

INTRODUCTION

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The Society of American Foresters Allegheny Section Summer 2017 training session was a celebration of a remarkably productive partnership. Beginning in the late 1960s, possibly at an Allegheny Section Society of American Foresters meeting, forest and natural resource managers in northwestern Pennsylvania worked with the USDA Forest Service to support and collaborate on a rigorous and challenging research agenda. The partnership began because the region was experiencing a crisis in natural regeneration, and over the decades it expanded to include several other lines of science. Many of these were represented by presentations at the September 2017 meeting. Many presentations combined an historical overview of scientific work, its translation into management guidelines, and its adoption by managers. In several key cases, presenters went on to describe how managers were able to use research results to bring key policy changes, such as changes in the management of an historically overabundant deer herd, Pennsylvania-wide assessments of regeneration adequacy, or a cohesive multi-agency collaboration to sustain oak in southeastern Ohio. Many presentations ended with a summary of the current state of science and implications for forest management.

During the course of the partnership that is celebrated in this proceedings, scientists began to share research results with managers by way of annual training sessions. These sessions described the results of research in a way that helped managers see how to adapt their management practice to take the results into account. This included suggestions for new ways to collect forest inventory data in stands where management was planned, and to use these data to determine a course of silvicultural treatments. As the training sessions continued, scientists developed a computerized decision support system into which managers could enter inventory data and receive both a comprehensive summary of current conditions and recommendations for the course of silvicultural treatments. The name SILVAH, originally an acronym for Silviculture of Allegheny Hardwoods, was first applied to the decision support software. Over time, SILVAH became an umbrella term for the science-management partnership and the various lines of science needed to support sustainable forest management, and eventually was extended to include mixed oak forests.

The work celebrated at the training session is truly collaborative work by hundreds of managers, scientists, interns, and stakeholders over the five decades since its inception in the late 1960s. We especially want to acknowledge the contribution of the permanent employees of the USDA Forestry Sciences Laboratories in Irvine, PA, and Delaware, OH, during this period. In particular, we acknowledge the commitment and dedication of those who installed the research studies and collected research data with precision, entered data, or wrote code for decision support software. They appreciated, every day, that the quality of their work could make the difference between detecting a meaningful difference among treatments or not, or a program that was useful or not. Led by Virgil Flick, Harry Steele, and Ernie Wiltsie, the technician crew also included Eric Baxter, Von Brown, Bill Borovicka, Carl Bylin, John Crossley, Reid Garrison, Josh Hanson, Joan Joliff, Pete Knopp, Lance Meyen, Linda Ordiway, Todd Ristau, Dave Saf, Greg Sanford, Julie Smithbauer, Scott Thomasma, and Corinne Weldon. We also acknowledge the contributions of the scientists in that period who designed studies, consulted with managers and technicians, analyzed data, developed guidelines, and reported results. Led by Dave Marquis, and Ben Roach, the scientists also included Lew Auchmoody, John Bjorkbom, Patrick Brose, Dave deCalesta, Rich Ernst, Kurt Gottschalk, Coeli Hoover, Steve Horsley, Bob Long, Gary Miller, Chris Nowak, Joanne Rebbeck, Todd Ristau, Scott Stoleson, and Susan Stout.

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Finally, forest management organizations across the Plateau have contributed everything from in-kind labor through study sites and treatments to financial support. Although many have participated, SILVAH has had long-term partnerships with the Allegheny National Forest, Collins-Kane Hardwoods, Forest Investment Associates, Generations Forestry, Hammermill Paper Company, International Paper Company, Keith Horn, Inc., the Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry, and the Pennsylvania Game Commission. In Ohio, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Forestry and Division of Wildlife and the Wayne National Forest played important roles.

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