationship[4] between income, level of education, age, living on their property, making decisions alone, ratings for legacy planning barriers and benefits, and the ratings provided for the conservation attitude items.

Legacy Planning

Despite landowners' overall positive attitudes toward conserving their wooded land, they reported low levels of current legacy planning and many challenges around planning. They also rated the various perceived benefits as high and relatively equal to each other. Woodland owners also reported a lack of knowledge around various legacy planning terms, planning activities, and potential actions to take to achieve a completed plan.

Completed Legacy Plans

Respondents were first given a definition of legacy planning as written by VDOF and VCE and asked to rate a series of statements about the difficulties of completing a plan. The definition read: *The Virginia Department of Forestry and Virginia Cooperative Extension define woodland legacy planning as the ongoing process of engaging and educating the next generation to transfer the values of family and land stewardship associated with their property, and that it also includes preparing for a change in ownership using available legal, financial, and conservation tools.* Given this context, 20.8% of respondents reported having a written legacy plan.

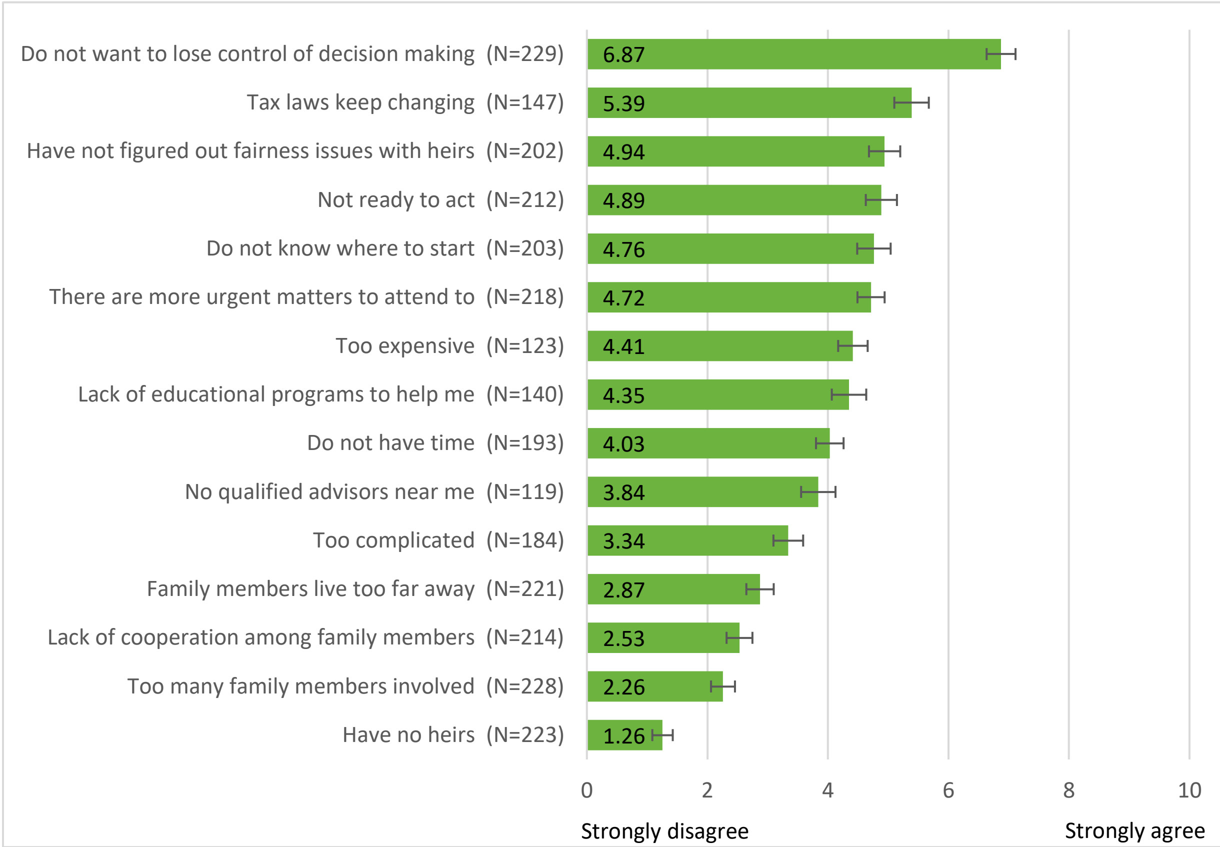
- A higher percentage of women than men reported completing a legacy plan (37.3% versus 16.6%, *p*<.05).
- A higher percentage of landowners with incomes below $75,000 than $75,000 and above reported completing a legacy plan (25.4% versus 14%, *p*<.05).
- Landowners who reported completing a legacy plan were significantly older than those who had not (73 years versus 65, *p*<.05).
- There was no relationship between having completed a plan and level of education.

Barriers to Legacy Planning

The barrier statements were derived from the literature, the focus groups, and the expertise of the project team members. Respondents were asked to rate a list of statements, on a scale of 0, *strongly disagree*, to 10, *strongly agree*, about items that may make woodland legacy planning difficult. Respondents were also given the option to mark *don't know*. The mean score along with the number of respondents that provided a response for each item are presented in Figure 4.

[4] No statistical relationship means that the answers to one question have no relationship to the answers on the other – there is no meaningful difference in how one answered the question based on the tested factor.

Figure 4: Mean Rating Scores for Barriers to Legacy Planning Items



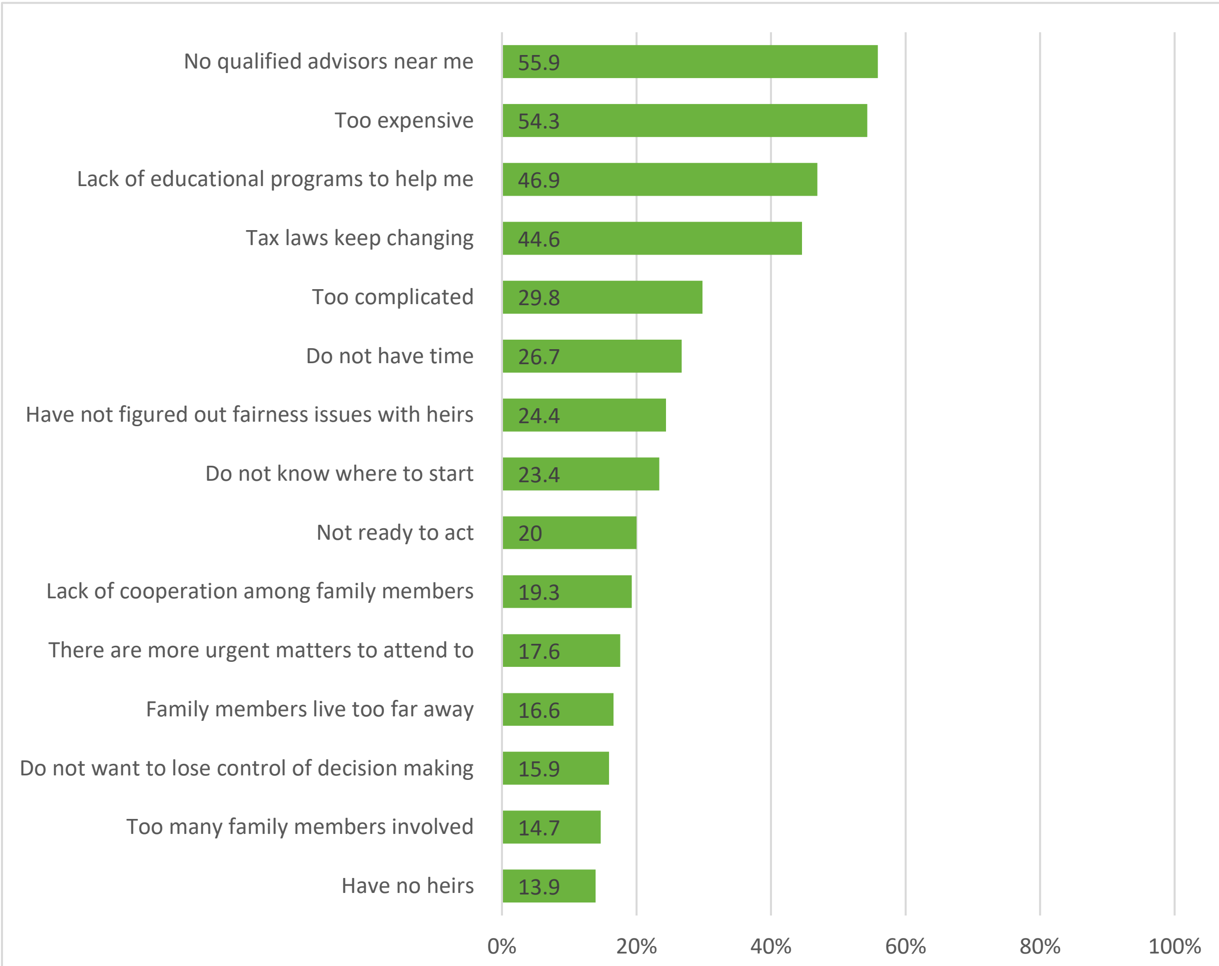
Results show that the most statistically significant barrier to legacy planning is respondents' concerns about *losing control of decision making on their land*.

The ratings for the next set of barriers were statistically the same, as displayed by the overlap of the standard error bars (meaning the difference between them is not statistically significant). This group includes: *tax laws keep changing, figuring out fairness issues with heirs, not ready to act, do not know where to start,* and *more urgent matters to attend to*. These secondary barriers demonstrate a range of challenges, from uncertainty of future laws, challenges with family, and the fact that legacy planning can be an overwhelming and confusing process, and one that respondents may rather put off than act now.

- Respondents who had a written legacy plan had significantly lower mean score ratings ($p<.05$) for *all* barriers than those who did not have a written plan (except for *lack of cooperation among family members*, *have no heirs*, and *tax laws keep changing* which were not rated significantly differently for those that did or did not have a written plan).
- Respondents who reported making decisions alone had a significantly higher mean score rating ($p<.05$) for *don't want to lose control of decision making* than those who do not make decisions alone.
- Women overall rated barriers similarly, with two exceptions: they were significantly less likely to feel that *not ready to act* ($M=3.70$ vs 5.28, $p<.05$) and *there are more urgent matters to attend to* ($M=3.76$ vs 4.98, $p<.05$) were barriers to legacy planning.
- There was no relationship between income, level of education, age, living on their property, having inherited their land, and the ratings provided for the barrier items.

