

2003 *VIP*-COVERTS Biennial Survey

Summary Report



July 2003

Brief Summary

The 2003 edition of the *VIP-COVERTS* biennial survey shows that *VIP-COVERTS* volunteers continue to actively promote forest stewardship in their communities. The number of volunteer hours reported was over three times the number reported in the 2001 survey. The most common outreach activity remains talking to neighbors and other woodland owners about forest stewardship. *VIP-COVERTS* volunteers are active members and supporters of Pennsylvania's local/regional woodland owner associations: 123 *VIP-COVERTS* were members and 50 were board members.

Survey Methods

We sent a survey form (sample on last page of this report) to all of the *VIP-COVERTS* in our database (n=252). We sent a second identical survey form to those who did not complete the first form by the deadline, and a third identical form to those who did not respond by the second deadline. Then, we telephoned each person who did not respond to the third mailed survey. When we were able to contact non-respondents, we asked them the survey questions over the telephone. If we were unable to talk to the *VIP*, we left a message asking them to call us back.

Three hundred eleven *VIP-COVERTS* have been trained since the program's inception and two hundred fifty two remained in the program at the start of the survey. Although we made no attempt to contact people who were no longer involved in the program before the survey began, we do know that we have lost some *VIPs* over the years when they moved out of state, sold their forestland, suffered from deteriorating health, or passed away. In 2001, we removed 18 people from the database, who said they were no longer interested in the program.

Results and Discussion

Response Rate

Of the 252 *VIP-COVERTS* in the program at the beginning of the survey period, 238 provided survey information (94.4 % response rate).

Current Status

The survey asked *VIPs* to indicate their volunteer status: active in the past 12 months; inactive in the past 12 months but wish to remain in the program; and no longer interested (see Table 1). One hundred ninety nine (79.0 %) said they were currently active. Thirty-two (12.7%) indicated that they were currently inactive but were still interested in remaining in the program. Many of the inactive volunteers cited time limitations and health factors as reasons, but hoped to become active again in the future. Seven (2.8%) indicated that they were no longer interested in the program, and 14 (5.6%) people did not respond to either the written surveys or telephone calls.

Table 1: Status of *VIP-COVERTS* Volunteer

Status	Number	Percent
Active	199	79.0
Inactive	32	12.7
Did Not Respond	14	5.6
No Longer Interested	7	2.8
Total	252	100.1

Volunteer Hours

The survey also measured *VIP-COVERTS* volunteer hours (see Table 2). *VIPs* were asked to provide hours for two categories: 1) number of hours volunteered in all Forest Stewardship activities during the past 12 months; and 2) number of hours working with others to promote Forest Stewardship in the past 12 months. The hours reported is probably an underestimate, because it is likely that some of the 14 non-respondents also had volunteer hours that went unreported.

The *VIPs* who did provide quantitative information collectively reported 38,516 volunteer hours in all Forest Stewardship activities (average = 193.5) and 11,884 hours working with others to promote Forest Stewardship (average = 59.7). These numbers indicate a very high rate of involvement in light of the initial agreement *VIPs* make at the time of training. Their commitment is limited to 40 volunteer hours in the 12 months after training; no further commitment is required. However, the active volunteers averaged over 193 hours of service in the past year alone, and many of these volunteers went through the initial training years ago.

Table 2: Number of Hours Volunteered in Past 12 Months and Average Hours Among Active Volunteers

Activity	Number of Hours	Average Number of Hours
All Forest Stewardship Activities	38, 516*	193.5
Working With Others To Promote Forest Stewardship	11,884	59.7

* Greater than 19 full-time employees at (40 hours per week for 50 weeks)

Stewardship Activities

The survey also asked *VIPs* to list their Stewardship activities. One primary objective of training Forest Stewardship volunteers is to provide them with the tools they need to effectively encourage their friends, neighbors, and other community members to become good stewards of their own lands. The most frequent *VIP* activity was talking to neighbors and other woodland owners about Forest Stewardship (see Table 3). Ninety-nine *VIP-COVERTS* reported doing this activity in the past year.

The other most common outreach activities were working to support an existing woodland owner group (44), attending forestry conferences, workshops, seminars (44), working with children/schools (42), presentations to adult groups (35), and writing and providing information

about forest stewardship issues to media outlets, including newspaper articles, books, news releases, newsletters, brochures etc., (33).

