

:foreststewardshipnotes

Storm damage in Ferry County; Landowners' responses can prevent future problems

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Broken trees and logs near Keller, Washington—July 2012. Photo: Karen Ripley/DNR. Photo: Karen Ripley/DNR

On the afternoon of July 19, 2012, a severe storm moved north along the San Poil River valley from the Columbia River into Canada. Its track closely followed State Highway 21, and passed the communities of Keller, Republic and Curlew. Bursts of wind were reported to have exceeded 100 mph. One woman was killed by falling timber, the entire county's power distribution system was damaged, and numerous trees across hundreds of acres were pushed over, bent or broken.

In the aftermath of the storm, many forest landowners were concerned about forest health issues associated with the damaged trees. An initial

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September 15, Carnation

Forest Health Workshop

October 6, Everett

Wind Damage Workshop

November 6, Preston

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assessment of storm damage can help quantify the impact and shed light on

long
wood

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concerns or motivate rapid action. This article documents some of the advice and recommendations provided to the affected landowners in the aftermath of this and other storm events.

Assessments

Walk your property to observe and note the numbers, species, and sizes of damaged trees. By observing how the trees failed, you may be able to learn more about the site or stand conditions, and prevent or correct similar deficiencies in the future. For example, if a tree has strong, abundant roots, but simply was blown over, it's called a "soil failure." This can indicate shallow soils or a high water table. In the future, it will always be important to avoid activities that might compact or damage these soils further and to thin conservatively on such sites.

When a tree breaks off along its trunk, it's called a "stem failure." Examine that tree to identify whether it had a large height-to-diameter ratio (it was too skinny); broke at a defective area such as a wound, decay pocket, or double top; or simply broke due to extremely powerful winds. Employ practices that prevent stem weakness or defects in the future.

When a tree topples over but the roots were missing, sparse, weakened or decayed, it's called a "root failure." Definitely look more closely to discern whether diseased (rotten) or damaged roots contributed to the failure. If a root disease is present, it's critical to identify which root killing fungus is present and to adjust management practices to avoid additional, continuing effects.

Use these observations to help adjust your techniques, strengthen the wind-resistance of your forest, and pursue your long-term management plan and objectives over time.

Response

Because Ferry County's pine and Douglas-fir forests are quite fire-prone, most landowners are also evaluating methods and opportunities to salvage or remove tree debris. They are concerned about the potential for insects to

HELPFUL PUBLICATIONS,

Blog at WordPress.com. Theme: Coraline.

[FNW630 – BASIC Forest Inventory Techniques for Family Forest Owners](#)

A newly published comprehensive guide to measuring trees. Includes diagrams, photos, links to online videos, and step-by-step instructions and applications for a variety of forest measurement tools, plus tables for volume and other important metrics.

[EMO44 – Diversifying Forest Structure to Promote Wildlife Biodiversity in Western Washington Forests](#)

If wildlife biodiversity is a goal for your forest, download this free publication. Hard copies available for a nominal printing fee.

[One Voice for Working Forests](#) is a blog from the Washington Forest Protection Association (WFPA) that "seeks to unite those who recognize the many benefits that working forests provide."

ALSO IN THE NEWS

[Family Forest Fish Passage Program has funds: seeks more projects](#)

[New forest practice fees bring new forms \(required after September 1, 2012\)](#)

[Washington State Tree Farm Program award to DNR forester](#)

HELPFUL LINKS

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- [Washington Farm Forestry](#)
- [Washington Tree Farm Program](#)
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Broken Douglas-fir tree reveals extensive decay from brown cubical butt rot *Phaeolus schweinitzii*. Photo: Karen Ripley/DNR

multiply in the downed material, threatening their surviving trees. They also are concerned about how quickly stain, decay and insect tunnels might degrade the value of products they could potentially salvage.

The storm occurred on July 19.

That's generally past the time that

would be favorable for insects such as the Douglas-fir beetle and Ips engraver beetles that would potentially use this material and breed into sufficient numbers to kill nearby uninjured trees.

However, there will likely be an immediate influx of several types of beetles attracted to fallen and injured trees. Bark beetles such as the mountain pine beetle, western pine beetle and Ips beetles will quickly be attracted to injured and fallen pines. They are likely to kill some weak trees with large bark wounds or less than 30 percent live crown remaining. They, and other wood-boring insects such as long-horned and metallic wood-boring beetles, are also likely to carry blue-staining fungi beneath the bark of the trees they tunnel into. With summer's favorable temperature conditions, this discoloration can affect a large volume of the sapwood within a few weeks. Blue stain severely degrades the salvage value of pine sawlogs that might have been manufactured into visual-grade wood products. Landowners who intend to salvage timber, especially pine sawlogs, should act quickly. Stain generally develops more slowly in Douglas-fir and the resulting defect is less critical in the products typically manufactured from it, but the timber buyer has the ultimate say in what's acceptable or not.