Rather than provide a rating, a high percentage of respondents selected the *don't know* response. The barriers that displayed the highest percentage of *don't know* responses showed some interesting findings (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Percentage of Don't Know Responses on Barrier Items



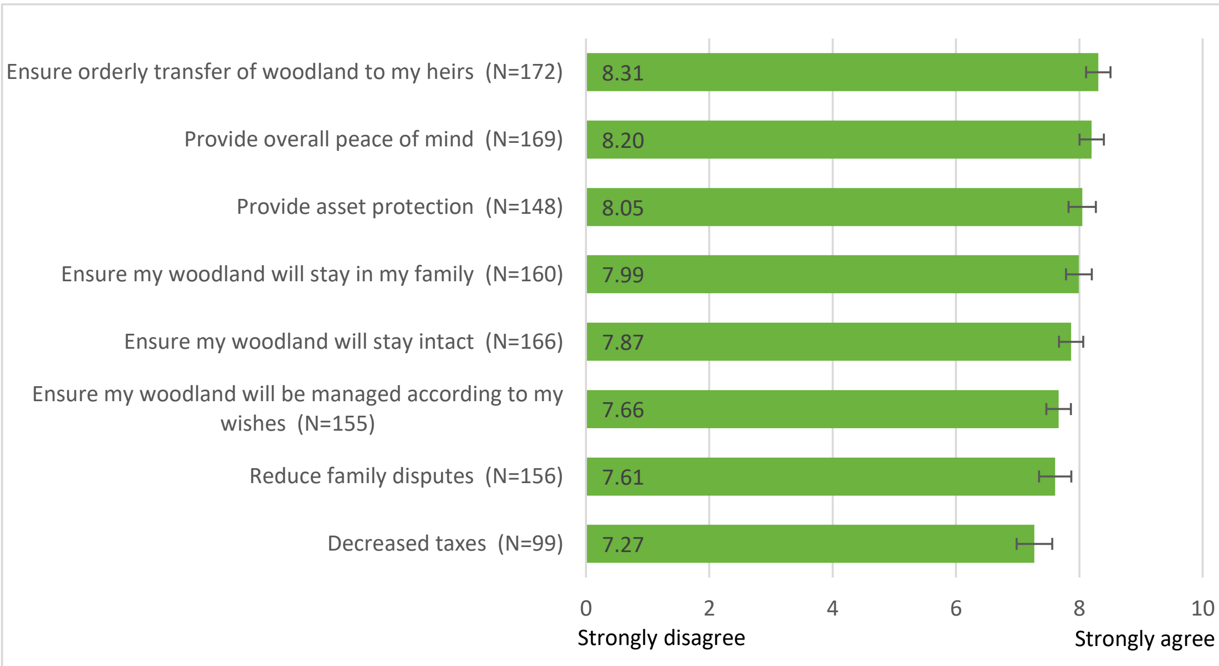
Over half of the respondents selected *don't know* for *no qualified advisors near me* (55.9%) and *too expensive* (54.3%), and nearly one half selected *don't know* for *lack of educational programs to help me* (46.9%) and *tax laws keep changing* (44.6%). It is unknown how much uncertainty respondents have about these items, as this was a single check box and not a Likert scale rating question

- An exploratory analysis was conducted to determine if there were any differences in gender, income, age, and having a completed plan for being unsure about the top four barriers (*no qualified advisors near me*, *too expensive*, *lack of educational programs to help me, tax laws keep changing*). There were no differences in the demographic factors, while those with a completed plan were statistically less likely to answer that they did not know about the barriers.

Benefits of Legacy Planning

The benefit statements were derived from the literature, the focus groups, and the expertise of the project team members. Respondents were asked to rate a list of statements, on a scale of 0, *strongly disagree*, to 10, *strongly agree*, about items that may be perceived as benefits of legacy planning. Respondents were also given the option to mark *don't know.* The mean score along with the number of respondents that provided a response for each item are presented in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6: Benefits to Legacy Planning

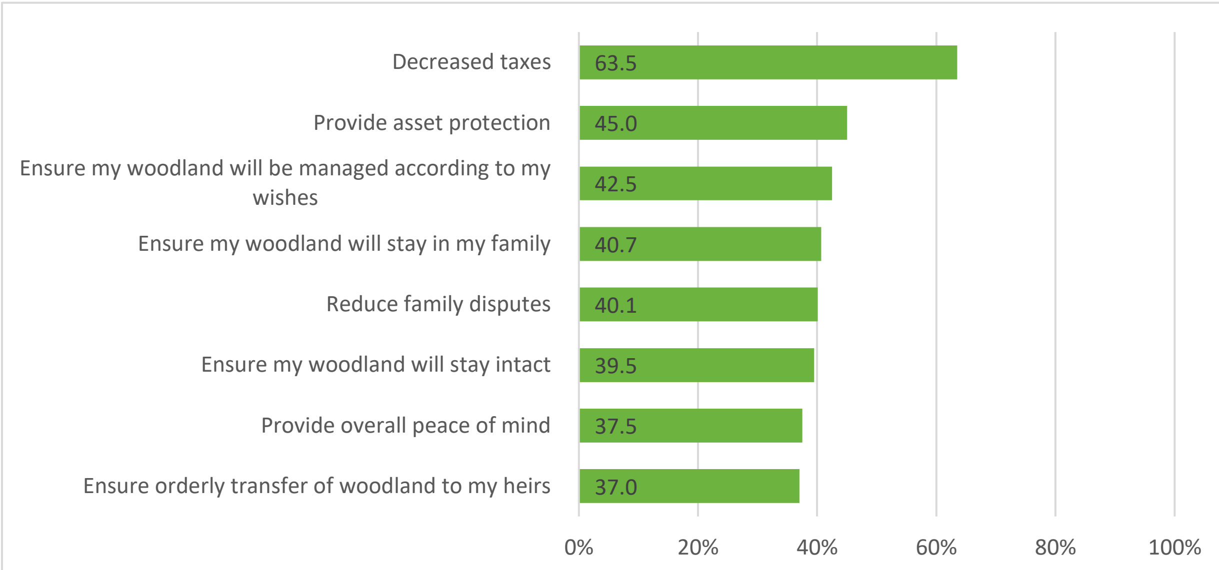


For the respondents who rated the benefits (displayed in the Ns next to the items), they rated all the potential benefits to legacy planning fairly high and there were no groupings or patterns that showed some benefits as significantly more meaningful than others.

- Respondents with a written legacy plan had significantly higher mean rating scores for *providing overall peace of mind* and *reducing family disputes* (M=8.8 versus 7.9, M=8.5 versus 7.2, respectively, p<.05) than those who did not have a written plan.
- Women placed a higher value on *ensure my woodland will be managed according to my wishes (M =* 8.40 versus. 7.46*, p<*.05*)*.
- There was no relationship between income, level of education, age, making decisions alone, living on their property, having inherited their land, and the ratings provided for the benefit items.

The high percentage of *don't know* responses across the items, shown in Figure 7, displayed some interesting findings.

Figure 7: Don't Know Benefits of Legacy Planning



Overall, more than a third of respondents responded that they didn't know if any of the benefits would be realized by completing a woodland legacy plan. Respondents were most unsure if planning would *decrease taxes* (63.5%). Interestingly, respondents in the focus groups identified decreasing taxes as one of their primary landowner interests.

- An exploratory analysis was conducted to determine if there were any differences in gender, income, age, and having a completed plan for being unsure about the top benefit (*decreased taxes*). There were no differences in the demographic factors, while those with a completed plan were statistically less likely to answer that they did not know about the benefit.

Legacy Planning Activities

Respondents were asked the status of selected activities that could fall under legacy planning. To have a "complete" legacy plan (with activities recommended by VDOF and VCE), a landowner would complete all the items listed below, with two exceptions: *Participate in a current use/land use tax program* and *Restrict development with conservation easement*. These two are activities that one may complete as part of legacy planning but are not necessary to having a complete plan. The answer choices were *completed*, *in progress*, *plan to do in the next five years*, *no plan to do this*, *not applicable*, or *I have not heard of this*. The percentage of respondents who chose each response category are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Percentage of Respondents in Various Planning Activity Progress

	Completed	In progress	Plan to do within 5 yrs	No plan to do this	Not applicable	I have not heard of this
Write a will	64.4	10.7	17.8	3.9	1.1	2.1
Write Advance Medical Directive or Medical PoA	52.7	9.2	17.2	13.6	4.0	3.3
Clear title	52.2	6.9	5.5	10.6	11.3	13.5
Create Power of Attorney document	52.0	7.0	17.3	15.5	3.7	4.4
Participate in a current use/land use tax program	37.0	5.8	3.6	15.9	10.1	27.5
Create a Forest Stewardship Management Plan	11.9	6.3	5.2	24.8	4.4	47.4
Write statement about what I want	11.7	11.7	20.4	34.7	8.7	12.8
Write list of who does what	11.4	9.1	14.8	33.0	15.9	15.9
Restrict development with conservation easement	8.1	3.5	11.6	45.6	6.2	25.1
Write a Forest Property Overview	7.5	5.3	6.4	26.8	5.3	48.7

Write a will, write an advance medical directive, clear title, and *create a power of attorney document* were completed by more than half of respondents. Similarly, in the focus groups, participants linked legal documents to legacy planning. While these are important, they don't represent the activities with the strongest relationship to family forestland retention.

Nearly half of respondents had never heard of a forest management plan (47.4%) or a forest property overview (48.7%). Similarly, one-fourth of respondents had not heard of a conservation easement (25.1%) or a land use tax program (27.5%). Nearly half of respondents reported no plan to participate in a conservation easement (45.6%).

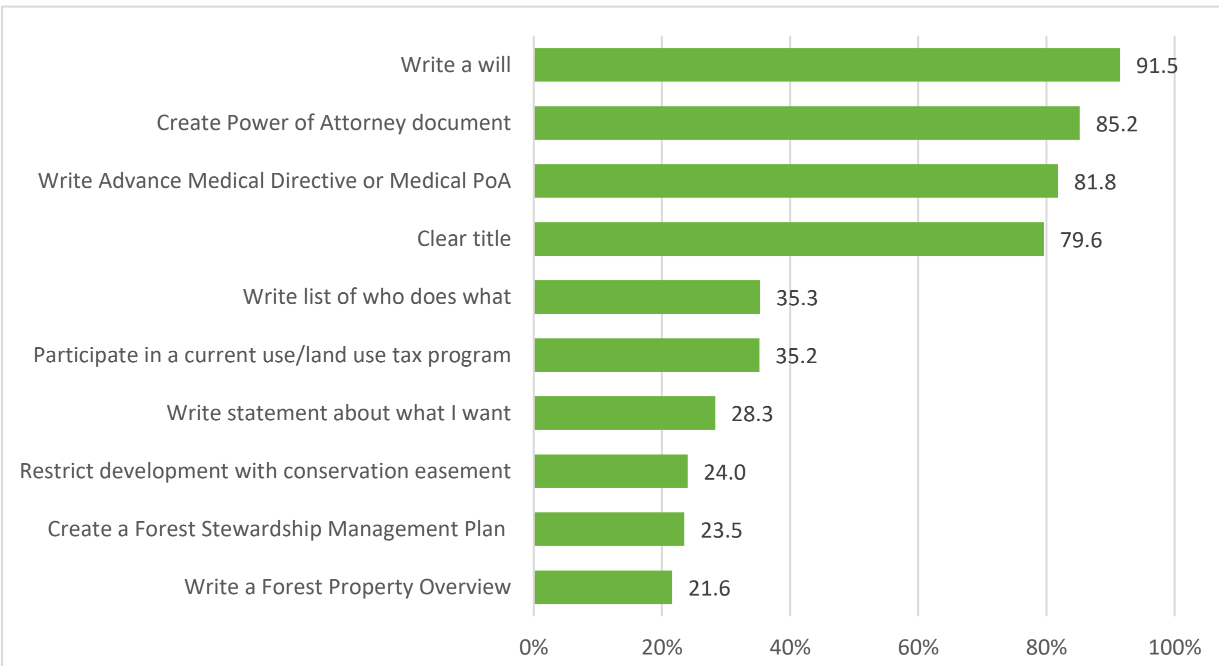
- Respondents with a forest management plan, forest property overview, and operations plan had significantly more wooded acres than those without (M=1,487 versus 312, M=2,055 versus 327, M=1,215 versus 362, respectively, p<.05).

