University of Nebraska - Lincoln
DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

11th Triennial National Wildlife & Fisheries Extension Specialists Conference (2006)

Extension Wildlife & Fisheries Specialists Conferences

10-14-2006

First-Stop Planning and Communication for LandHelp

Delwin Benson
Dept. of Fish, Wildlife and Conservation Biology, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/ewfsc11

Part of the Environmental Health and Protection Commons

Benson, Delwin, "First-Stop Planning and Communication for LandHelp" (2006). *11th Triennial National Wildlife & Fisheries Extension Specialists Conference (2006)*. Paper 2.
http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/ewfsc11/2

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Extension Wildlife & Fisheries Specialists Conferences at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in 11th Triennial National Wildlife & Fisheries Extension Specialists Conference (2006) by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

First-Stop Planning and Communication for LandHelp

Delwin E. Benson
Dept. of Fish, Wildlife and Conservation Biology, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado

Abstract: I developed an Internet-based, planning and communication system for professional and private users to make plans for their lands, which is branded as LandHelp (www.LandHelp.info). The project was funded by grants from the Renewable Resources Extension Act, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Wildlife Habitat Management Institute, Colorado State Forest Service, United States Department of Agriculture, Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (USDA SARE) from the Western Region, and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agro-forestry program with the NRCS. Currently, LandHelp contains links to 31 broad categories of information that then link to 2,613 more resources. Major topics include, but are not limited to, planning, water, forests, fire, range, fish and wildlife, livestock, rural community living, pests, emergencies, health and safety, recreation, tourism and value added enterprises, financial aid and programs, community assessment and management, education, and the green infrastructure and sustainability. This "first-stop-resource" for understanding and managing land, wildlife, and people has been reviewed 122,000 times in the past year without promotion by the university except through personal communications. LandHelp can be used by faculty, students, professionals, and all persons with access to the Internet. We want to encourage persons to help themselves to information and to practice conservation. LandHelp and the Internet simplifies communications. The Internet is the most convenient, uniform, and accessible place to house, edit, and to share important information. However, persons also need a helping hand to put information into action. Natural resources professionals have made inputs in the past and they will be needed in the future as needs broaden and questions become more thoughtful. The next step for LandHelp is to get natural resources agencies, organizations, and individuals around the world to store information and to communicate with their publics through the shared website. LandHelp could become the Internet voice for all Extension Natural Resources links, and I encourage interest and participation by Extension Specialists, Agents, Administrators, and their clients from throughout the country.

Key Words: Internet, landscapes, natural resources, planning, stewardship

Proceedings, 11th Triennial National Wildlife & Fisheries Extension Specialists Conference, October 14-18, 2006, Big Sky, MT

LandHelp on the Internet, the "Now" of Communication

LandHelp, (www.LandHelp.info), is "eXtension" before its time, providing an Internet-based first-stop site for storing and retrieving educational materials and planning guidelines to help people manage landscapes and related infrastructures wisely. It assists individuals and groups at local and community levels to take a holistic perspective about land stewardship including soil, water, air, plants, animals, sustainability, and people.

LandHelp is a foundation site for landscape planning and management information with primary support from Colorado State University (CSU) Cooperative Extension, Colorado State Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service. Other agencies and organizations throughout the United States could use LandHelp to place their information in a common location and to make information conveniently available for professionals and customers. Managers and landholders anywhere could access the same information and make plans for their lands.

LandHelp provides a convenient and common resource base for emerging issues such as sustainability, agro-forestry, small acreage management, and natural resources problem solving. Traditional subject links such as Fish and Wildlife, Forestry, and Rangelands have numerous links to basic management for a variety of situations. The Section about Pests provides information on how to manage weeds and animal damage. The Planning Section and a Planning Outline link human objectives with land attributes and capabilities. Sections dealing with Fire and Water tie people to the land during current times of drought and provide lasting information for the better times to come in arid environments. Users can learn about value-added enterprises, how to be better neighbors, managing small acreages, living on the land, and much more.