In some areas, firewood will be a reasonable use of the damaged trees.

Firewood cutters should avoid the temptation to "crib" logs cut from freshly killed trees between surviving trees. Although this looks tidy, it often results in the death of the supporting trees because large numbers of beetles intent

on invading the fresh, attractive-smelling firewood also blunder into the live trees and overwhelm their defenses.

The forest landowners of Ferry County who suffered storm damage can't be delighted about this event. However, it does present them with opportunities to look more closely at their site and forest conditions. If a management entry is needed, it's a chance to move forward with long-term stewardship goals. Every entry is a good opportunity to choose what to leave (healthy, well-spaced trees of durable species for the site conditions) as well as what can be salvaged or must be cleaned up.

By Karen Ripley

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Forest Stewardship Coached Planning Courses: Fall classes scheduled

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Forest managers on a recent field tour share information about controlling bear damage to their trees. Small forest landowners can learn the latest forest management techniques at a Forest Stewardship Coached Planning Course. Photo: DNR.

Our flagship course — Forest Stewardship Coached Planning — teaches forest landowners how to prepare their own forest stewardship plan with guidance and “coaching” from natural resource professionals. A written stewardship plan may qualify you for property tax reductions and cost-share assistance. You will also learn how to keep your forest healthy and productive, attract more wildlife, and achieve your specific ownership objectives.

Vashon: October 3 – November 28. After a long absence, we are happy to be returning to Vashon Island this fall. Classes will be on Wednesday evenings at the Vashon Land Trust Building, and there will be two Saturday field trips. Details and registration information are available on the [WSU Extension-Snohomish County website](#) or by calling 425-357-6017.

Bellevue: October 4 – December 6. Our fall class will be on Thursday evenings in southeast Bellevue this year at the Lewis Creek Park Visitor Center. This is a smaller facility, so space is more limited this year than usual. Since we’ve always sold out in the past (with more space), be sure to reserve your spot early for this class. Also, special discounted rates are available for City of Bellevue residents. Details and registration information are available on the [WSU Extension-Snohomish County website](#) or by calling 425-357-6017.

And save the dates for these Coached Planning classes in 2013:

- Online (for Western Washington properties) on Wednesdays: January 16 – February 27, or
- Everett on Thursdays: February 28 – April 25

Check your [local WSU Extension office website](#) for more classes.

By Kevin W. Zobrist

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Stink 'friends' (not stink bugs)

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A western conifer seed bug (*Leptoglossis occidentalis*).

One of the early signs of fall in our household is the first appearance of a western conifer seed bug on a windowsill inside. In years when the population of this insect is booming (especially inside our houses, it seems) our WSU Master Gardener

clinics and our Extension office phones are ringing with questions about them—usually from people new to forest living.

Their frantic buzz as they fly around lights and the flash of yellow and black are a bit heart-stopping. But these bugs have no stingers, do not spoil our foodstuffs nor destroy our dwellings. They just like to share our winter quarters... When they land you can see the flattened band on the hindmost legs that puts them in the leaf-footed bug family.

Many people call them stink bugs (for reasons easily discovered when handling them) but entomologists reserve that name for a different family. The Latin name for the western conifer seed bug is *Leptoglossus occidentalis*, meaning “western narrow-tongue”. That tongue is used to suck the juices out of the seeds growing in cones of as many as 30 species of trees. They are considered a pest in seed orchards where selected trees are maintained for their annual cone crop.

Conifer seed bugs mate and lay their small barrel-shaped eggs on foliage in mid- to late spring. They hatch after about 2-1/2 weeks of development and feed on maturing cones in treetops throughout the summer, becoming adults in late August. As temperatures drop during the fall and early winter, the adults look for a dry over-wintering location where they go into a state of torpor until spring. Favorite spots are under peeled bark and in bird and rodent nests.

Obviously, some of these bugs have higher ambitions for winter lodgings

than rodent nests, and choose our houses instead. In the fall when they sometimes aggregate on the south-facing walls of houses in large numbers, you may be able to simply hose them off with water or attack them with a shop vac. No insecticide is registered for inside use on them. Most advice runs along the lines of preventing entry by sealing cracks around windows and doors. But I'm here to tell you that after 25 years of sustained efforts with a caulking gun, I still can sometimes find a dozen bugs flying around inside on a sunny winter day.