- Respondents with a will, power of attorney, and advance medical directive had significantly more wooded acres than those without (*M*=111 versus 88, *M*=117 versus 89, *M*=115 versus 91, respectively, p<.05).
- Interestingly, there were no relationships between decision-making alone or with others or ownership individually or with a spouse, and having completed planning activities.

A Written Legacy Plan and Activities

As expected, respondents who said they had completed a written legacy plan were significantly more likely (p<.05) to have completed planning activities (except for *participation in the land-use tax program*) than those who said they had not completed a written legacy plan. However, of those who said they had a written legacy plan, many only have completed the legal activities related to planning, as opposed to the forestry activities. The percentage of respondents with a written legacy plan and each of the completed activities is displayed in the figure below.

Figure 8: Those with a Written Legacy Plan: Percentage of Respondents Who Have Completed Each Planning Activity

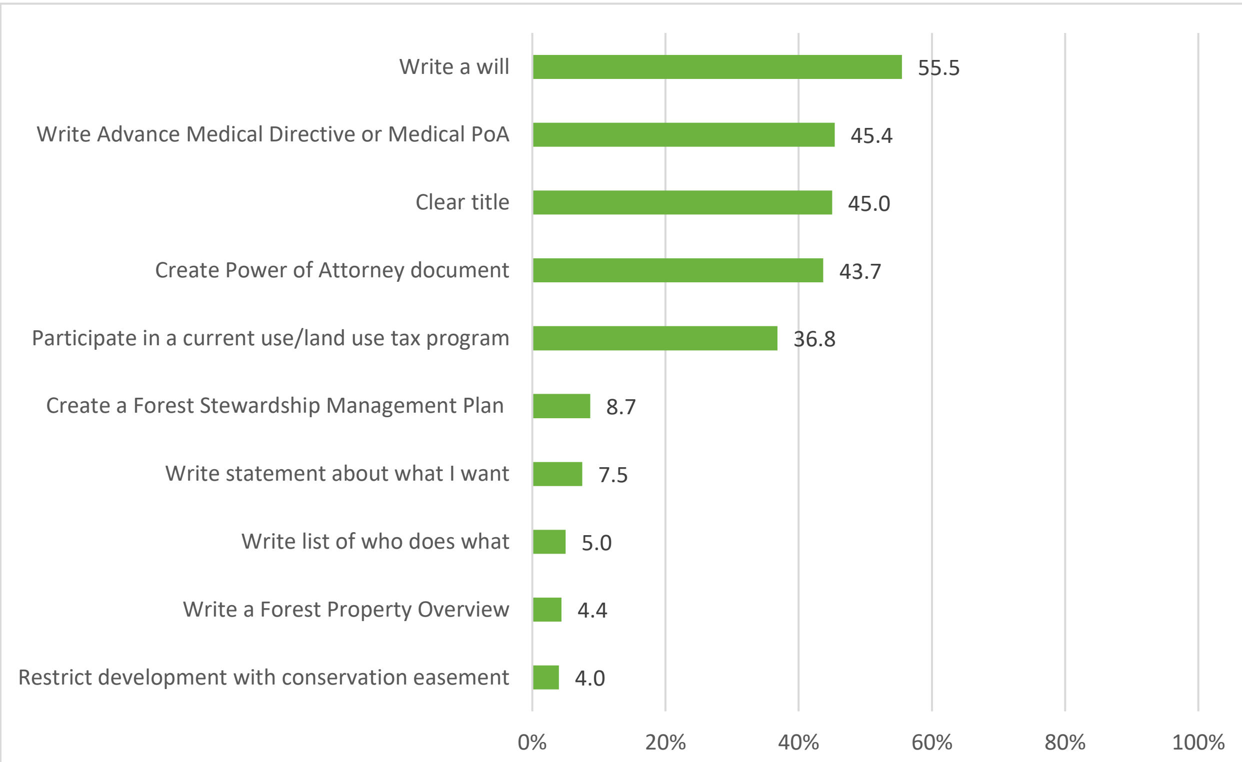


Note: p<.05 for all relationships except land-use tax.

While respondents with a written legacy plan were more likely to have the individual planning activities than those who did not have a plan, the percentage of those with legal and financial documents (*a will* (91.5%), *power of attorney* (85.2%), *advance medical directive* (81.8%), and *clear title* (79.6%)) was much higher than those with property-related activities, (*a list of who does what* (35.3%), *statement about what they want* (28.3%), *forest management plan* (23.5%) and *forest property overview* (21.6%)). This divide is evident in Figure 8, where after *clear title*, there is a significant drop off in the percentage of respondents reporting having completed the activity.

Respondents who reported they did not have a completed a written legacy plan were significantly less likely to have completed each planning activity (except for *participation in the land-use tax program*) than those who reported they had completed a written legacy plan. The percentage of respondents without a written legacy plan who have completed each planning activity is displayed in the figure below.

Figure 9: Those without Written Legacy Plan: Percentage of Respondents Who Have Completed Each Planning Activity



As mentioned previously, approximately the same percentage of respondents reported *participation in the land-use tax program*, but all other planning activities were completed at a significantly lower rate, as would be expected for those who report not having a completed plan. Overall, about half of respondents who reported not having a completed plan had done some legal activity, but less than 10% had completed the documents around land management or conservation easements. This difference demonstrates the same divide between completion of legal activities and property activities as seen in respondents who report having a completed plan.

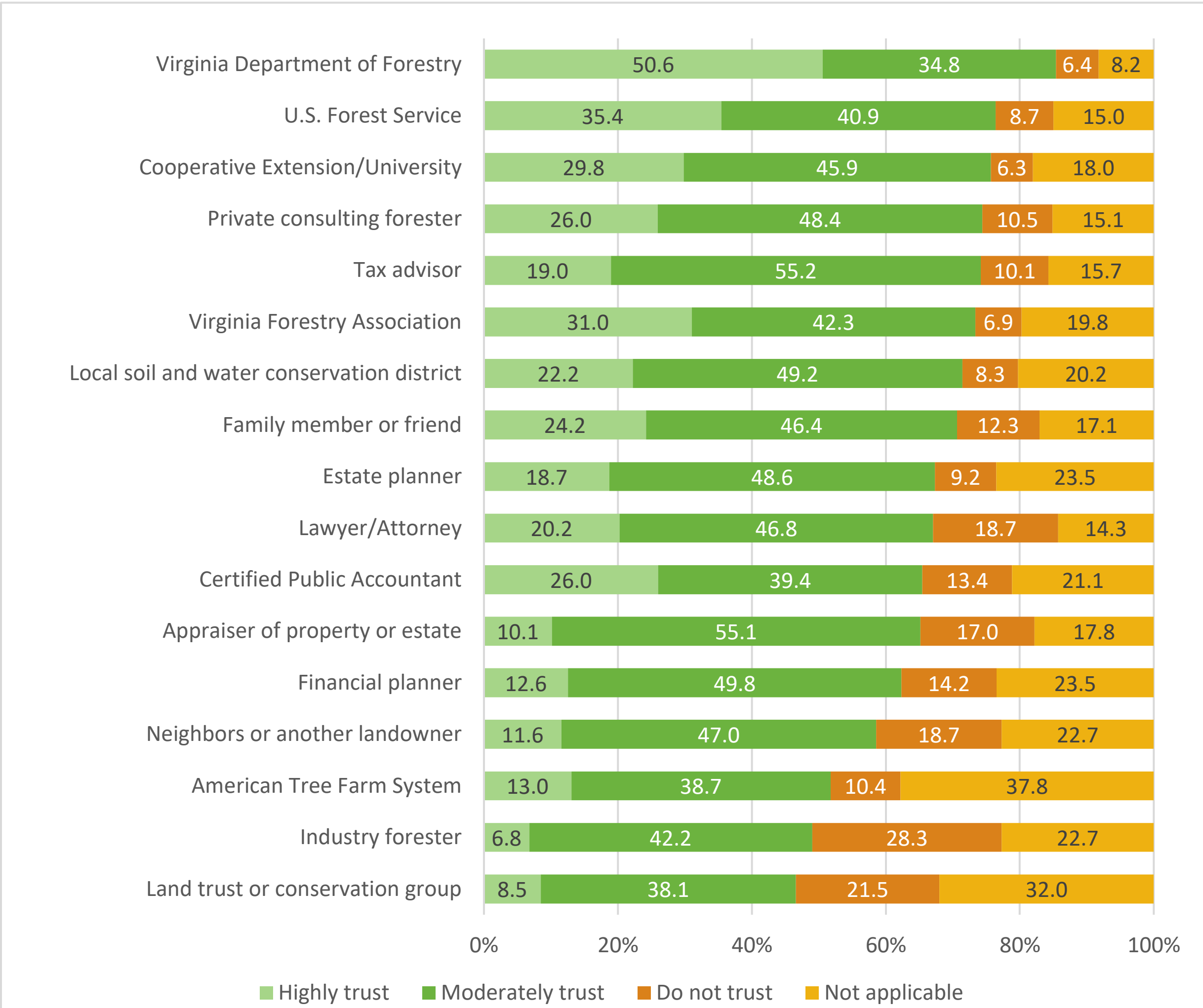
Finally, when looking at all respondents, we found the following relationships increased one's likelihood of having completed more planning activities.

- Respondents with an advanced degree reported having completed significantly more planning activities (M=4.3 versus 2.7, p<.01) than those without an advanced degree.
- Women reported having completed significantly more planning activities (M=3.8 versus 2.9, p<.01) than men.
- There was no relationship between the years the land had been in the family, conservation intentions, income, age, living on their property and the number of completed activities.