LandHelp is limited only by the number of cooperators who place information within it, the quality of information available, and the number of persons who access it to solve their problems and to review opportunities. LandHelp will improve instantly when more people with Extension and other agencies make LandHelp their home to place and to distribute information. The format is in place as a generic resource with no special reference to agency or location. It has application around the world, yet information can be entered and retrieved by location such as a state. Next steps will simply add cooperators and contents while reaching out to more users.

The concept for LandHelp began from conducting workshops for educators, natural resources agency professionals, and landowners. It soon became apparent that more information was available than either public or private sector managers could put into action. Information in the form of books, journals, and bulletins became increasingly voluminous as the depth and breadth of knowledge increases. The libraries of information needed by professionals and landowners have become too large to physically handle effectively and information was constantly changing. Ironically, the ultimate users, our customers, don't always possess even the basic information because of barriers to information transfer. The Internet overcomes these problems and accommodates proper storage, editing and retrieval of information simultaneously and anywhere in the world with Internet connection. Through the Internet, useful resources can be viewed jointly while on the telephone, projected at workshops, retrieved on site, or copied at public and private offices or personal residences.

The Role of Resource Professionals with LandHelp

The Internet is a convenient and uniform location to house, edit, and to share important information, but persons also need a helping hand to put information into action.. The role of mentors, trainers, advisors, and coaches is always important. A personalized Train-The-Trainer initiative called Coached Planning resulted in workshops that were conducted in Colorado, Wyoming and New Mexico to train Extension and natural resource agency persons about how to use LandHelp and how to coach people to use it for their land management needs. This successful hands-on educational approach has been traditionally practiced within CSU Cooperative Extension, Colorado State Forest Service, and similar organizations around the nation to encourage adoption of practices. Personal assistance, demonstrations, and experimental applications help clients to overcome barriers of thought and action. The opportunity to combine traditional educational tools with modern technology was funded by grants from the Renewable Resources Extension Act, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Wildlife Habitat Management Institute, Colorado State Forest Service, and United States Department of Agriculture, Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (USDA SARE) from the Western Region. Scott Cotton from Pueblo County Cooperative Extension, Jan Hackett with Colorado State Forest Service, and Delwin E. Benson with Department of Fish, Wildlife and Conservation Biology and CSU Cooperative Extension led the Coached Planning and LandHelp initiative, with the help of student and professional Internet designers, administrative assistants, work study students, and natural resources agency cooperators.

Results

Accomplishments/Milestones with Coached Planning for LandHelp as of 2004

The web-based LandHelp curriculum was initially completed in 2001 and was constantly undergoing updates and review to maintain its vigor. Five separate trainings were conducted for Cooperative Extension, NRCS, Conservation District and other educators from environmental and producer organizations, and 151 educators were oriented at training sessions and another 27 received individual orientation across the four-state area. Thirteen landowners/educational sessions were conducted by project cooperators and participants of the trainings, resulting in 346 landowners drafting plans and beginning implementation of best-management practices in participating states. Landowner

evaluations and educator evaluations were conducted, in addition to significant levels of constructive input by agencies and individual educators.

Impact and Contributions/Outcomes as of 2004

1. The Coached Planning for LandHelp curriculum was successfully used to educate landowners in issues of timber management, small acreage management, community resource planning, drought management, range management, wildlife management, and water quality remediation.
2. In Colorado, Wyoming, Arizona, and New Mexico, 346 landowners, 32,000 web users, and 178 professional educators learned, utilized, and benefited from this project, with growing numbers each week.
3. Other cooperating agencies and groups found both the curriculum and delivery methods flexible enough to list their materials on the site and refer their staff to its location.
4. Word-of-mouth reports of program satisfaction to other community members generated secondary demand for repeat programs in Colorado and Wyoming. Landowners offered to pay higher fee levels to make the program a perennial offering in central and southern Colorado.
5. The LandHelp website, where the curriculum is hosted, was constantly reviewed by a multi-disciplinary group of agency representatives and field educators to provide insight to enhance usability.
6. Suggestions were made to sponsor a "HumanHelp" curriculum in a similar manner that could address consumer, family, and nutrition education projects.