My husband once suggested that it might be easier to change my attitude toward the bugs than to successfully fortify our house. Joining in this spin campaign, our kids renamed them "stink friends". I once found a toy airplane where several bugs had even been enlisted as passengers. Nowadays, they'd have been stopped for carrying concealed chemical weapons.

The chemical the conifer seed bugs release is hexanal, and it functions as an alarm pheromone to communicate the presence of a threat and to repel predators. However there are several heroes of our winter woods who eat these bugs with gusto, including flickers, gray and Steller's jays, chestnut-backed chickadees and hairy woodpeckers. We evict our bugs into the snow bank outside our window where they are immobilized by the cold and provide us entertainment as the birds discover them. Free birdfeed—now there is a positive spin. For mass collecting from those sunny windows, hold a square-sided plastic container firmly to the glass below them and dislodge them with a gentle tap. Some folks find the hand-held vacuum cleaners a nifty solution. Or if you're feeling brave, grasp firmly by the antenna and fling quickly out the door.

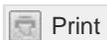
Stink friends were once limited to the Rocky Mountains, but their range seems to be spreading rapidly. Extension offices all the way to New England are starting to get inquiries about these household visitors—and their advice is along the lines of what I dispense: "Oh, you have stinkbugs...? Aren't you lucky to live in a forest!"

Carol Mack

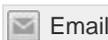
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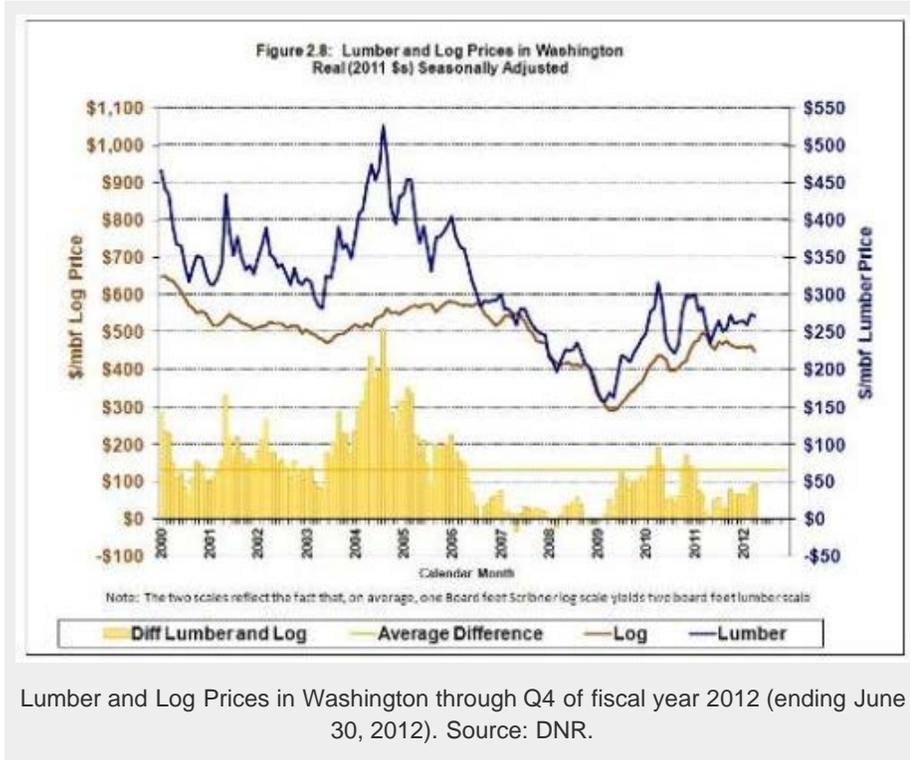
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Lumber, log and housing markets

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Log and Lumber Prices. Pacific Northwest log prices continue to hold relatively steady, with the price for a “typical” DNR log delivered to the mill averaging \$475/mbf over the first five months of 2012, down slightly from an average of \$481/mbf for all of 2011. West Coast lumber prices are up a little from last year, with the Random Lengths’ Coast Dry Random and Stud composite lumber price averaging \$282/mbf for the first four months of 2012, compared with an average of \$270/mbf for all of 2011.

Housing. Many U.S. housing market experts think that nominal housing prices are bottoming out. New home sales continue to be at historically low levels but new housing starts are finally creeping up from the historically low and flat level they have been in for the last three years. New home completions and sales will not increase significantly until the excess supply of existing homes, including those in the foreclosure pipeline, is absorbed. Reducing the inventory (supply) is a necessary part of restoring the U.S. housing market because it will contribute to the need for new houses to be built. The fragile economy still faces serious challenges, including high numbers of unemployed workers and foreclosed residential properties, which will weigh down the housing market for years to come.