Trust

Respondents were asked to rate organizations and groups on the amount they trust them, choosing either *highly trust, moderately trust, do not trust,* or *not applicable*. The percentage of respondents that chose each answer choice is shown in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Level of Trust for Receiving Legacy Planning Information



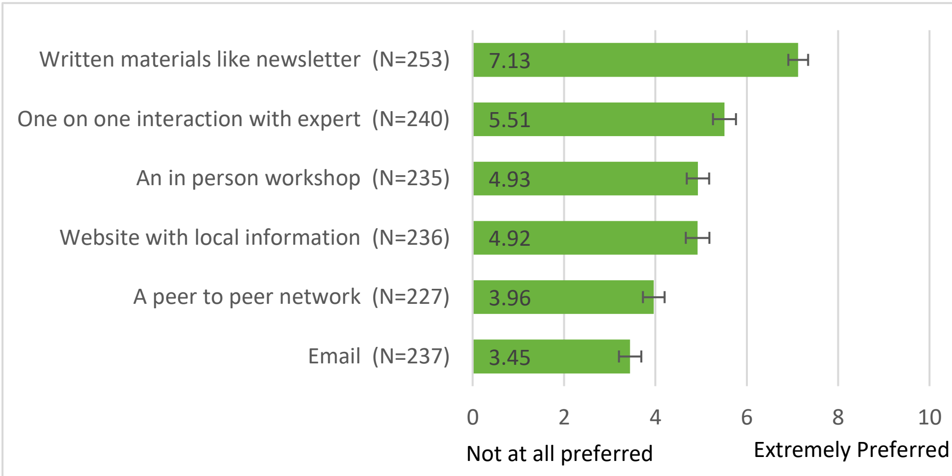
VDOF was the most trusted organization by far, with 50.6% of respondents rating it as *highly trusted*, and another 34.8% rating it as *moderately trusted*. *The US Forest Service, the Virginia Forestry Association, and Cooperative Extension* were also highly trusted, signaling that the government and local extension are optimum legacy planning messengers.

- *Industry foresters* garnered the lowest trust rating, while almost a third of respondents (32%) stated that *land trust or conservation groups* were not applicable to them.
- *Neighbors* were rated lower than expected, given the bonding displayed in the focus groups.
- Women had the same general patterns of trusted organizations as men, with two exceptions: women were more likely to say a *private consulting forester* and an *industry forester* were not applicable groups for their trust ($p<.05$)

Communication

Respondents were asked to rate a list of communication methods for which they would prefer receiving information about woodland legacy planning (0*, not at all preferred*, to 10, *extremely preferred*).

Figure 11: Landowner Communication Preferences



Overall, woodland owners rated receiving written materials statistically significantly higher than any other communication method. There was no difference in communication preferences by gender, which was not expected given other research indicating that women typically prefer face-to-face communication methods.

Term for Passing on Your Land

Respondents were asked to select a term they preferred for referring to passing on their land. While they were asked to check only one, a significant portion of respondents checked multiple terms, so the percentages do not add to 100%.

- The preferred term was *Landowner estate planning* (selected by 54.7% of respondents) and was also the preferred term in the focus groups.
- *Asset protection planning* received the next highest percentage (only 10.9% of respondents).
- Of interest is that the survey referred to the process as *legacy planning*, which was also used in several of the term options, but this did not come up as the top term, despite the number of times the respondent had read the term.
- Additionally, 3.2% of respondents wrote in "will" as their preferred term – a large enough percentage to signal that legal documents are a primary focus for landowners, as most open-ended fill in questions rarely get above 1% of respondents agreeing on a single answer.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Together, the focus groups and the survey provided breadth and depth of understanding about legacy planning. Utilizing these findings, we first present a table that summarizes each outcome and the recommendation, and then go into more depth on each recommendation. The recommendations are not listed in a specific order, but generally start with topics that had more significant and clear findings.

Table 3: Recommendations for Outreach Based on Outcomes from the Survey and Focus Groups

Outcomes	Recommendation
High percent of "Don't Know" on barriers, benefits, and activities. Reported feelings of confusion in focus groups.	**Increase Clarity on Legacy Planning Activities and Definitions.** Clarify specifics of what legacy planning is and what steps it entails to address the large amount of confusion and sense of being overwhelmed. The audience prefers written material, so consider creating an infographic or a checklist of steps.
Not wanting to lose control of decision making was highest barrier. Important topic in focus groups.	**Address Barriers: Prevent the Feeling of Losing Control.** Provide clear steps as to how to maintain control and consider additional efforts to understand what control means to landowners. Discuss control through workshops and materials that connect benefits of legacy planning with control over desired outcomes.
Fairness issues with heirs was a mid-level barrier. Family was an important topic in the focus groups.	**Address Barriers: Provide Assistance to Families.** Address how planning tools can be used to assist with fairness using a guide that links tools to specific fairness challenges. Consider additional efforts to clarify and understand what fairness means or can mean. Recommend mediation services or provide a guide for family conversations.
High rates of "don't know" responses to benefit items. Those with a plan were more likely to value peace of mind and reducing family disputes	**Increase Clarity on Benefits.** Increase motivation by demonstrating how they will benefit from increased control, asset protection, etc., through planning. Consider emphasizing peace of mind and reducing family disputes. Utilize peer landowner testimonials and stories to highlight planning benefits.
High conservation intentions ratings across all respondents.	**Leverage Positive Conservation Intentions for Outreach.** Focus on reducing barriers and enhancing benefits – leverage the existing positive conservation attitudes (keeping land intact, in forest, and in their family) to get responses to initial legacy planning messages.
Women have higher plan completion rates Women were less likely to feel not prioritizing planning was a barrier	**Leverage Women's Existing Motivation.** Women may be more motivated to complete a legacy plan, may be more likely to prioritize planning, and can be further motivated through women-focused events.
Landowners chose different preferred terms in survey and focus groups.	**Consider if Legacy is the Right Terminology.** Consider using the term "*landowner estate planning"* or conduct additional message testing to determine how to best connect with landowners in a clear and understandable way.
Tax and legal documents had highest completion rates. Changing tax laws was a mid-level barrier.	**Consider Leading with Taxes and Legal.** Employ a "foot-in-the-door" technique by leading with the areas of greatest initial interest and comfort (wills, taxes) to start landowners on the path to other components of legacy planning.
DOF, VFA, and VCE were rated highest for trust.	**Use VDOF, VFA or VCE as Messengers.** Use messengers that were rated as trustworthy when communicating with landowners or giving presentations.

Increase Clarity on Legacy Planning Activities and Definitions

In the survey, when asked which legacy planning activities a landowner had conducted, almost half had not even heard of a *forest stewardship management plan* (47.4%) or a *forest property overview* (48.7%).

Fifty-four percent don't know if legacy planning is *too expensive* and 55.9% don't know if there are *qualified professional advisors near where they live*. In relationship to the benefits of legacy planning, 63.5% don't know if it would *decrease taxes*. Based on these high percentages of don't know responses, we can say that a significant portion of respondents are lacking information about critical components of legacy planning. In addition, even the 20.8% of respondents that reported having a completed plan had not completed all of the listed activities, with approximately a third or less having completed documents such as *list of who does what* or *create a Forest Stewardship Management* Plan. Finally, this was also articulated in the focus groups when respondents described it as an *overwhelming process* and people just *want to know where to start*.

While social science research strongly demonstrates that knowledge alone does not typically lead to action, a lack of knowledge can be one important barrier to address.[5] If landowners do not know what legacy planning entails in a specific and actionable way, they cannot act. Additionally, if they don't know how it will impact or benefit them, they are unlikely to act. While landowners will likely still face barriers to acting, discussed in the *Address Barriers* section (below), knowing how to act is a crucial first step. The high level of "don't know" responses indicate that Virginia woodland owners are looking for help to fit all the pieces together and understand the complex process of planning for one's legacy. Therefore, we recommend organizations use language that is understood by the audience and create a tool or resource such as an infographic or list of steps clarifying what is involved in legacy planning and the associated barriers and benefits. For example, the list of ten activities in the survey could be a useful starting place to define what each activity is and how a landowner would complete it. While no single tool or resource could capture all the individual complexities one will face, a simple diagram that displays at least the broad steps of planning would help set the stage. The document could include the caveat that this is for illustrative purposes, and even list factors that would lead to needing a more customized process (e.g., a large number of stakeholders). Then, the landowner can know what they are getting into broadly and get into specifics regarding their own individual needs using other tools or the advice of experts, as applicable.

Address Barriers

Prevent the feeling of Losing Control of Decision-making. The idea of "losing control" came from focus group responses such as "Finances are an issue…but also loss of control" and "Once I'm gone, I can't really control it…but in reality I'd like [the land] to stay intact." For the barriers question of the survey, the top barrier to legacy planning was losing control of decision-making for their land. This barrier still rated high despite all the "don't know" responses to the other barriers and lack of clarity around what legacy planning means. While the exact reason is unknown, this idea of losing control could be related to the sense that once they have a written legacy plan, their heirs may start to take over decision-making, or that they are not sure how best to plan so that their decisions will be respected (and

[5] McKenzie-Mohr, D. (2011). Fostering sustainable behavior: An introduction to community-based social marketing. Gabriola Island, B.C: New Society Publishers.

therefore, they will lose control). They may also be grappling with the reality that, at some future point, they will no longer be here, and therefore future decisions will be beyond their control. Ironically, ways to control the future use of family land -- and what one really wants for their land -- can be supported through legacy planning. We recommend organizations discuss this issue of control with landowners through workshops and informational handouts that connect legacy planning to maintaining control. It would be best to provide them with accurate, myth-busting, up-to-date information about conservation tools, and legal options they can utilize to influence what happens on their land. Overall, it may be effective to frame legacy planning first and foremost as a tool to keep control of their land.

In addition, the fear of losing control is a phrase that clearly resonates with landowners, and while we can base our understanding of what this phrase could mean in social science research and the context of other findings from the survey and focus groups, organizations may want to do further analysis into what this phrase means to landowners. For example, is it more about discomfort handing over decision making, or is it because they don't trust any process to ensure their wishes are followed, or it is the fact that they will not always be there?

Provide Assistance to Families. Many of the focus group themes involved family – critical in the success or failure of legacy planning, life events as motivators, wanting land to stay in the bloodline and large number of heirs. This result was also shown in the mail survey as 38.1% own their land with their spouse, 17.9% own it with other family members or friends and 14.3% either had a family partnership, LLC or trust. Also, over half (52.5%) make decisions about their woodland property with at least one other person. Finally, *figuring out fairness issues with heirs* was among the top-rated barriers (M = 4.94).

There are two recommendations on how to assist families with these legacy planning issues. First, there are a variety of legal tools available to assist families in being "fair" to their heirs that can help reduce the parcelization of land which is one of the most common consequences of inadequate legacy planning or "fair" dividing of land between heirs. Programs could frame their outreach as providing unique solutions to fairness issues or create a short guide to each tool and explain how fairness challenges could be resolved by utilizing these tools.

Communication among family members is also critical for the success of legacy planning. A mid-level barrier identified in the survey was that respondents have not figured out fairness issues with their heirs. Associated with this was the high awareness that a benefit to legacy planning is ensuring the orderly transfer of land to heirs. Therefore, we recommend organizations suggest to families using mediation services to help with family conversations about legacy planning. Alternatively, organizations should develop a guide for Virginia woodland owners to facilitate these family discussions. Information provided could include focus group quotes that talk about how difficult the conversations are so landowners know their experiences are similar to other woodland owners.

Increase Clarity on Benefits

Overall, more than a third of respondents responded that they didn't know if any of the benefits would be realized by completing a woodland legacy plan. Clearly, a large portion of respondents did not understand what benefits would be realized by legacy planning. This high level of uncertainty about the benefits of legacy planning suggests that landowners may not have the motivation to act – even if the process is as simple as it can be, if landowners do not see a benefit to planning, they won't be motivated to do so. While as a whole, no benefit of planning was valued significantly more, landowners who had completed the process of having a written plan were more likely to value *providing overall peace of mind* and *reducing family disputes*. While this relationship is not necessarily causal, these may be benefits to emphasis, given that those who have completed the desired action of planning value them.