Status of LandHelp Contributions and Users as of 2006

1. Over 1,200 links were added to LandHelp since 2004 by supplementing existing sections and creating new sections. Currently, there are 2,613 links to websites or documents, on a wide variety of topics (Table 1).
2. Successfully launched a new visual and programmatic version of LandHelp.info in 2005.
3. Two Masters students conducted Internet-based research to improve LandHelp links, particularly in the areas of Agro-Forestry, Green Infrastructure and Sustainability, Fire, Forestry, and Water. Examples of the varied information available can be noted in the lists of sub-sections from Green Infrastructure and Sustainability (Table 2) and Forestry (Table 3). A work study employee is currently researching Hunting and Shooting Sports and adding additional links to the site.
4. LandHelp is accessed by over 100,000 persons per year (Table 4).
5. The following three books were scanned and excerpts have been linked to LandHelp:
    - Lynch, D. (Editor). 2005. Foresters Field Handbook. Colorado State University Cooperative Extension Bulletin No. XCM-185. The handbook is a useful, 5 × 6-inch, 350-page guide for reference in the field.
    - Henderson, F. R. (Editor). Guidelines for Increasing Wildlife on Farms and Ranches: With Ideas for Supplemental Income Sources for Rural Families. Great Plains Agricultural Council – Wildlife Resources Committee, and Cooperative Extension Service, Kansas State University – Manhattan. 586 pages.
    - Hoover, R. L., and D. L. Wills (Editors). 1987. Managing Forested Lands for Wildlife. Colorado Division of Wildlife. 459 pages.
6. The section on small acre management was enhanced by linking to Living on the Land, a Western SARE Development Project, 2001, 1260 pages, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension.
7. The Coached Planning for LandHelp curriculum was linked to the Planning Section of LandHelp and is now readily available to web users.

Conclusion

LandHelp is designed to store and retrieve information for people who need answers. We want to help persons solve problems and find proactive solutions to diverse issues and opportunities on the land and with people.

As information providers, we can readily organize new information, update existing topics, and make information immediately accessible on LandHelp or hidden for review by cooperators before becoming available. Professionals do not need to carry boxes of supporting materials to presentations; however, if needed, they can make copies of any materials that are on the Internet and hand them out as desired. When unanticipated questions come up about topics, answers can be found on LandHelp or new links with answers can be added into LandHelp at the first opportunity – on the road, in the office, or at home.

LandHelp will benefit if you add your information and send your cooperators to LandHelp. The website is only as good as its users. You and your cooperators will benefit from the depth and breadth of information already in LandHelp and with a little effort your imputs are magnified by the thousands.

Contributing to LandHelp is simple. We can place your links into the system for you if the numbers are few or we can give you the authorization to add your own information. As the system of users increases, LandHelp would benefit from a central funding sponsor who could pay the general costs of site maintenance, daily inputs, and editing. The sky is the limit, and this Big Sky Country of Montana is where we should commit to some joint activities. How would you like to participate with LandHelp? The fact sheet "Why Use www.LandHelp.info?" (Figure 1) asks for your commitment. Email your interest to us at LandHelpinfo@yahoo.com or contact Del Benson at <delben@warnercnr.colostate.edu>.

Table 1. Sections of LandHelp and number of links as of Friday, October 6, 2006.

Section Title	Number of links
Agriculture	73
Agro-Forestry international	65
Agro-Forestry: U.S. and Canada	55
Animals: fish and wildlife	795
Community assessment and management	18
Conservation easements and land trusts	10
Cooperating organizations	35
E-Answers	3
Emergencies, health and safety	25
Financial aid and programs	23
Fire	41
Fishing	12
Forests	298
Green infrastructure and sustainability	176
How to live with land and people	15
Hunting and shooting	108
Journals	30
Landscaping and gardening	22
Legal issues	9
Livestock	43
Measures and conversion	10
Pests	82
Planning	129
Rangelands	47
Recreation, tourism, and value-added enterprises	87
Small acreage management	33
Soils	31
Teaching packages	148
Water	147
Weather	8
Youth, fire, and water--you + 2	38
Total	**2,613**

Table 2. Sub-sections of LandHelp Green Infrastructure and Sustainability and number of links as of Friday, October 6, 2006.

