

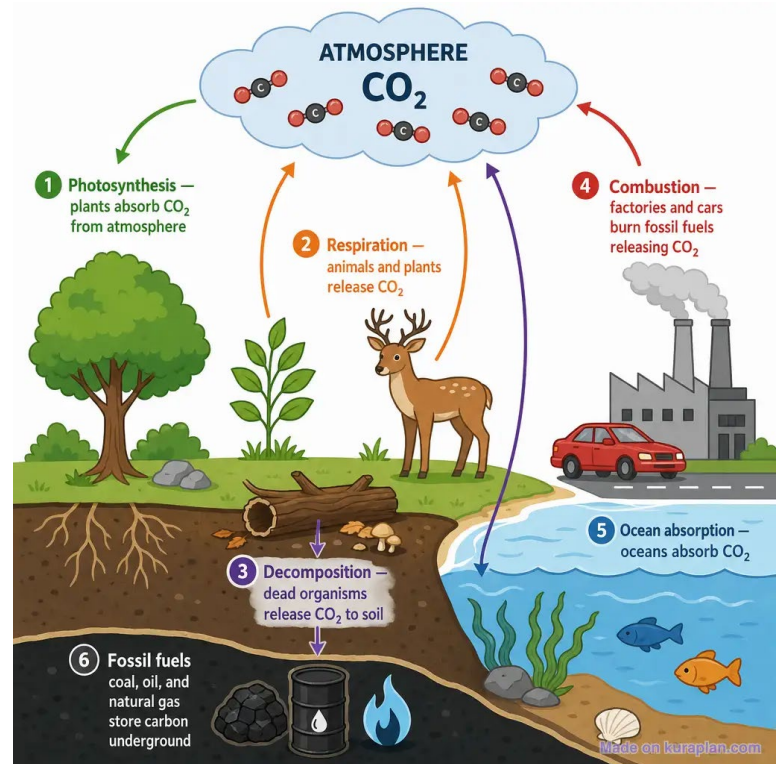
Relationships with the Land and the Structures that Govern it: The Family Forest Owner's Path to Stewardship