Outreach should be clear about what benefits are achieved through legacy planning and how landowners achieve those benefits through effective legacy planning that includes all the necessary activities. This communication will likely need to go beyond simply stating that a landowner will have their assets protected or peace of mind, and whenever possible, show specifically how that will happen (e.g., explain how a Forest Stewardship Management plan supports your heirs in managing the land, or include testimonials from heirs about how having a written operation plan in place helped them).

Leverage Positive Intentions for Outreach

Overall, all respondents had very positive attitudes toward keeping their land intact, in forest, and in their family, demonstrating that most landowners already value these attributes. However, those who rated conservation intentions higher were not more likely to report that they have a written plan or have completed most planning activities, and were not more likely to have lower barriers to planning. The fact that these attitudes do not directly lead to legacy planning behavior is expected, as social science research consistently demonstrates that positive attitudes and beliefs alone do not often lead to behavior change.[6] The fact that the majority of the audience already values these conservation intentions, but only one-fifth report having a legacy plan, clearly demonstrates that we must address the other barriers that prevent landowners from taking legacy planning actions, as attitudes and intentions are insufficient to instigate action. However, existing positive attitudes can be leveraged to get landowners started in the process and having a positive attitude toward conservation can help provide motivation to act. In addition, creating wide spread attitudinal change is a challenge, so demonstrating most landowners already hold these positive attitudes (a strong positive social norm) is beneficial, as organizations can focus on addressing barriers and enhancing benefits, rather than trying to generate these positive attitudes.

Leverage Women's Existing Motivation

Women may have more existing motivation to complete a legacy plan, as female respondents were more likely to report having a completed plan and having completed planning activities. While women faced similar barriers to men, there were two exceptions. Women were more likely to rate two barriers lower than men: *not being ready to act* and *there are more urgent matters to attend to*. While these were lower barriers as compared to the barriers about control and fairness issues, they are more directly related to prioritizing planning. They also had generally similar high ratings of benefits across the board as men, with one exception. Women were more likely to rate one benefit higher: *ensuring their woodland will be managed according to their wishes*. Moreover, in the focus groups, the women expressed a lot of enthusiasm for their land as something that is their own, while still facing challenges. It is important to note that these findings are correlation, not causation – women may be more highly motivated by factors that were not included in this research, and they will still need assistance with the same important barriers and challenges discussed throughout this report. Overall, we recommend

[6] McKenzie-Mohr, D. (2011). Fostering sustainable behavior: An introduction to community-based social marketing. Gabriola Island, B.C: New Society Publishers.

continuing events such as Women & Land that specifically focus on women and their needs to drive planning in households with female leadership and leverage this existing motivation.

Consider if *Legacy* is the Right Terminology

A question about terminology was asked in a small survey conducted at the focus groups and was placed in the comprehensive mail survey. In both instances the preferred term by far was *landowner estate planning*, despite using the term "legacy planning" throughout the survey and the focus groups. Therefore, we recommend considering using this new term with Virginia woodland owners instead of *legacy planning*. This finding suggests that the term "legacy" may not be resonating with landowners. While the exact reason is unknown, the results suggest some factors that could relate to this lack of attachment to this terminology. It's possible that the idea of conserving land may not resonate as strongly with landowners who have purchased their land versus through inheritance, given their shorter duration of ownership and their lower rating on importance of passing down the land to family. On the other hand, as financial and legal activities were more top of mind and more likely to be completed, landowners may feel that passing land down is more related to the legal side of the process, as opposed to stewardship of their land. If an organization wants to use the term "legacy planning," they may need to spend more time on defining and connecting that term with landowners.

As a note, the term lists for both the focus group and the survey did not use the term "succession planning," which has been used in some recent workshops to differentiate between what is done during estate planning and what constitutes a "completed plan" that addresses vision, heirs, etc. Organizations may want to do further analysis into what terms resonate, particularly given the confusion around the process all together, and if the term "succession planning" may be clearer, as this was not tested.

Consider Leading with Taxes and Legal

When conducting the focus groups, the topics of taxes and wills were top-of-mind for participants. This theme continued through to the mail survey. A mid-level barrier identified in the survey was that tax laws keep changing (5.39 out of 10), couple that with the high percentage that "don't know" if tax laws keep changing (44.6%) and those that "don't know" legacy planning can be a tax benefit (63.5%), taxes is an important topic to focus on. In the focus groups, 67% had a written will. This was similar to the mail survey results where 64.4% had completed a will and only 2.1% had never heard of a will (the lowest response for all attributes). Finally, 3.2% of respondents used the fill in section for the terminology question to note their preferred term for passing on your land was "will." Since wills are where Virginia woodland owners seem knowledgeable and motivated to complete the behavior, we recommend starting workshop discussions and information handouts with that topic and then incorporating information about the effect legacy planning has on taxes. Social science recommends using easier behaviors as a foot-in-the-door technique to then move woodland owners down a behavioral chain towards potentially more difficult, expensive or complicated actions.[7] Starting at a place of comfort and knowledge for a landowner can help motivate them to continue with legacy planning.

[7] McKenzie-Mohr, D. (2011). Fostering sustainable behavior: An introduction to community-based social marketing. Gabriola Island, B.C: New Society Publishers.

Use VDOF, VFA, or VCE as Messengers

Based on survey responses, the preferred way to receive legacy planning information would be through written material such as a newsletter. When asked who they highly trust for legacy planning information, government agencies were at the top for woodland owners - VDOF (50.6%) and the USFS (35.4%). The Virginia Forestry Association (31%) and Cooperative Extension (29.8%) were close seconds. Sometimes when this question is asked in relationship to forest management, highly trusted messengers are friends, family or neighbors. Since this isn't necessarily the case with the results of this survey, we recommend these government and non-profit agencies lead the legacy planning effort with Virginia woodland owners but incorporate ways for landowners to learn from each other as was seen in the focus groups.

Conclusion

Overall, landowners expressed positive attitudes toward keeping their land intact, in forest, and in their family, but face other barriers to legacy planning. While organizations working on legacy planning can leverage the positive conservation intentions and interest in legal and tax documents to get landowners started with planning, legacy planning is a complex process. As with most complex behaviors, there is a gap between having a positive attitude about the action, or even an intention to act, and taking action itself. Landowners may want to keep their land intact, in forest, and in their family, which is a start, but that does not necessarily mean they will plan to achieve that result. Landowners need support in understanding what it specifically means to do legacy planning, what benefits they can expect, how to have these difficult conversations with their family, and how to ensure they maintain control of what they want for their land. To overcome these barriers, organizations will need to focus on better defining the steps involved in legacy planning and motivating landowners to act by connecting legacy planning to the benefits they will obtain. In particular, by connecting how planning can be used to garner and keep control of their land is a key concept.

Lessons Learned

Based on this work, there were several lessons learned the team would like to share with others working on gathering information from rural communities.

Allot Significant time for Obtaining and Cleaning Address Lists

The biggest challenge encountered during this analysis was compiling a list of sufficient size, quality and accuracy. The list was full of inconsistent labeling, misspellings, missing fields, and other challenges. Based on working in other rural communities, this is a common issue. Moreover, demographics for addresses were either not available (such as gender or race) or not accurate (such as property size), which created a challenge in oversampling audiences of interest. These challenges are likely related to the lower than expected response rate (23%, as opposed to 30% to 50% typically seen with this surveying method). Therefore, we recommend that organizations allot a significant amount of time for acquiring and cleaning address lists.

Rural Mail Delivery

There were challenges with the rural mail system. Landowners called to report receiving both postcards before receiving a survey packet, or the mail had the right address but was delivered to the wrong address. Rural mail systems often deal with larger, spread out mail zones with complex addresses, creating an issue for accurate audience targeting and the time allotted for returning surveys. This was also likely related to the lower than expected response rate (23%, as opposed to 30% to 50% typically seen with this surveying method). We recommend organizations use a post office that is as local as possible, spot check address formatting to ensure formatting matches local conventions, and leave plenty of time for survey returns.

Appendix A: Focus Group Report

Background and Purpose

For this effort, the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) and Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) selected the Southside of Virginia because there are few landowners in this area that participate in conservation programs and the region contains large blocks of intact high conservation value forestland. The goal of the focus groups was to obtain an in-depth understanding of the issues Southside landowners face when starting or going through the legacy planning process. These qualitative findings also helped inform a quantitative survey that was sent out to 1,450 Southside woodland owners.

Three focus groups were conducted in the Southside area with the following priority audiences:

1. Woodland owners with more than 50 acres
2. African American woodland owners
3. Female woodland owners

The diversity of groups allowed for a better understanding of issues that transcend all groups, as well as specific issues faced by audiences that may be additionally underserved within the already underserved area of the Southside.

Recruitment and Locations

Recruitment for woodland owners was completed through multiple avenues. The African American participants were personally recruited by Ebonie Alexander, Executive Director of the Black Family Land Trust. The women's group was recruited from recommendations made by Heather Dowling, VDOF service forester and leader of a women woodland owners group. The remainder of the participants were recruited from lists of woodland owners that covered the 17-county area, provided by VDOF and the Conservation Management Institute (Virginia Tech). While the goal was to recruit woodland owners with at least 50 acres, in some cases those in the African American and women's group had less acreage.

Woodland Owner Attributes

Woodland owner attributes are noted below.

1. Wednesday, April 18th (6-8pm) in Wakefield, VA (African-American) – nine participants; average land size was 149 acres, with the largest 900 and the smallest 15. Based on their own definition of a completed legacy plan, two participants noted they had completed a succession plan, four had started but had not finished, and three had not taken any steps toward legacy planning.
2. Thursday, April 19th (9-11am) in Farmville, VA (General woodland owners 50+ acres) – 11 participants; average land size was 733 acres, with the largest 2,500 and the smallest 155. Based on their own definition of a completed legacy plan, five had a complete plan, one had started but not finished, and five had not taken any steps toward legacy planning.
3. Friday, April 20th (11:30am-1:30pm) in McKenney, VA (Women) – five participants; average land size was 86 acres, with the largest 288 and the smallest 15. Four of the women were African American and one was white. Based on their own definition of a completed legacy plan, all five had started but not finished a plan. During group discussion, it was apparent that one group member did have a completed plan.

Overall Themes

Participants in all three groups were engaged and provided their insights and experience. There was generous sharing among participants and a significant amount of discussion. Several themes emerged across all groups, as well as specific themes within the African American and women woodland owner groups which are all discussed below. It is important to remember that these themes reflect the viewpoints of only 25 landowners, and therefore may or may not be representative of the larger population. However, they offer a way to gather in-depth information on topics that cannot be collected through a broad research tool (e.g., survey), such as the complexity of family relationships. Additionally, the focus group process helps collect information on more novel research topics, such as the specific experience of being a female landowner. The themes below are not listed in a specific priority order, though the first four themes generated the most discussion by participants.

1. **Family is Critical**

"You have to get everybody to the table and hash it out, pleasant or not, in order to make the best decisions for this asset for the family."

