

From the August 2007 issue of *The Forestry Source*

Profiles in Forestry:

Louise Levy, Coordinator, Sustainable Forests Education Cooperative, Cloquet Forestry Center

Louise Levy, Coordinator of the Sustainable Forests Education Cooperative (SFEC) at the University of Minnesota's Cloquet Forestry Center, manages the cooperative's program, which serves natural resources professionals who work on forestland. The members of the SFEC include tribal, industry, county, state, and federal forestland owners; environmental organizations; and private consulting foresters.

When did you become interested in forestry?

I became interested in the profession of forestry a couple of years after finishing my undergraduate degree (in German), spending a year living in Switzerland (during the fall of the Iron Curtain, when the Berlin wall came down), and working for a state pollution control agency. Oddly, I was unaware growing up in Duluth that Minnesota had a forest industry; I knew only of iron ore mining and shipping. I realized that forestry was the only natural science field in which policy, economics, and social issues were inextricably linked to the field itself. That attracted me—one couldn't engage in forestry while ignoring policy, economics, and society.

How did you get where you are today?

I enrolled in some post-baccalaureate forestry classes at the University of Minnesota. My silviculture professor suggested that getting into a master's program at Oregon State University (OSU) would be the ticket to an exciting future. My research required me to spend two summers in southeast Alaska (who could complain about that?); my colleagues—professors and students—were outstanding, and I became the College of Forestry liaison for an innovative OSU program called Science and Math Investigative Learning Experiences (SMILE) that targets under-represented groups in math and science.

But as beautiful and exciting as Oregon was, I wanted to be back in Minnesota, where snow was right outside my door; where the trees turn color in the fall; where spring is hardly noticeable; and where summer brings amazing biting insects and bright, blue water.

I was hired to run the newly formed SFEC, a public-private partnership focused on professional continuing education for natural resource managers, because of my technical and scientific forestry background, my experience on the student-faculty committee of the Forest Science Department, my work developing a seminar series and forestry conferences, and my understanding of the natural resource management community in Minnesota.

What's a typical day for you?

Balancing the less-than-exciting tasks of coordinating workshop logistics (catering, facility, transportation) with the interesting work of understanding what topics and training needs are most on the minds of forestry practitioners; keeping abreast of cutting-edge research in forest ecology, management, and the social sci-

ences; developing relationships and training opportunities that bring the various natural resource management professions (wildlife, forestry, ecology, etc.) together in the same room; and developing my own research opportunities.

What knowledge and skills are essential for your job?

A mix of technical and research knowledge, the typical computer skills (word processing, database management) along with an interest in cutting-edge delivery methods (both simple and technologically sophisticated), the ability to build teams to develop specific workshops, collaborating with other natural resource organizations, a mind open to unrecognized or overlooked sources of information and experience, and pleasure in creating opportunities for colleagues to hear new ideas and information.

What is the biggest challenge associated with your position?

Maintaining the relationships that keep the SFEC resourceful, vibrant, and imaginative; finding funding sources to create innovative programs; and doing enough to fulfill what I consider the program's responsibilities to its cooperators.

What keeps you motivated?

Interacting with colleagues—it's so much more interesting than working alone!

What advice would you give to new or young foresters?

It's hard to follow Richard Porterfield's answer to this question, but I'll try. Work hard; maintain your personal and professional integrity; speak your mind (tactfully but with conviction); seek and enjoy collegial interactions as well as with those who are different from you (in opinion, profession, employer, etc.); listen—you don't have to agree with someone to benefit from their perspective; take initiative at meetings where you don't know anyone—stick out your hand and introduce yourself—it can be scary, but it's more fun and productive than waiting for someone else to do the same thing.

Has SAF membership benefited your career? If so, how?

I joined SAF near the end of my time in Oregon, after receiving a year's free membership for participating in a student work weekend. Cheap, I know, but it got me hooked. After that, I couldn't help but stay involved. And the more involved I got, the more fun and rewarding my membership became. I also benefit from membership in the Forest Guild, which offers a smaller sized organization and different perspectives on forest management and stewardship. The SAF Leadership Academy was great, too, and introduced me to new people and ideas.

Profiles in Forestry highlights the various positions within the broad field of forestry and the people who hold them.