The most commonly cited stewardship activities that *VIPs* implemented on their own properties included planting trees/reforestation (37), leading and hosting woodland tours (20), wildlife enhancement (19), maintaining trails/roads (17), and timber stand improvement (16). Twenty-seven *VIPs* reported miscellaneous forest management activities on their own land that were grouped into the “other forest management activities on own land” category.

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Table 3: Forest Stewardship Activities in the Previous 12-Months

Activity	Number of VIPs
Talking with neighbors and other woodland owners about forest stewardship	99
Working to support an existing woodland owner group	44
Attended forestry conferences, workshops, seminars	44
Working with children/schools	42
Planting trees/reforestation	37
Presentations to adult groups	35
Writing and providing information to media about forest stewardship	33
Planning and coordinating workshops/conferences for woodland owners	31
Other forest management activities on own land	27
Served on Advisory Committees	22
Leading and hosting woodland tours	20
Wildlife enhancement	19
Distributing Forest Stewardship information	19
Maintaining trails/roads	17
Timber stand improvement	16
Providing input to elected representatives and government agencies	16
Removing competing vegetation/invasive plants	14
Assisting service forester	14
Staffing forestry exhibits	13
Working to start new woodland owner group	12
Watershed-related activities	12
Timber sale and preparation	11
Deer fencing/census/control	11
Other conservation volunteerism	10
Referrals to consulting forester	7
Growing non-timber forest products	5
Volunteer in a state forests/parks	3
Preparing new forest stewardship plan	2
Community tree projects	2
Conservation easements on land	1

Local Woodland Owner Associations

Local woodland owner groups are important catalysts for promoting Forest Stewardship in Pennsylvania. Each group is independent, and most sponsor education programs, woodland tours, and newsletters to provide woodland owners with information about managing their forestlands. The *VIP-COVERTS* Steering Committee's *Get-in-Touch, Stay-in-Touch* initiative has targeted increasing the effectiveness of existing associations and starting new ones in parts of the state where no such organizations exist. As part of the initiative Jack and Suzanne Murray—Steering Committee Chairman and Secretary, respectively—have prepared presentations and supporting materials for starting new woodland owner associations. They have also brought together board members of associations to lead best practices discussions.

One hundred and twenty three *VIP-COVERTS* belong to at least one local or regional woodlands association and fifty reported that they were board members. Forty-four reported working to support an existing woodlands association and 12 *VIP-COVERTS* said they were working to start new associations. Since the last biennial *VIP-COVERTS* survey in 2001, six new associations have formed. *VIP-COVERTS* volunteers have worked to start and nurture each of the fledgling organizations.

State and National Forestry Associations

Fifty-eight *VIP-COVERTS* reported being members of the Pennsylvania Forestry Association, and 6 were members of associations in other states, including New York (4), Maryland (1), and Virginia (1). Four *VIP-COVERTS* were members of the National Woodland Owners Association and one reported being a member of the Forest Landowners Association, Inc.

Table 4: Local Woodland Owner Association Memberships

Name of Local Association	Number of <i>VIP</i> Members
Lycoming Woodland Owners Association	16
Woodland Owners of Southern Alleghenies	15
North Central Forest Landowners Association	13
Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association	12
Woodland Owners of Centre County	12
Bradford Sullivan Forest Landowners' Association	11
Wayne-Lackawanna Forest Landowners' Association*	11
Central Susquehanna Woodland Owners Association	9
Susquehanna County Forest Landowners Association	8
Southeast Forest Resources Association*	6
Northwest Pennsylvania Landowners Association	5
Tioga County Woodland Owners Association*	5
Clarion County Forest Stewardship Council	4
Perry-Juniata Woodland Owners Association*	4
Mercer County Woodland Owners Association	3
Laurel Highlands Forest Landowners Association*	1
Dauphin County Woodland Owners Association*	1

*(New association: formed since the last survey).

Other Associations and Memberships

VIP-COVERTS are active in many other organizations related to forest stewardship (see Table 5 on next page). Common affiliations included Forest Stewardship Property (144), Tree Farm System (65), American Chestnut Foundation (26), wildlife conservation organizations (20), watershed protection organizations (12), farm organizations and committees (7), and land conservancies (6).