"I worry whether they'll see the need and have the love of the land. I'm trying to pass on my passion and hope that their love for me will be enough to keep it."

"It's gonna get messy quick."

"[These conversations] ruin every holiday."

"An outside person changes the dynamic and improves the behavior…a facilitator can control the personal attacks and keep the conversation on track."

Across all groups, family relationships were an important component in the success or failure of legacy planning. Those who had been able to negotiate and communicate successfully with family members tended to have a more organized and planned process, while those who struggled with competing goals, low communication, and significantly larger families faced greater challenges. It is important to note that the types of issues were diverse, from concerns about children's significant others to sibling rivalry to divergent generational interests. It was clear there was no "one-size-fits-all" or even a "one-size-fits-most" approach to dealing with family.

At one end of the spectrum were parents who were successful in driving a child's interest in the land (in two groups, there was a father and child attending the group together). On the other end, parents struggled with what would happen when the land was passed down to children who they knew were no longer interested in it. In between was the "muddled middle" where participants either weren't sure where their heirs might be on this spectrum, or knew they had a mix, some heirs who were interested in the land and some who were not.

When asked what could help make legacy planning easier, one person asked the county to provide a facilitator to help with family discussions. Additionally, several participants said that succession gets more difficult when considering future generations, with one saying, "*The second generation has 20 and it gets more complicated as you go down the line."*

2. **Legacy Planning Leads with Legal and Taxes**

"Some think they own the property but they haven't been paying the taxes. Now they want this and that."

"I don't understand how they think they have a share if all these years I've been paying the taxes."

When the woodland owners discussed legacy planning, the tendency was to first discuss legal and tax related issues – wills, trusts, medical directives, appraisals, taxes and changing tax laws. Concerns about taxes played a role in driving planning, whether it was to minimize tax liability or stay current with tax laws. Discussion about taxes were pervasive across a variety of land topics, most often intertwined with family dynamics and control of the land. For example, who pays the taxes was a significant factor in determining who has rights to the land. Several woodland owners made a distinction between who is listed on the deed, who is related to them, and who actually pays the taxes, noting that paying taxes is, or should be, a determining factor on whether someone should have any say in what happens to the land.

The idea of a forest stewardship or management plan that directs what should and could be done with the land made sense conceptually to woodland owners as part of legacy planning, and some were familiar with the idea. However, this type of planning was generally not the first thing they wanted settled; rather, they wanted to focus on tax and legal planning items first. A woodland owner may also consider a plan that is formulated in their head, but not written down as "having a plan." One woodland owner pointed to his head when asked if he had a plan. The primary exception to this were the few conservation-minded woodland owners with easements on their land. These individuals more often than others mentioned working with a forester. Finally, while the discussion focused on all elements of legacy planning, the word 'plan" to some participants may have meant only a forest stewardship or management "plan," as each participant's usage of the word "plan" was not separately defined. Overall, this is a reminder of the importance of clear definitions of legacy planning.

3. **Overwhelming Process**

"Lots of people are scared and don't want to talk about it."

"What do we do, where do we start…It's overwhelming…who do you go to?"

A lot of different factors create the sense that legacy planning is overwhelming. Woodland owners seemed aware that it would be better if there was a plan, but the time and work to get to a complete plan felt daunting. Also, the process could be full of unpleasant conversations, require research to find reputable experts, entail a financial burden and involve spending time thinking about when they are no longer alive. Overall, time was a barrier from two perspectives –woodland owners know the process will be a long one, and they felt they had more time than they may actually have.

4. **Life Events are Leading Motivator**

"Failure to plan is a plan. The state will decide. Something will occur no matter what."

"We hadn't thought about [legacy planning] but our youngest is in graduate school and thinking about getting married."

"One of my brothers had a health scare…there's six of us that co-own…but at some point, you have the next generation…what do you do?"

"Seeing all the things that happened to my family…I don't want this to happen to me…they had no plan, thought the children would be okay…it just exploded."

"I just need a little push…people wait until they have to."

Woodland owners identified multiple events that had moved them toward legacy planning: death of a parent or other significant family member, a health scare, a change in a child's marital status, children growing up, and tax collection. One participant said that the motivating factor for him was "*writing a big check to the IRS for his brother's estate*."

5. **Woodland Owners Enjoy Learning from Woodland Owners**

"Have to decide what legacy planning I'm going to choose, what to do…then you have to gather all the information…and that's why activities like this [are helpful], getting together and everyone giving their views on what they've done. On your own, you're not really able to gather all this information."

Once the facilitator succeeded in engaging people in the conversation, most woodland owners had lots to share, and even asked questions to learn from each other. Once some group trust was built, the participants shared information with each other which seemed beneficial to all parties. After the sessions ended, many stayed to continue talking to each other and recommended resources to each other, such as lawyers. Woodland owners also mentioned enjoying workshops and books that allowed them to learn more about the process.

6. **In Search of Trustworthy Experts**

"*My Daddy told me, you need to put people around you who know forests."*

"Don't go to a silk stocking firm."

"There's not a lot of people who deal with what we are talking about."

"Having someone who really knows [legacy planning] and can direct you to people and give you a list of good resources – that would be wonderful to have."

Several woodland owners said they needed to find legal professionals who are trustworthy. Most woodland owners said that you would need to travel to nearby cities to find experts, but they were available. One individual mentioned that the ideal lawyer or accountant or other professional would be someone who was also a woodland owner or raised on a farm. Other participants agreed (further building on the idea that the most trustworthy person is someone seen as a peer). A number of participants asked for a contact list of experts that could help. One participant encouraged his fellow woodland owners to "*find a good lawyer on trusts and wills but first know what you want.*" Another participant mentioned that *"financial planners are not informed."* Additionally, two owners noted dissatisfaction with timber companies who, *"screwed us on the timber sale."*

7. **Fitting all the Pieces Together**

"What I'm hearing is some kind of decision tree, where when you go through the process, you start off: if the answer is yes you go there, no you go there…Basically a decision tree that would help landowners to prioritize the steps of what comes first…we're at different places on that decision tree…for future landowners or future transfer land, that's an instrument that…VDOF or Extension should give some serious thought to."

"I'm not sure where to stop."

While those who are interested in attending a focus group may be more likely to be seeking guidance, the feeling across all groups was that there was a lack of information on how this whole process fits together – is there a better place to start, or a better order in which to act? One participant suggested a decision tree that would delineate the steps in the process and various places to start, branching off toward different decisions depending on what choices are made or different circumstances (i.e., no heirs).

8. **"Plans" Tend to Stay Static**

"My grandfather had [a plan] years ago. We looked at that, and kind of still use it. It's probably from the early '50s."

"We have a forest management plan that was done back in the '90s…we have followed that."

"You gotta review [your documents] from time to time, they're not good forever."

Woodland owners, especially those who are already in the process, seemed mostly aware that forest stewardship, forest management, and succession plans need to evolve and be updated. If this updating is not being done, it is not due to lack of awareness that it should be, but rather that it is an overwhelming process, or there's uncertainty about what needs to be updated, when. Each landowner was given three cards – "I started a plan but it is not complete," "I have a complete plan," and "I have not taken any steps to plan." After some initial discussion, each landowner was asked to place the card that reflected the status of their written legacy planning documents by their name tent. Many marked their plans as completed.. However, in the ensuing discussion, participants also mentioned items they still wanted to look into. There were also admissions that plans were "*in a drawer*" and plans from the last generation were still being used. Finally, and as noted in the second theme, based on the way the word plan was used throughout the groups, it seems that landowners often have different definitions of what having a "plan" means, suggesting the importance of defining exactly what the desired steps are for a completed legacy plan from VDOF and VCE's perspective.

9. **Cost is Not Top of Mind as a Barrier**

"[Planning is] gonna cost you some money…but you get somebody who's a specialist, it'll save you headaches and money in the long term."

"*Finances are an issue…but also loss of control."*

"Legacy planning ain't cheap…but it depends on how complicated you're getting."

In a recent finding from a legacy planning survey, cost was an important barrier, with 55% of landowners agreeing with "having enough financial resources to move forward" as an important barrier.[8] However, in all three groups, cost was not a primary identified barrier. Our facilitator had to probe to get participants to talk about cost, which was then mentioned as an issue, although it did not generate much discussion. It is unclear if this relates to discomfort talking about money around people who are relative strangers or, if the literature and surveys have not fully captured the depth of challenges around family concerns (such as, it's quite difficult to capture the complexity of how a particular family situation influences legacy planning in a quantitative format). Overall, this finding suggests that despite the costs of lawyers and other professional services, there are other more pressing challenges.

10. **Benefits of Planning**

"Having a mission statement can be a legal document down the road – here is what he intended."

"A stewardship plan is a guide – it can help you."

"Once I'm gone, I can't really control it…but in reality I'd like [the land] to stay intact."

"I'd like to put down some definites [sic]… then [my kids] would have some directions, not 'all we're doing is paying taxes on this every year, we ain't getting nothing from it.'"

Overall, woodland owners said that peace of mind was a significant benefit of legacy planning. There were woodland owners who mentioned ensuring future control of the land by their family. For those who had children, they mentioned the benefit of involving children in the land and future planning, although there was a significant amount of uncertainty if the next generation would be engaged or not. Others felt that once they were gone, they didn't want to be part of directing what happens, although several woodland owners added a caveat: if the next generation wants to sell, they'll have to sell the land intact.

[8] Table 2 in Markowski-Lindsay, M., et al. (2017). Estate planning as a forest stewardship tool: A study of family land ownerships in the northeastern U.S. *Forest Policy and Economics 83;* 36–44

African American Group Themes

While the themes expressed above held true for the African American focus group, there were other additional themes.

1. **Vital for Land to Stay in the Bloodline**

"Originally we had 1100 acres and now only 42. I watched it all disappear and I told Mom, don't divide the last 42 acres … We have to hold on to it because it's the heart beat… the bloodline means a lot. "

"I'm the last one on the home place."

"I'd like to keep the land in the family…bloodline means a lot. That's basically what [legacy planning] means to me."

"Someone brought the partition suit, someone who was married into the family, someone who wasn't blood related…now it's all divided up."

Participants reported a focus on not only keeping the land in their family (which was reported in all groups), but very specifically in their own bloodline, potentially to the exclusion of family by marriage. One group member wished there was a law that gave blood relatives priority in land sales -- family members would have to give their family the opportunity to buy the land prior to it going on the open market. Related to the land staying in the bloodline, the land serves as a living history of their family, which is an important story to preserve and tell.

2. **Trusted Community Leader**

The Black Family Land Trust (BFLT) is a recognized leader in their community and will be instrumental in engaging African American woodland owners in a meaningful way. While the focus group had a potential bias, given the recruitment was conducted by Ebonie Alexander, BFLT was also mentioned by African American woodland owners in the women's group. One person in this group also mentioned that the local service forester was great, while another felt that finding experts was particularly challenging in this region.

3. **Large Number of Heirs**

"I manage 82 acres in a Family Reunion Foundation where… [when things go to a vote] there are 300-400 ballots."

