

MPC Update for May 2018

By Mark Jacobs

Retaining and attracting members through engagement

As a long-time member of the Forest Stewards Guild, I've seen an on-going concern about attracting new members. Though it makes sense to us that everyone interested in forests would be in lock-step with Guild values, maybe it's not quite that simple!

In fact, there seems to be an overall lack of awareness of the Guild. To raise awareness, it would help to define our niche. In other words, what do we offer that separates us from other, similar, forestry-based groups? For a start, as our new website will highlight, we have a dedication to helping our members, supporters, partners, and sponsors contribute to responsible forestry. We are not only here to practice ecologically and economically sustainable forest management, but to promote and foster it as well. We build knowledge, awareness, opportunity, and capacity for putting the forest first now and in the future.

Let's embrace our role as a grass-roots organization and become more active in our region or local community. Try an event!

Events, large or small, are one way to engage locally. Involve Guild members and like-minded, non-member professionals (a.k.a. potential members). We all have friends, acquaintances, or colleagues who are foresters, loggers, ecologists, or biologists who seem to share Guild values. Contact them with an event idea in your area and see where it goes. Guild members taking a leadership role in these endeavors can make the Guild attractive to those who share our values but are unaware of our organization.

Events could be as small as leading a walk in the woods with local experts and regulars from the coffee hangout, to highlight the connection of well-managed forests and clean water. Or, cooperate on a regional conference on a timely topic. Just make sure that partners and participants know you are a member of the Forest Stewards Guild. And, let the Guild know about your events. In my experience, Guild staff are happy to help promote events that represent Guild values.

Keep in touch!

Maybe the best initial step in recruiting new members is to communicate better among ourselves. As a member of the Membership and Policy Council I encourage all members to share their thoughts on how to better communicate ideas and experiences with other members.

I view Forest Steward Guild membership as being more about quality than quantity. Retaining our quality membership is top priority; recruiting new like-minded members a bonus.