Elysia Palmieri

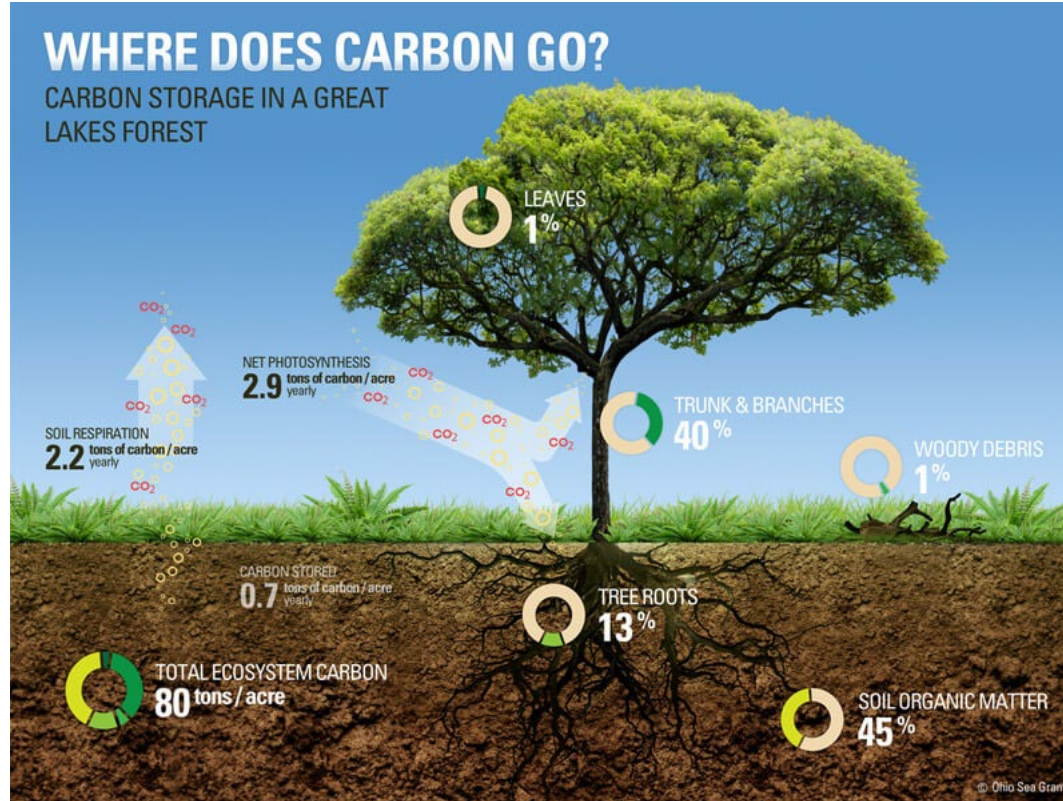


Why Forests Matter | Forests and Climate Change

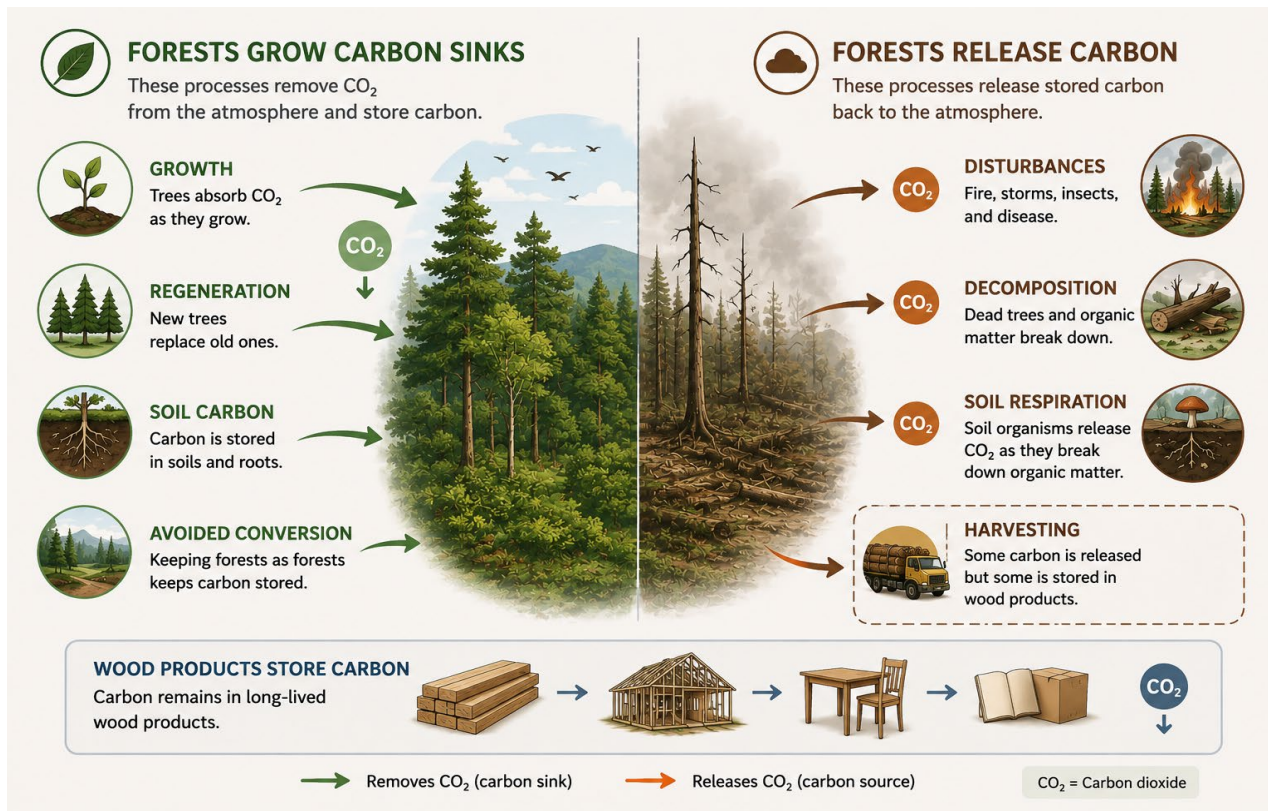
- Forests remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store carbon in trees, soils, and other organic material.
- What is a “carbon sink?”



Why Forests Matter | How Does a Tree Capture Carbon?



Why Forests Matter | Forest Carbon Dynamics



Why Forests Matter | Forest Management

- Tree planting
- Avoided conversion to non-forest land uses
- Prevent or remove invasive species
- Foster resilience to pests and pathogens
- Manage to reduce tree mortality from ice, fire damage and wind
- Improve silvicultural prescriptions to increase carbon uptake
- Sustainably harvest for long-lived wood products



Why this matters in NY | Climate Goals

- New York State's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA)
 - ◆ Aims to reduce GHG emissions by 85% from 1990 levels by 2050
 - ◆ Remaining 15% of emissions offset through carbon sequestration (New York State Climate Action Council, 2020)
- New York's 18.7 million acres of forested land will play an important role and serve as a mechanism for carbon capture

Why this matters in NY | Who owns the forests?

