

Models bridge gaps in understanding: *JEM* authors illuminate impacts, interactions, and diverse values

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Don Gayton opens this issue by reflecting on the roots of conservationist attitudes, and concludes that our society's disconnection with nature is resulting in indifference. In general, the younger generation today is denied the formative, "immersion-in-nature" experiences that sow the seeds of caring for our ecosystems in the people we recognize as conservationists. The potential for re-engagement is there, and Gayton suggests ways to prompt a shift in societal values.

The natural resource management community is certainly not indifferent, but faces the challenges of time limitations and information overload as we manage the complex interactions between society, economy, and our environment. The authors in this issue of *JEM* each take aim at a question or challenge with the goal of bridging gaps in understanding, or describing helpful models—thus supporting sound decision making.

John Lewis, Stephen Sheppard, and Karyn Sutherland introduce landscape visualization tools that create common ground for discussion and evaluation—models that are "readable" by the layperson and expert alike. Informed dialogue leads to better decisions, broad community support, and innovative approaches. As the later Perspectives article by Shawn Morford and colleagues emphasizes, participation empowers. This is true in evaluating forest management options by visualizing them in three dimensions, and equally true in defining important community research goals by involving the local population. Morford *et al.*'s case study illustrates the benefits and challenges of closer linkages between social scientists from Malaspina University-College and the community of Ucluelet, B.C. Community-researcher partnerships are presented as a powerful and productive approach to understanding and moving through economic and social transitions in natural resource-dependent rural British Columbia.

Nancy Densmore, John Parminter, and Victoria Stevens assess recent practices in coarse woody debris (CWD) management. Their research suggests that specific management guidance is needed to maintain CWD (outside of reserves) in managed stands. By providing a sampling and modelling methodology, the authors hope to support the assessment of CWD presence throughout a managed forest rotation, resulting in improved management of this resource.

Maja Krzic, Hillary Page, Reg Newman, and Klaas Broersma contribute to our understanding of the effects of harvesting and grazing on aspen regeneration, forage production, and soil compaction. The results of this study, based in the Peace River region of British Columbia, suggest that cattle grazing and aspen harvesting are complementary land uses for cutblocks in this area. While laying the groundwork for more informed management, they emphasize that proper planning is needed to avoid cattle distribution problems.

Cindy Prescott, Leandra Blevins, and Candis Staley question the status quo in their Discussion Paper on litter decomposition. Their detailed examination of some commonly held assumptions leads them to conclude that forestry practices do not necessarily control or influence litter decomposition in the ways we'd thought—revised management practices can now be developed based on this empirical evidence and improved understanding.

On behalf of FORREX, I'd like to thank and acknowledge our tireless volunteers. Our peer reviewers for *JEM* issues 5(1) and 5(2) are acknowledged on page v. Without their dedication and expertise, neither we, nor you—our valued reader—would have the confidence we do in the science-based information published in *JEM*. We appreciate their time and effort.

Our Working Group is acknowledged on our masthead page. Each member brings to our table a unique perspective, genuine enthusiasm, and a commitment to support FORREX's understanding of our audience and our role. Together, we're working to uphold high standards of quality and integrity for *JEM* and the full suite of FORREX publications. Far from being indifferent to the challenges facing us today, this group, and the broader natural resource management community, actively contributes to bridging the gaps in our knowledge base, enabling access to the best available science and supporting sound solutions.

We look forward to your feedback through our annual *JEM* reader survey. Please respond to the on-line survey at www.forrex.org/jem by March 11, 2005. And, please guide, challenge, criticize, and praise *JEM*—it's yours to shape and yours to enjoy.