Table 5: Other Memberships and Affiliations Related to Forest Stewardship

Organization	Number of VIPs
Forest Stewardship Property	144
Tree Farm System	65
American Chestnut Foundation	26
Wildlife Conservation Organizations	20
County Cooperative Extension Boards	12
Watershed Protection Organizations	12
Farming-Related Committee	7
Land Conservancies	6
Master Gardener/Botanic Society	6
National Arbor Day Foundation	5
County Conservation District Boards	5
Community Tree Commissions/Councils	4
Planning Commission	4
Misc. Conservation Group	4
Pa Forest Stewardship Steering Committee	6
Church-Based Environmental Stewardship Committee	3
Township Environmental Action Committee	3
RC&D Committee	2
Pennsylvania Biodiversity Partnership	2
Maple/Christmas Tree Growers' Association	2
Quality Deer Management Association	1
NRCS Technical Committee	1
State Legislature: Forestry Committee	1

VIP-COVERTS served in leadership positions for various local organizations: County Cooperative Extension boards (12), county conservation district boards (5), community tree

commissions/councils (4), planning commissions (4), the Pennsylvania Forest Stewardship Steering Committee (6), Resource Conservation & Development Council committee (2), Pennsylvania Biodiversity Partnership (2), the Natural Resources Conservation Service Technical Committee (1), and in the state legislature on the Forestry Task Force (1). Clearly, VIPs are influencing the implementation of sound private forest resources management and education through their involvement with these boards and committees.

Comparison with 2001 Survey

The 2003 *VIP-COVERTS* survey form and methods were very similar those in 2001 with the following modifications:

- 1) The 2003 survey form asked respondents if they were members of the Tree Farm System and about having a Forest Stewardship property.
- 2) The 2003 form specifically asked respondents if they were board members of woodland owners associations.
- 3) The 2003 form dropped the question asking inactive volunteers to list the activities that they would like to do in the future and included more room for active volunteers to list their activities. (The back page of the survey form was available for this purpose on both surveys.)
- 4) In 2003, survey methods were altered by sending three rounds of survey forms, with each successive round going to those who did not respond to the previous round of surveys. In the 2001 survey, we sent two rounds.

The tables that follow compare the 2001 and 2003 surveys. Some notable changes include:

- 1) A higher response rate (80.1% in 2001; 94.4% in 2003).
- 2) A more than three-fold increase in the total number of volunteer hours in all forest stewardship activities (12, 172 in 2001; 38,516 in 2003) and in forest stewardship outreach (5562 in 2001; 11,884 in 2003).
- 3) Increased numbers of *VIPs* working to support the local and regional woodland owner associations. In 2001, 26 *VIPs* indicated that they were working to support the

organizations. Whereas, in 2003, 44 said they were working to support existing associations and 12 were working to help start new ones. As discussed above the *VIP Steering Committee's Get-in-Touch, Stay-in-Touch Initiative* emphasized strengthening the existing organizations and starting new ones in parts of the state where none exist.

- 4) In 2003, both the activities reported and the organization affiliations indicate that there was an increase in the number of *VIPs* serving on forest stewardship-related advisory committees. Twenty-two *VIPs* reported serving on advisory committees in the activities section of the survey (compared with zero reported in 2001). The actual number for both is higher because in the affiliations section of the survey in 2003, 41 indicated that they had an advisory role in an organization and in 2001, 27 indicated that they had such a role. The organizations included county conservation district and Extension boards, Farm Bureau and other farming-related organizations, community tree commissions/councils, planning commissions, the Pennsylvania Forest Stewardship Steering Committee, the Natural Resources and Conservation Service State Technical Committee, Resource Conservation and Development committee, and in the state legislature

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Table 6: Status of VIP-COVERTS Volunteers in 2001 and 2003

Status	Number		Percent	
	2001	2003	2001	2003
Active	138	199	57.3	79.0
Inactive	37	32	15.4	12.7
Did Not Respond	48	14	19.9	5.6
No Longer Interested	18	7	7.5	2.8
Total	241	252	100	100.1

Table 7: Number of Hours Volunteered in Previous 12 Months and Average Hours Among Active Volunteers for 2001 and 2003