- 74% of the state's forestland is privately owned (Albright et al., 2020), making private landowners essential to the success of CLCPA



Why this matters in NY | Who are family forest owners (FFOs)?

- Family forest owners (FFOs) in the Adirondack-North Country Region of New York State
 - ◆ *Family Forest Owners*: Individuals, married couples, family estates, trusts, or other groups of people who are not incorporated or organized as legal entities who own forested land (Butler & Leatherberry, 2004)
 - ◆ May own forests for:
 - Recreation
 - Wildlife
 - Timber
 - Family legacy
 - Privacy
 - Conservation

NY Forest Management Programs | 480a Forest Tax Law

- 480a Forest Tax Law
 - ◆ Established in NY for 50 years
 - ◆ 50+ contiguous acres
 - ◆ Landowners commit to following a management plan prepared by a qualified forester
- Program Updates as of March 2026
 - ◆ 2 flexible 10 year periods, with a focus on harvesting forest crops
 - ◆ Fewer rigorous updates required
 - ◆ No high grading
 - ◆ Regeneration component required
 - ◆ Forester training

NY Forest Management Programs | Regenerate NY

→ RegenerateNY Cost Share Grant Program

- ◆ 5+ acres owned
- ◆ Reimbursement for up to 90% of project costs for practices:
 - Reforestation/afforestation
 - Forest stand regeneration
 - Competing vegetation control
 - Deer exclosures

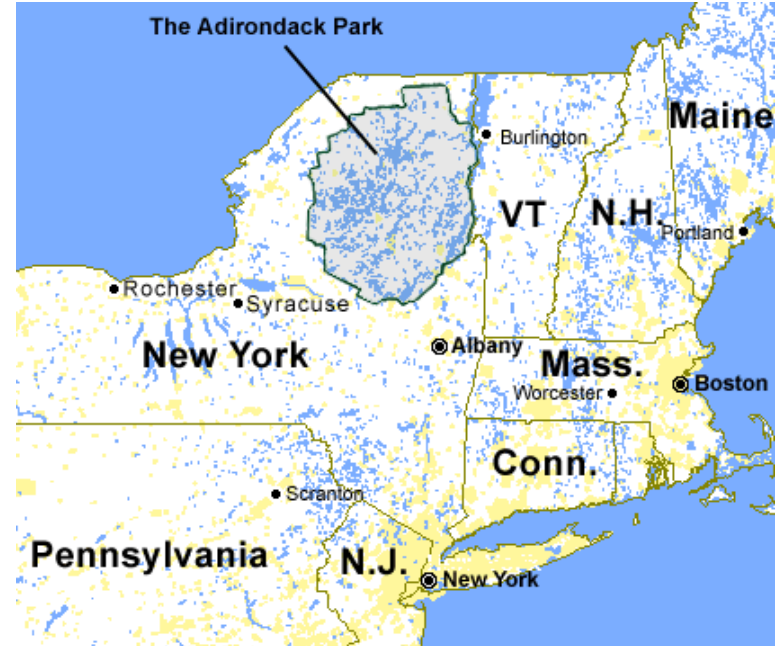
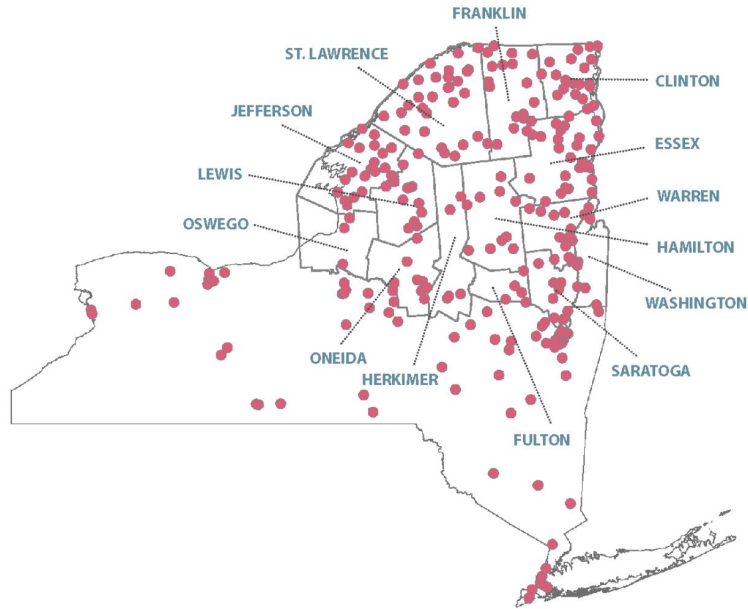
NY Forest Management Programs | Why not?

