

2014

University-Based Forestry Research and "The Little Red Hen"

Steven H. Bullard

Stephen F. Austin State University, Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture,
bullardsh@sfasu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/forestry>



Part of the [Other Forestry and Forest Sciences Commons](#)

[Tell us](#) how this article helped you.

Repository Citation

Bullard, Steven H., "University-Based Forestry Research and "The Little Red Hen"" (2014). *Faculty Publications*. 103.

<https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/forestry/103>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Forestry at SFA ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of SFA ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact cdsscholarworks@sfasu.edu.

A VIEW FROM YOUR STUMP

Opinion

BY STEVE BULLARD

UNIVERSITY-BASED FORESTRY RESEARCH AND 'THE LITTLE RED HEN'

Universities have three basic mission areas: service, teaching, and research. Through the service mission, many forest landowners participate in forestry extension programs and use university-based outreach materials and resources. Many forest landowners also recognize the teaching mission of universities by interacting regularly with forestry professionals who were trained through academic programs accredited by the Society of American Foresters. These two mission areas, service and teaching, have been and continue to be relevant to millions of forest landowners across the nation.

But what about university-based forestry research? As a forestry dean and as current president of the National Association of University Forest Resources Programs, and (just as importantly) as a forest landowner, I'd like to address three key questions about forestry research, including what this has to do with "The Little Red Hen."

Is public funding for forestry research relevant to private forest landowners in the 21st century?

Forestry research creates knowledge that is critical for 21st-century challenges such as: invasive plants, diseases, and insects; water availability and quality; ownership fragmentation; increased intensity and frequency of wildfires; and the need for strong markets for timber products as well as for ecosystem services. When it comes to private forestland today, in many ways the phrase "Rome is burning" is appropriate. The issues of the 21st century threaten the very existence of working forests in our landscapes. Meanwhile, forestry researchers are not "studying the flames while Rome burns;" they are providing science-based solutions that are critical to both the economic and the ecological wellbeing of private forests.

Should universities be involved in forestry research?

Consider what would happen if only the private sector invested in forestry research – results of the research would be proprietary rather than openly distributed to users, and the focus of research would tend to be short-term and focused on profit potential. Many critical

issues would simply not be addressed because the "public goods" nature of the results would not be profitable to private companies. Universities work in partnership with the USDA Forest Service and other public agencies, but universities are the only research providers who also train future forestry scientists. This role is critical for research capacity to address the ecological and economic challenges affecting the sustainability and profitability of working forests today.

What does support for forestry research have to do with "The Little Red Hen?"

"The Little Red Hen" is a children's story about a hen who finds some grains of wheat in the barnyard, but none of the other barnyard animals will help her plant the wheat, cultivate and water the wheat, and ultimately harvest the grain, grind it and bake bread from the flour. Once the bread is baked, however, all the other barnyard animals want to enjoy the fruits of the Little Red Hen's labor. The story's moral involves the need to show initiative and work hard toward a common goal.

My view from the stump ends with a call to action. I hope many forest landowners will help universities cultivate and communicate the message of forestry research, with the common goal of providing science-based solutions to critical challenges. Universities need your help to cultivate federal funding support for the McIntire-Stennis Cooperative Forestry Research Program, for example, a program that sustains capacity for forestry research at universities, and thereby enables outreach and teaching programs. We definitely will reap what we sow in terms of investing in forestry research in this century. Let's cultivate and communicate this message together, to ensure we have science-based solutions baked into the future for private forest landowners. (For more information on the McIntire-Stennis program, please view the 50th anniversary video at www.naufpr.org.)

Steve Bullard is Dean of the Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas.

Your opinion matters; submit your opinion to A View from Your Stump in 700 words or less by sending it to info@forestlandowners.com.