

NE Washington Chapter WFFA Winter Meeting
January 22, 2011
Usk, Washington

Stevens, Ferry and Pend Oreille County WFFA members and guests totaling just over 100 were treated to a day of speakers and socializing with fellow forest stewards on January 22. For the third year running, the meeting was held on Kalispel Tribal Land in the Camas Center for Community Wellness, a facility the Kalispel Tribe shares with native and non-native residents throughout the NE region.



The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) was represented by Bart Ausland and Mark Simpson. The WSU Extension provided the likes of James Freed, Andy Perleberg and Pend Oreille County's own Carol Mack. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) gave us Jim Bottorff, Matt Castle, Karen Ripley and Cliff Thresher. The Specialty Forest Products Co-op was represented again this year by Monica McMackin.



The event was well-attended by all three Pend Oreille County Commissioners and the Community Development Department. Other notables were Phil Carew of Ponderay Newsprint, and Serena Carlson, Interim Director of the Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition (NEWFC).

Cusick High School in Pend Oreille County, Columbia High School in Stevens County, and Curlew High School in Ferry County were able to send students and an instructor for the day. They all seemed to enjoy the variety of speakers, a continental breakfast and hearty lunch. The seven guests from three high schools received free admission, a common practice of the Northeast Chapter. This year the cost to extend free tuition was mitigated by a silent auction, with items donated from nearly thirty supportive businesses in the region. Sufficient funds were raised that when the chapter plans future events there's no doubt it will find youth in attendance. And again, this will be at no charge.



The Kalispel Tribe of Indians graciously accepted the NE Chapter's invitation to be included in the schedule of speakers. The Director of the Kalispel Natural Resource Department (KNRD), Deane Osterman, gave a presentation that included a historical perspective of the Tribe, and explained goals and objectives going forward. Osterman was welcoming of even more opportunity to work with NE Chapter in the future.

Also from the KNRD was speaker Matt Berger, Wildlife Program Manager who spoke about invasive plants and how they affect wildlife habitat.

Other speakers were: Chris DeForest of the Inland Northwest Land Trust who talked about conservation easements; WSU Extension's James Freed who explained the ins and outs of producing and selling local non-timber products; DNR's Karen Ripley who spoke about LiDAR Technology and how it can be employed to monitor forest health; and Marc Keith of Mountain Mushroom Farm in Malo, Washington shared his research project - growing shitake mushrooms. Steve Stinson and Larry Mason traveled from the West side to give the NE Chapter their political, fiscal and scientific perspective, and explained how these affect small forest landowners throughout Washington State.

After the Winter Meeting concluded, the NE Chapter's board meeting began. Elections were held finding few changes, except a new face for the Stevens County position. Olga Mills will replace Bob Bushnell in that county.

In sum, it was a good day and the feedback was positive. It appeared the event provided something for everyone. And our NEWFFA membership table was successful with the signing of three new members.