- What are the barriers to participation?
 - ◆ Cost of implementation
 - ◆ Knowledge of the program
 - ◆ Time to implement
 - ◆ Bureaucratic hurdles
 - ◆ Clashing management goals
 - ◆ Risk of new practices
 - ◆ Disapproval of family or neighbors
 - ◆ Trust in program administrators
 - ◆ Relationships to the land

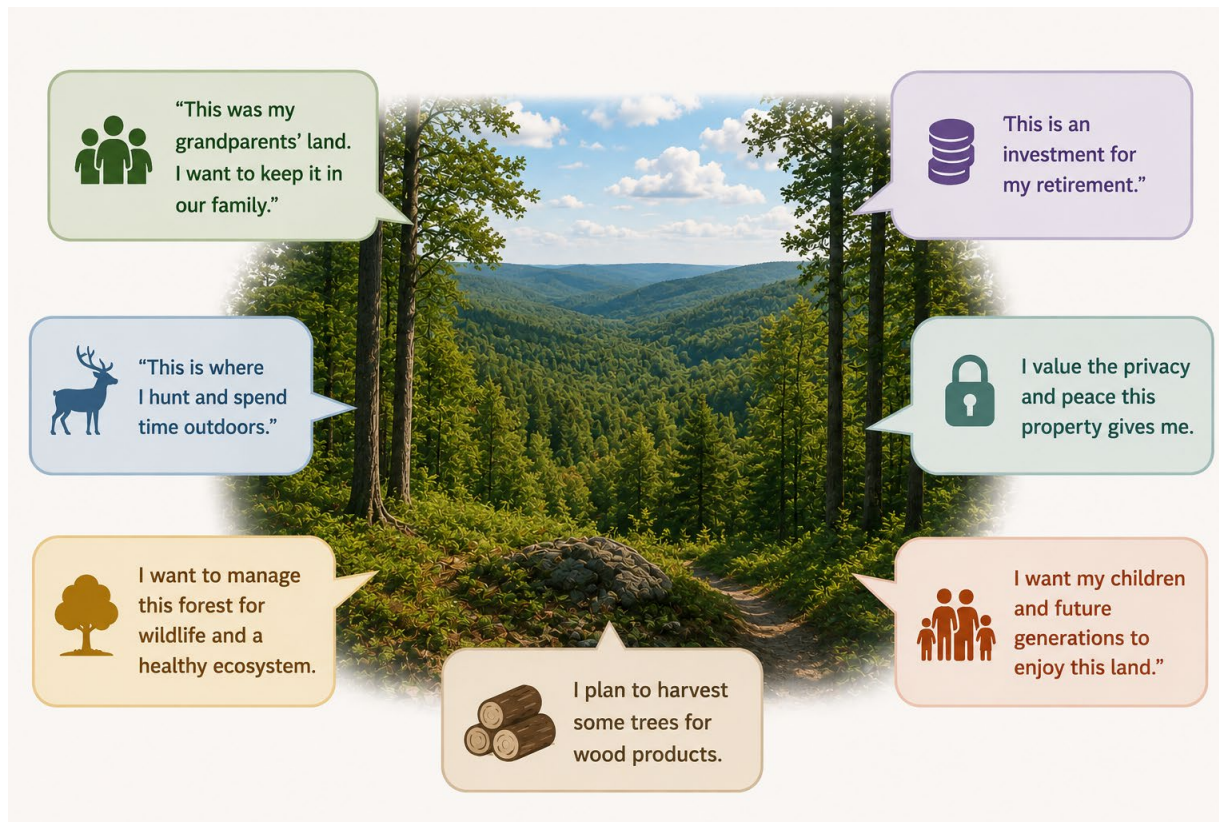
This Study | Research Questions

- What shapes a landowner's decision to participate (or not participate) in sustainable forest management?
- Financial incentives matter, but decisions are often shaped by social, psychological, and identity-based factors, which are underexplored in New York.
 - ◆ Sense of place
 - ◆ Institutional trust
 - ◆ Influence of friends, family, neighbors, social norms

This Study | Location



Sense of Place | What do places mean to us?



