

Kris Tiles demonstrates the procedure for determining the age of a tree at a woodland owner workshop.

Educating Landowners

Landowner contacts are the highlight and most challenging aspects of Kris Tiles' job.



In her position as Basin Educator in Park Falls, WI, with the University of Wisconsin-Extension, Kris Tiles (B.S. Forest Science 1999, M.S. 2003) juggles a variety of tasks. She organizes landowner conferences, prepares educational brochures, and facilitates discussions on issues that can at times be contentious. “My favorite part of this job is working with landowners and talking about their concerns and the joys of owning land,” says Kris. On the flip side, a more challenging aspect, says Kris, is “working with people on very divisive issues that seem to have no potential for compromise.” Issues such as the Public Trust Doctrine and private property rights fall into this category.

Effective communication with landowners is a key component of her job, so it is no surprise that Kris recommends students: “Take a good communications course. No matter what you go into, you will need to work with the public, often

on issues that people are very angry or passionate about.”

Kris points to two experiences at the UW-Madison that laid the foundation for handling the challenges of her current position. She says the community forestry class (Forestry 430) opened her eyes to the fact that the best-laid management plan come to nothing if the people for whose land it is written do not understand it or do not agree with its principles. Also, her graduate research involving forest landowner interviews provided insight into the passion some landowners have for their land and where their concerns for the forests lie.

When asked for any other advice for forestry students, Kris replies: “Get out in the field and do some grubby field forestry internships.”