Activity	Number of Hours		Average Number of Hours	
	2001	2003	2001	2003
All Forest Stewardship Activities	12,172	38,516	112.7	193.5
Working With Others To Promote Forest Stewardship	5562	11,884	51.5	59.7

Table 8: Forest Stewardship Activities in the Previous 12-Months for 2001 and 2003

Activity	Number of VIPs	
	2001*	2003
Talking with neighbors and other woodland owners about forest stewardship	50	99
Working to support an existing woodland owner group	**	44
Attended forestry conferences, workshops, seminars	6***	44
Working with children/schools	20	42
Planting trees/reforestation	20	37
Presentations to adult groups	29	35
Writing and providing information to media about forest stewardship	16	33
Planning and coordinating workshops/conferences for woodland owners	22	31
Other forest management activities on own land	0	27
Served on Advisory Committees	0	22
Leading and hosting woodland tours	26	20
Wildlife enhancement	8	19
Distributing Forest Stewardship information	10	19
Maintaining trails/roads	9	17
Timber stand improvement	14	16
Providing input to elected representatives and government agencies	17	16
Removing competing vegetation/invasive plants	8	14
Assisting service forester	14	14
Staffing forestry exhibits	6	13
Working to start new woodland owner group	**	12
Timber sale and preparation	2	11
Deer fencing/census/control	13	11
Other conservation volunteerism	0	10
Referrals to consulting forester	0	7

Watershed-related activities	8	12
Growing non-timber forest products	0	5
Volunteer in a state forests/parks	3	3
Preparing new forest stewardship plan	0	2
Community tree projects	5	2
Conservation easements on land	0	1
Gypsy moth spraying	3	0

* Zero indicates that this category was not used to classify responses in 2001.

** In 2003, these two categories were split from the single category “working to support a woodland owner group” in the 2001 survey, which had 26 responses

*** This category was “attended national forestry conference” in 2001

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Table 9: Local Woodland Owner Association Memberships in 2001 and 2003

Name of Local Association	Number of <i>VIP</i> Members	
	2001	2003
Lycoming Woodland Owners Association	6	16
Woodland Owners of Southern Alleghenies	13	15
North Central Forest Landowners Association	10	13
Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association	7	12
Woodland Owners of Centre County	5	12
Bradford Sullivan Forest Landowners' Association	10	11
Wayne-Lackawanna Forest Landowners' Association	*	11
Central Susquehanna Woodland Owners Association	7	9
Susquehanna County Forest Landowners Association	6	8
Southeast Forest Resources Association	*	6
Northwest Pennsylvania Landowners Association	4	5
Tioga County Woodland Owners Association	*	5
Clarion County Forest Stewardship Council	2	4
Perry-Juniata Woodland Owners Association	*	4
Mercer County Woodland Owners Association	2	3
Laurel Highlands Forest Landowners Association	*	1
Dauphin County Woodland Owners Association	*	1
Butler County Woodland Owners Association	2	0

*(New association: formed since the last survey).

**Table 10: Other Memberships and Affiliations Related to Forest Stewardship
in 2001 and 2003**

Organization	Number of VIPs	
	2001	2003
Forest Stewardship Property	0*	144
Tree Farm System	16*	65
American Chestnut Foundation	17	26
Wildlife Conservation Organizations	6	20
County Cooperative Extension Boards	6	12
Watershed Protection Organizations	4	12
Farming-Related Committee	3	7
Land Conservancies	12	6
Master Gardener/Botanic Society	0	6
National Arbor Day Foundation	0	5
County Conservation District Boards	6	5
Community Tree Commissions/Councils	6	4
Planning Commission	0	4
Misc. Conservation Group	0	4
Pa Forest Stewardship Steering Committee	6	6
Church-Based Environmental Stewardship Committee	2	3
Township Environmental Action Committee	1	3
RC&D Committee	0	2
Pennsylvania Biodiversity Partnership	0	2
Maple/Christmas Tree Growers' Association	0	2
Quality Deer Management Association	0	1
NRCS Technical Committee	0	1
State Legislature: Forestry Committee	0	1
National Arbor Day Foundation	8	0
American Forest Foundation	5	0
Sustainable Forestry Initiative® of PA	5	0

Nut Growers Association	3	0
PA Lumber Museum Association	1	0

*These categories were not used to classify data on the survey in 2001