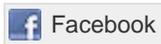
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Forester's Notes: Thinning

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Not being a forest owner myself means that I will never fully understand the challenges that you face in stewarding your land. It is true that I have expertise and experience in forest management, and I can give you sound advice.

However, while I may understand the technical aspect of things, there's a more human aspect that also needs to be considered.

I've been pondering this while working in my garden this summer. I have been trying to cultivate more of a green thumb. I tried last year to grow various vegetables, but with poor success. Why? Because I tried to produce more than my small plot of dirt could support, and I left plants crammed too close together. You can probably already see where I'm going with this.

This year I am determined to be successful, and I've gone all-out. I had the soil tested and amended accordingly. I have carefully selected seeds and starts, used proper amounts of fertilizer, been watering diligently when needed (but not too much), and even inoculated my young plants with mycorrhizae to naturally improve success and soil flora. But still my success ultimately comes down to spacing.

When it came time to thin my tender sprouts and shoots, it was very difficult for me to take a bunch of these plants that I had nurtured and labored over and rip them up and discard them. Even though I knew it was the right thing to do and that it was not really wasteful at all, I still had trouble. And then there were the decisions of which ones to take, and which to leave. I tried to leave the best ones, but that often meant leaving certain individual plants spaced too close together, forcing me to balance even spacing with selection of the best specimens.

I bit the bullet and completed my thinning. Then some of the ones I had left to grow died, leaving gaps in my rows. "If only I had left a different one," I would think to myself. In other areas I would finally get things growing well and correctly spaced, only to have some of my best specimens wiped out by marauding slugs.

Does all of this sound familiar? I thought it might. Here I felt a little bit of anguish trying to thin onion starts and carrot sprouts, which really only involved minimal effort and expense to establish (and if they do not succeed, it really is not big deal). So I can only imagine what it is like for you with your trees, which take so much time and effort to establish for a long-term and fairly high-stakes endeavor.

So I am imagining that when I encourage you to do things like thin your forest, or tolerate sporadic mortality for the sake of wildlife, or give similar management advice, your internal response may be something along the lines of "Easy for him to say." While my advice will not change in this regard (these are still the right things to do!), I am trying to develop a better understanding of the human factors and emotions that go along with these decisions.

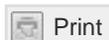
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New online classes

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The response from participants who have taken our new online classes at Forest Stewardship University has been overwhelmingly positive. We've now added three key new classes to the lineup:

- Forest Stand Dynamics in Western Washington
- Eastern Washington Forest Diseases
- Western Washington Forest Diseases

These three new classes have also allowed us to create three new packages:

Introduction to Forest Management in Western Washington

(includes forest stand dynamics in Western Washington and forest management and silviculture primer)

Forest Health in Western Washington (includes forest health concepts, Western Washington forest diseases, forest insects in Western Washington, and abiotic forest diseases).

Forest Health in Eastern Washington (includes forest health concepts, Eastern Washington forest diseases, forest insects in Eastern Washington, and abiotic forest diseases).

Also, we've increased the amount of time to access each class from 30 days to a guaranteed minimum of one year. To sign up for these and other online workshops (there are 24 to choose from right now, with more still in the works), [visit WSU Extension's Forestry Stewardship University online](#)

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Fall forestry workshops

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FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE WORKSHOP

September 15, Carnation

Join Washington State Department of Natural Resources Forest Stewardship Wildlife Biologist Jim Bottorff for an in-depth workshop on forestry and wildlife. Topics covered will include understanding forest wildlife habitat, protecting and enhancing habitat during forest management activities, providing supplemental habitat (e.g. nest boxes), and controlling wildlife damage to trees. Registration is open but space is limited. Details and registration information are on the [WSU-Snohomish County Extension website](#) or by calling 425-357-6017.

FOREST HEALTH WORKSHOP

October 6, Everett

Join Washington State Department of Natural Resources forest health specialists for an in-depth workshop on forest health. Topics covered will include forest health concepts and issues, Western Washington forest insects, Western Washington forest diseases, and abiotic impacts (e.g. drought, pollution, storm damage). Registration is open but space is limited. Details and registration information are available on the [WSU-Snohomish County Extension website](#) or by calling 425-357-6017.

WIND DAMAGE WORKSHOP

November 6, Preston

Join us this fall as we get into our windy season to learn about how to properly care for your trees and your forest before (prevention) and after (clean-up) a windstorm. This is a reprise of the popular workshop we did last year. Registration is open but space is limited. Details and registration information are available at the [WSU-Snohomish County Extension website](#) or by calling 425-357-6017.

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