

The Renewable Resources Extension Act (RREA) at University of Maryland Cooperative Extension

RREA programs help Maryland's diverse makeup of forest landowners to make sound forest stewardship decisions, provide education for the professionals, and encourage mutually beneficial relationships with the forest products industry. RREA funds are leveraged with other funds to engage a number of partners in program delivery. In educational programs by Maryland Cooperative, each RREA dollar is leveraged with \$5 of state, private, or local funds. In the past year from October 1, 2005 through September 30, 2006, RREA funds were used as described below. Information on these and other program is available at www.naturalresources.umd.edu.

∞ **Maryland Coverts Project** is a forest wildlife volunteer program that educates 20-25 forest landowners each year about sound forest stewardship in a 3.5 day workshop. Since 1990, 385 volunteers have been trained that own a total of 69,161 acres. In 2006, 20 cooperators were trained with a total of 709 acres. Annual survey of only 63 past volunteers in 2005 reported 2,140 personal contacts by volunteers in last year and 35% reported other property owners sought professional assistance because of their efforts on 3,265 acres. Volunteers spent 1,920 hours in outreach efforts, equal to \$32,640 in wages. Volunteers recently initiated two woodland owner associations and have leadership positions in many forestry organizations.

∞ **Woods In Your Backyard** is a new program to provide educational and technical resources for landowners with 1-10 acres who represent 75% of Maryland's forest landowners. \$40,000 in funding from unique partners has produced a high-quality self-assessment publication and a resource CD in cooperation with Penn State and Virginia Tech extension. The purpose is to help landowners that can not access traditional forestry assistance to make informed decisions that impact water, wildlife populations, recreational opportunities, and forest health. Train the trainer workshops have been made to over 500 volunteers to deliver the program at the local level.

∞ **Branching Out** is a quarterly 4-page forest stewardship newsletter initiated in 1992 that is sent to over 5,500 forest landowners and professionals. All landowners who receive assistance from the Maryland Forest Service (about 300 per year) are put on the mailing list to connect them with educational offers from Cooperative Extension. With support from the Maryland Tree Farm, this newsletter is transitioning to an electronic format in 2006.

∞ **General Forestry Correspondence Course** is a non-credit course from the University of Maryland offered spring and fall semester that requires designing your own forest management plan. Started in spring 2000, nearly 300 participants have enrolled. An internet version is being developed and will be available in 2007. Surveys indicate nearly 75% of participants have initiated or updated their forest management plans, impacting over 5500 acres. More than 50% changed or adopted new forest management practices, 50% sought the advice of a professional forester, and 33% expect to benefit financially from the course.

"I learned much, met nice people and I look forward to being a positive influence and advocate of forest and wildlife stewardship." Covert Project volunteer

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