"The challenges are…there are gonna be more and more people...when it's passed on to them, [my children] won't have as much land as I had…I worry whether they'll see a need to keep [the land]."

The issue of heir properties and significant numbers of people who had a say in the land (or who were heirs of small pieces of the larger property) was more common in the African American community. Only in this group did someone mention that the first step in legacy planning is to "*get the deed in your name*."

Women's Group Themes

The women's woodland owners focus group also expressed many of the themes already noted (four out of the five members were African American), as well as some additional ones.

1. **Women Want to Listen to Other Women**

"That Women in Land workshop – that got me started and off my butt.

"You get an open conversation…about anything. This group is good because you only have a few people. If you get a speaker standing up there, people are less likely to ask questions. You don't want to reveal your personal business."

"I would like to see another Women in Land workshop…I know more women who would love to come to that."

While stories are a compelling communication tool in general, women seemed particularly interested in hearing what other women had done. In all three focus groups, woodland owners were interested in speaking with each other, but in the women-only group, women seemed to be interested in sharing their stories and hearing others, and even spoke openly of how empowering it was to hear how one group member had succeeded in taking control of her land. Small group discussions were directly acknowledged as being helpful, with one woman stating that in small groups you can be honest and trust everyone there and be less afraid of looking dumb when asking a question. It was also clear that these women enjoyed relating with each other.

2. **Pride in Their Own Land**

"I just enjoy owning it…I just like knowing that it's mine."

"Taking ownership of the property now…it's important to me because of the legacy that my grandmother purchased it."

While family and history are important, women in the group also mentioned that one of the most meaningful aspects of being a woodland owner is having something that was their own, that they had control over the land and could determine what happens to it.

3. **Navigating a Male-Dominant Sector**

"You have to be a leader. Usually it's the male who runs the family…You're a woman, you just gotta take control."

"They think we don't know because we're women…you have to watch out for that."

"Whether you're widowed, single, etc., women, like you said, pick up the balls and run. If your husband dies and leaves you…you really need the information. A lot of time is taken up in calling people, asking for referrals and references."

All the women acknowledged that they were trying to succeed in a male-dominated context and noted a greater need to prove themselves. The women talked to each other about needing to overcome perceptions that they can't be leaders or decision makers because of their gender, especially when they had previously been deferring to their husband (four out of the five women were widows).

4. **Owner as Outsider**

"I acquired the land. I wasn't born there."

"I don't know what I'm morally obligated to do about [my late husband's land]. Legally it's mine, but morally. I don't want to be the nasty sister-in-law, but I've been paying taxes…on my own for 24 years."

As most land is still owned by men, female woodland owners may be more likely to come to the land through marriage, as opposed to blood relationships, and as discussed in a previous theme, this has its own challenges. Blood relatives may not accept that a woman is the legal owner. One female woodland owner in this situation was very conflicted about what her moral obligations were regarding her husband's wishes, his family's desires and what is best for the land. Even though she is the legal owner of the property after her first husband's passing, her late husband's blood relatives met to talk about what to do with the land without including her. The other women in the group reacted by supporting her and saying that she needed to decide what she wanted to do and then follow it, which seemed to be advice she had not previously been given.

Both Women and African American Group Themes

While the women and African American groups faced disparate challenges, there were some overlapping themes.

1. **Land as Life Support**

"In case health gets bad, we've got [the land]. Then when our children get our age, they can recut it…If they look at it in the long term, [my children] have something to take care of you when you get old."

While land is the primary asset for many woodland owners, the woodland owners in the African American and women groups both spoke of their land as THE critical asset. Examples were given of how your land will be what you can fall back on if things go wrong, and have nothing else to depend on. This theme was particularly strong in the women's group, as a natural pairing to the idea that one of the land's greatest benefits is that it is something that is under their control.

2. **Meet Them Where They Are**
In both groups, there were unique additional issues that were not raised in the general woodland owner group. Overall, for the African American group, there was an even stronger

focus on blood-related family lines and preserving the history of the land. There were also unique issues related to having a large number of heirs with claims to the land. For the women, there was a strong interest in hearing more stories from women as the protagonist, protecting land as their primary or only asset, and speaking with other women in a small group setting. There were also unique issues around being a woman in a male-dominated sector and inheriting the land through marriage rather than blood. Therefore, it is likely that these groups will need either their own smaller peer-to-peer workshops, or a pre-workshop with a peer leader, that can specifically acknowledge this context and assist with linking how legacy planning can address their needs.

3. **Engage Trusted Community Leaders**
   While these groups may have some bias given that they were recruited through group leaders, it is clear that these woodland owners rely on community leaders to help them plan and problem solve. Traditionally, these groups are difficult to reach and to recruit. The trust between African Americans and governmental and/or research groups is particularly low. The women reported also having negative experiences with trying to navigate a world built more for men. Overall, partnering with community leaders will create more trust with participants. Programs should not only work with community leaders to recruit woodland owners, but also include them in the development and delivery of materials and assistance. This will help ensure that programs touch on the most important issues for each specific group and reduce the feeling that someone "outside" the community is coming in to tell them what to do with their land.

Pre and Post Group Survey Responses

Each focus group started and ended with a short survey. Aggregate survey responses are below, and these results informed the subsequent mail survey.

Legacy Planning Association

Prior to the focus group starting, we asked about various words that participants relate to regarding legacy planning. The top four phrases were asset protection (58%), family trust (46%), family/heirs (46%) and future generations (46%). These results support the themes that the legal side of legacy planning is often the lead, as well as the importance of family.

Word	Percentage
Accountant	4%
Anxiety	8%
Appraiser	4%
Asset protection	58%
Attorney	13%
Communication	8%
Complicated legal issues	4%
Family disagreements	38%
Family trust	46%
Family/heirs	46%
Forest management plan	25%
Forester	8%
Future generations	46%
Gifting land	17%
House	8%
Intergenerational transfer	17%
Land	29%
Land trust	38%
Life insurance	13%
Loved one passing away	8%
Peace of mind	29%
Solidifying future vision for land	21%
Tax programs	25%
Transition planning	29%
Will	25%

Intentions for the Land

Prior to the focus group, participants were asked about future intentions for their wooded land. Three statements and the average score aggregated for all respondents between 0 (not important) and 10 (very important) are shown below.

- I want my wooded land to stay wooded = 7.7 out of 10.
- I want my wooded land to stay in my family = 9.0 out of 10.
- I want my wooded land to stay intact = 8.0 out of 10.
- Planning to ensure the orderly transfer of my wooded land is important = 9.3 out of 10

Ultimately, these ratings are from a small group of people and cannot be taken as representative findings. However, they do further support the themes that family is critical, and that people do want to plan for their future (but get overwhelmed or run into other obstacles).

Components of a Legacy Plan

We asked which components of a legacy plan had been conducted by the focus group attendees at the end of the session. The respondent percentages are below. Again, as before, these results are from a fairly small group of people – however, they partially reinforce that the highest priority elements are legal (will, power of attorney, medical directive, and title of ownership). The majority of participants did have a forest stewardship management plan and a written forest property and estate overview. Additionally, a very large percentage (81%) had title of ownership and beneficiary designations (although we don't know if that designation was to the next generation or between spouses).

1. Forest Stewardship Management Plan = 62%
2. Written forest property (& estate) overview = 48%
3. Title of ownership & beneficiary designation = 81%
4. Written list of who does what on the land = 10%
5. Written mission or vision statement = 33%
6. Legal tools/documents
    - Will = 67%
    - Power of Attorney = 57%
    - Advance Medical Directive = 62%
    - Revocable (Living) Trust Documents = 38%
    - LLC Documents = 14%
    - Partnership Documents = 10%
    - Corporation Documents = 14%

Message Testing

Finally, we asked one message testing question. Seven potential legacy planning terms were provided and participants were asked to rank their top three. The top term was "landowner estate planning," the second most preferred term was "intergenerational transfer planning," and "asset protection planning" and "legacy planning" tied for third. The term "legacy planning" coming in third is somewhat surprising, given that it had been the term used throughout the focus groups, and suggests that there may be other terms that are more preferred by woodland owners.

Appendix B: Mail Survey Materials

Pre-notification Postcard

Virginia Cooperative Extension

UPCOMING FOREST OWNER SURVEY
VIRGINA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY
VIRGINIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY

Dear Landowner,

Within the next few days, you will receive by mail a request to complete a brief survey. The survey is part of an important project being conducted on behalf of the Virginia Department of Forestry and Virginia Cooperative Extension.

You are one of a small number of landowners selected and your participation is voluntary and confidential.

When you receive your survey, please take a moment to fill it out and send it back in the envelope provided. Your confidential responses are extremely valuable to the success of this project.

If you have any questions, you are welcome to contact me.

Thank you,

Mike Santucci, Virginia Department of Forestry
(434) 220-9182

Reminder Postcard

Virginia Cooperative Extension

RECENT WOODLAND
LEGACY PLANNING SURVEY

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY

Dear Landowner,

You recently received a survey that is part of an important project being conducted on behalf of the Virginia Department of Forestry and Virginia Cooperative Extension. If you have already completed and returned the survey, thank you. If you have not completed the survey, please take the time to do so today. Your confidential responses are extremely valuable to the success of this project.

If you have any questions, you are welcome to contact me.

Thank you,

Mike Santucci, Virginia Department of Forestry
(434) 220-9182

Cover Letter

June 2018

Dear Woodland Owner,

The Virginia Department of Forestry and Virginia Cooperative Extension want to gain a better understanding of how landowners are making decisions about the future of their land. Your answers to this 2018 Woodland Legacy Planning survey, included here, are critical to help us identify and meet the needs and interests of family woodland owners like you.

We would like the owner who makes most of the decisions about your wooded land to answer the survey. Also, when responding to questions, if you own more than one wooded property in Virginia, please have them all in mind as you complete the survey.

Your responses are confidential and your participation is voluntary. The survey should take no more than 10 minutes of your time. Your opinions are important so please answer as honestly and completely as possible. When you have completed the survey, send it back in the pre-addressed, postage-paid envelope provided. We would appreciate receiving your responses in the next few days.

Thank you for taking time to complete this survey. If you have any questions or the envelope is missing, please contact either of us.

Sincerely,

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Appendix C: Mail Survey Results

Topline Percentages

2018 Woodland Legacy Planning Survey

INTRODUCTION

1. How many acres of land do you own in Virginia? Min = 23, Max = 20,000, Avg = 564.3 acres

2. Of those acres (in #1), about how many wooded acres do you own in Virginia? Min = 20, Max = 20,000, Avg = 428.4 acres

Wooded land does not include Christmas tree farms, orchards or nurseries, or land that is mowed for lawn.

* **3.** Of the property or properties included above, do you (check all that apply):

77.3 Live on your property,

24.1 Live within one mile of your property, or

39.5 Live more than one mile away from your property?

*Percentages will not add to 100%

* **4.** Which category best describes your ownership? (Check one.)

36.4 Individual

38.1 Joint, with spouse

17.9 Joint, with other family members or friends

8.3 Family partnership or family LLC or LLP

6.0 Family trust or estate

1.7 Corporation or business

Other (please specify) ________________________________

* **5.** Who makes decisions about your woodland property? (Check one.)