Sub-section Title	Number of Links
Green infrastructure and sustainability	9
Climate change	6
Energy	19
Energy: university	2
Exurban development	7
Green building	21
Smart growth for communities	7
Sustainability	9
Sustainability: community	17
Sustainability: individuals	20
Sustainability: reporting	4
Sustainability: university	37
Transportation	7
Waste and recycling	11
Section Total	**176**

Table 3. Sub-sections of LandHelp Forestry and number of links as of Friday, October 6, 2006.

Sub-section Title	Number of Links
Forests	17
Agencies and associations	14
Forest inventory	20
Forest inventory - basal area (tree density)	11
Forest inventory - maps, aerial photos and surveying	15
Forest management	19
Landscaping in forested areas	5
Planning – assistance	7
Planning - forest types	10
Planning - land capability/site quality	6
Planning - site selection	5
Planning - wildlife impacts	6
Silviculture	13
Silviculture - commercial thinning	9
Silviculture - growth projections	14
Silviculture - harvest	15
Silviculture - insects and disease	19
Silviculture - natural regeneration and planting	9
Silviculture - site preparation	11
Silviculture - stand structure	8
Timber - forest products	8
Timber - inventory/timber cruise	6
Timber - log rules and measurement	11
Timber - volume calculations	12
Urban and plains forestry	9
Urban and plains forestry - living snowfences	6
Urban and plains forestry - tree maintenance	6
Watershed and recreation	7
Section Total	**298**

Table 4. Number of LandHelp users by month for 2005 and first 9 months of 2006.

Month	2006	2005	Change	% Change
Jan	12,358	18,203	-5,845	-32%
Feb	18,686	13,683	5,003	37%
Mar	11,648	9,269	2,379	26%
Apr	12,638	7,686	4,952	64%
May	14,866	10,674	4,192	39%
Jun	9,765	14,429	-4,664	-32%
Jul	7,953	9,904	-1,951	-20%
Aug	9,177	5,583	3,594	64%
Sept	10,360	6,503	3,857	59%
Oct		6,307		
Nov		10,021		
Dec		6,706		
Total	**107,451**	**118,968**	**11,517**	

For more information contact:
Professor Delwin E. Benson:
970-491-6411;
delben@warnercnr.colostate.edu

FACT SHEET
Why Use www.LandHelp.info?

What is LandHelp?

- LandHelp is pre-researched and pre-sorted for users to retrieve useful information to manage the land's resources wisely: including soil, water, air, plants, animals, people, and human developments.
- A First-Stop-Shopping Internet storage and retrieval site with holistic natural resources information
- A "brand name" used to market natural resources educational products
- A compendium of information links, unique files, and an outline planning framework with links to facilitate planning
- Professionals use LandHelp to store useful information for customers

Why a Need for LandHelp?

- Information is often created but not used beyond professional outlets
- Persons in need of information are confused about where to go for answers
- Valuable information should be housed in an electronic library
- Rather than reinvent information, LandHelp is a better way to share information

Why use LandHelp in Cooperative Extension?

- A common place to store, retrieve, create, use, and promote planning and management information about natural resources and the environment
- Professionals and outreach clients have one site to remember
- A logical way for Extension Specialists to work together with other cooperators for the good of the land and society

LandHelp will benefit from support

- LandHelp has no specific operators outside of part-time professional work funded by CSU Cooperative Extension and the State Forest Service
- LandHelp is operated with soft money from different sources to pay for web design and implementation
- Supporting the existing LandHelp program leverages toward advanced successes with minimal inputs
- At a larger scale, LandHelp could have a room dedicated to computers and workers who would place inputs into LandHelp from cooperators and promote LandHelp to users.

****

I would like to support LandHelp (check all that relate and return to Del Benson or e-mail to LandHelpinfo@yahoo.com)

☐ **Provide Links**
☐ **Use with my cooperators**
☐ **Provide funding**
☐ **Other** _____

Name_____ **email address** _____