47.8 I decide alone

52.5 I decide together with at least one other person

0.3 Other (please specify)

* **6.** How did you get your wooded land in Virginia? (Check all that apply.)

71.4 Purchased ➤ In what year did you purchase your land? 1949 - 2018, Avg ownership = 28 years

54.8 Inherited ➤ How long has the property been in your family? Min = 5, Max = 373, Avg = 103 years

2.3 Other (please specify)

7. Circle a number from 0 (*strongly disagree)* to 10 (*strongly agree),* or check *Don't know* for each statement below.

I want my land to:	Mean	0 (Strongly disagree)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 (Strongly agree)	Don't know
a. Stay intact and not be broken up into smaller parcels.	8.76	1.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	7.7	2.1	2.8	10.1	3.5	64.0	5.3
b. Stay wooded.	8.38	1.4	0.0	0.7	0.7	0.3	10.0	6.6	6.2	13.8	3.8	50.5	6.0
c. Stay in the family.	8.87	2.4	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.0	6.8	1.0	3.1	6.8	5.5	67.1	5.2

WOODLAND LEGACY PLANNING

The Virginia Department of Forestry and Virginia Cooperative Extension define *woodland legacy planning* as the ongoing process of engaging and educating the next generation to transfer the values of family and land stewardship associated with your property. It also includes preparing for a change in ownership using available legal, financial, and conservation tools.

8. I have a completed **written** legacy plan for my land. 20.8 Yes 79.2 No

9. Circle a number from 0 (*strongly disagree)* to 10 (*strongly agree),* or check *Don't know* for each statement below.

Woodland legacy planning is difficult because:	Mean	0 (Strongly disagree)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 (Strongly agree)	Don't know
a. It is too expensive.	4.41	4.1	4.8	3.3	4.8	3.0	11.2	5.2	3.0	3.3	0.4	2.6	54.3
b. There are no qualified professional advisors near where I live.	3.84	7.8	6.3	2.6	6.3	1.9	8.5	1.5	2.2	2.2	1.5	3.3	55.9
c. I do not have time.	4.03	11.0	11.8	6.1	6.8	3.4	12.5	4.9	3.8	4.9	0.9	7.2	26.7
d. I haven't figured out fairness issues with heirs.	4.94	13.9	8.2	4.5	3.7	0.7	11.6	3.0	3.4	9.4	4.5	12.7	24.4
e. My family members live too far away.	2.87	29.1	14.7	7.2	6.4	2.6	6.4	1.1	1.9	4.2	2.6	7.2	16.6
f. There is lack of cooperation among family members.	2.53	30.2	16.2	4.9	6.8	3.4	5.7	1.5	1.1	3.8	2.6	4.5	19.3
g. There are too many family members involved.	2.26	35.2	16.9	7.5	4.5	2.6	5.2	2.6	1.5	3.4	2.2	3.7	14.7
h. It is too complicated.	3.34	20.2	11.5	4.2	5.0	4.2	8.0	1.9	3.1	5.3	1.1	5.7	29.8
i. I don't know where to start.	4.76	18.5	7.2	3.4	5.7	3.0	7.5	1.5	1.5	6.8	4.9	16.6	23.4
j. I am not ready to act.	4.89	14.7	10.6	2.6	4.9	2.3	11.3	3.4	3.8	6.0	4.2	16.2	20.0
k. I have no heirs.	1.26	50.2	21.2	3.1	1.9	0.4	2.7	1.2	0.0	0.4	0.4	4.6	13.9
l. There is a lack of educational programs in my area to help me.	4.35	9.8	6.8	1.9	3.8	3.8	8.3	4.2	2.7	3.4	2.3	6.1	46.9
m. The tax laws keep changing.	5.39	6.8	4.9	2.3	4.5	1.1	9.4	4.9	2.3	5.3	3.0	10.9	44.6
n. There are more urgent matters I need to attend to.	4.72	12.8	10.2	4.2	2.6	1.5	18.1	7.2	4.2	9.1	4.2	8.3	17.6
o. I don't want to lose control of the decision making for the property.	6.87	6.3	7.4	2.9	2.9	1.8	7.7	3.7	2.9	6.6	4.0	37.9	15.9
p. Other (please specify)													

10. Circle a number from 0 (*strongly disagree)* to 10 (*strongly agree),* or check *Don't know* for each statement below.

Woodland legacy planning benefits include:	Mean	0 (Strongly disagree)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 (Strongly agree)	Don't know
a. Decreased taxes.	7.27	1.1	1.1	1.1	0.7	0.7	6.3	1.1	4.8	4.1	1.8	13.7	63.5
b. Ensuring my wooded land will be managed according to my wishes.	7.66	0.7	1.5	0.7	0.0	0.4	9.7	4.8	6.3	7.8	3.3	22.3	42.5
c. Ensuring my wooded land will stay in my family.	7.99	2.6	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	7.4	3.0	4.1	8.1	4.4	28.1	40.7
d. Ensuring my wooded land will stay intact.	7.87	1.1	0.7	0.4	1.5	1.1	9.1	3.6	4.4	6.9	4.7	27.0	39.5
e. Ensuring the orderly transfer of my wooded land to my heirs.	8.31	2.2	1.1	0.4	0.4	0.0	5.5	3.3	2.9	7.3	5.1	34.8	37.0
f. Providing asset protection.	8.05	1.9	1.5	0.7	0.0	0.0	5.2	3.7	3.7	5.9	5.6	26.8	45.0
g. Providing overall peace of mind.	8.20	1.8	1.5	0.4	0.0	0.4	5.9	3.0	3.7	8.5	5.9	31.4	37.5
h. Reducing family disputes.	7.61	5.0	1.9	0.8	0.4	0.8	5.0	2.3	4.6	4.6	5.4	29.1	40.1

TURN OVER →

i. Other (please specify)

11. Which of the following activities, if any, have you done or plan to do?

	Completed	In progress	Plan to do within 5 years	No plan to do this	Not applicable	I haven't heard of this
a. Create a Forest Stewardship Management Plan or equivalent like Tree Farm Plan or CAP 106.	11.9	6.3	5.2	24.8	4.4	47.4
b. Write a Forest Property Overview to include acres, tax parcels, land use history.	7.5	5.3	6.4	26.8	5.3	48.7
c. Clear title to help ensure land ownership can be transferred.	52.2	6.9	5.5	10.6	11.3	13.5
d. Write down a list of who does what on the land (i.e., operations plan).	11.3	9.1	14.8	33.0	15.9	15.9
e. Write a statement for the family about what I want for the land.	11.7	11.7	20.4	34.7	8.7	12.8
f. Write a will.	64.4	10.7	17.8	3.9	1.1	2.1
g. Create a Power of Attorney document.	52.1	7.0	17.3	15.5	3.7	4.4
h. Write an Advance Medical Directive or Medical Power of Attorney and Living Will.	52.7	9.2	17.2	13.6	4.0	3.3
i. Restrict development with conservation easement or other option.	8.0	3.5	11.6	45.6	6.2	25.1
j. Participate in a current use/land use tax program.	37.1	5.8	3.6	15.9	10.1	27.5

RESOURCES ABOUT WOODLAND LEGACY PLANNING

12. How would you prefer to receive woodland legacy planning information?

Circle a number from 0 (*not at all preferred*) to 10 (*extremely preferred),* or *Don't know* for each statement below.

Format preference:	Mean	0 (Not at all preferred)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 (Extremely preferred)	Don't know
a. Written materials such as a newsletter	7.13	11.3	0.7	2.5	0.7	1.5	9.5	5.1	4.7	10.9	7.3	37.8	8.0
b. Email	3.45	36.0	7.8	6.6	4.3	2.7	6.2	3.9	4.3	5.8	1.9	12.4	8.1
c. A website with local resources, tips, and events	4.92	26.9	4.3	3.9	1.6	1.2	8.2	5.9	8.2	8.2	5.1	18.8	7.7
d. An in-person workshop	4.93	22.9	3.4	3.1	3.4	3.8	13.4	5.0	5.0	8.4	5.0	16.4	10.2
e. A peer-to-peer network to meet similar woodland owners	3.96	28.2	3.9	4.2	5.8	2.7	15.1	5.0	4.6	4.6	3.1	10.4	12.4
f. One-on-one interaction with an expert on my land or at my home (e.g., forester, financial planner)	5.51	21.1	3.4	1.9	2.3	2.6	12.4	6.0	4.9	6.0	4.5	25.2	9.7

* **13.** Which term do you prefer from those listed below to refer to passing on your land? (Check only one.)

10.9	Asset protection planning	54.7	Landowner estate planning
7.3	Conservation-based estate planning	5.3	Legacy planning
0.8	Conservation legacy planning	7.3	Woodland legacy planning
7.3	Intergenerational transfer planning	2.8	Woodland legacy-based planning
8.1	Other (please specify)	2.8	Woodland legacy-based planning

14. Please indicate the extent to which you trust the following for information about woodland legacy planning.

	Highly trust	Moderately trust	Do not trust	Not applicable
a. American Tree Farm System	13.0	38.7	10.4	37.8
b. Appraiser of property or estate	10.1	55.1	17.0	17.8
c. Certified Public Accountant	26.0	39.4	13.4	21.1
d. Cooperative Extension/University	29.8	45.9	6.3	18.0
e. Estate planner	18.7	48.6	9.2	23.5
f. Family member or friend	24.2	46.4	12.3	17.1
g. Financial planner	12.6	49.8	14.2	23.5
h. Industry forester (one who works for a paper or saw mill)	6.8	42.2	28.3	22.7
i. Lawyer/Attorney	20.2	46.8	18.7	14.3
j. Land trust or conservation group (e.g., Black Family Land Trust, Virginia Outdoors Foundation)	8.5	38.1	21.5	32.0
k. Local soil and water conservation district	22.2	49.2	8.3	22.2
l. Neighbors or another landowner	11.6	47.0	18.7	22.7
m. Private consulting forester	26.0	48.4	10.5	15.1
n. Tax advisor	19.0	55.2	10.1	15.7
o. U.S. Forest Service	35.4	40.9	8.7	15.0
p. Virginia Department of Forestry	50.6	34.8	6.4	8.2
q. Virginia Forestry Association	31.0	42.3	6.9	19.8

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

15. In what year were you born? Min age = 31, Max age= 97, Avg age = 67.1 years

16. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?

4.7 Less than 12th grade
22.4 High school/GED
19.0 Some college
9.5 Associate degree
26.4 Bachelor's degree
18.0 Advanced degree

17. What is your gender? Male = 77.7, Female = 22.3

18. Are you of Hispanic or Latino origin? 0.7 Yes 99.3 No

* **19.** What is your ethnic identity or race?

0.7 American Indian or Alaska Native
* 0.3 Asian
3.1 Black or African American
0.3 Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
96.2 White
0.3 Other (please specify) ___________________________________

20. What is your total annual household income?

10.1 Under $25,000
19.0 $25,000 to under $50,000
19.4 $50,000 to under $75,000
17.8 $75,000 to under $100,000
19.7 $100,000 to under $150,000
14.0 Over $150,000