Sense of Place | Definition

- Sense of Place Theory (Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1977)
 - ◆ Spaces are transformed into significant places through human experience and interpretation, accumulating layers of meaning over time
 - ◆ Sense of place may influence decision-making by shaping how individuals, perceive, value, and interact with their environment



Sense of Place | Measurement

- Place attachment
 - Place identity
 - Place dependence
 - Sense of community
 - Temporal rootedness
-
- ◆ To what extent do you agree with the following statements:
 - "I feel more comfortable here than any other place"
 - "I feel this place is a part of me"
 - "I maintain my livelihood in this place"
 - "When there are problems regarding this place, people in the community join together to solve them"
 - "My family has lived here for generations" vs. "This is a second home I visit once a year"

Institutional Trust | Why does it matter?



Institutional Trust | Definition

- Institutional Trust Theory (Tyler, 1990)
 - ◆ Individuals are more likely to cooperate with institutions they perceive as legitimate, fair, and competent
 - ◆ Landowners who trust the institutions running these programs may be more likely to participate in them

Institutional Trust | Measurement

- Individual dispositional trust
 - Individual willingness to take risks
 - Organization ability
 - Organization benevolence
 - Organization charisma
-
- ◆ To what extent do you agree with the following statements:
 - "I believe most people can generally be trusted"
 - "I would be willing to rely on this agency even when its decisions could have important consequences for my property"
 - "I am confident are you in this agency's ability to effectively manage land resources"
 - "The agency has my best interest in mind when making decisions"
 - "The agency does a good job connecting and engaging with landowners"

Social Networks | Who influences our decisions?



Social Networks | Definition

- A set of people or organizations and the social relationships that connect them. (Wasserman & Faust, 1994)
- Social networks are the relationships through which people exchange information, experiences, advice, and support.
- These relationships can influence what people know about, trust, and ultimately choose to do.

Social Networks | Measurement

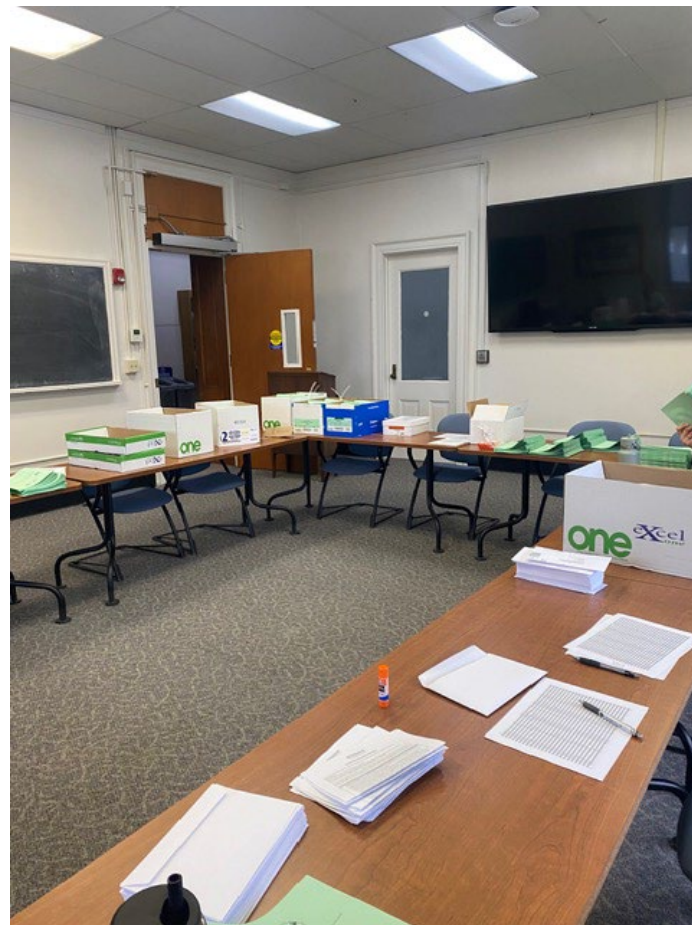
- Information exchange
- Network ties and interaction
- Descriptive norms
- Injunctive norms

◆ Questions:

- "When making decisions about your forestland, how often do you seek advice from other landowners?"
- "How often do you discuss forest management with other landowners in your community?"
- "Do many forest landowners in my community participate in forest management programs?"
- "Do people whose opinions I value would support my participation in a forest management program?"

Methods | Survey

- 44,714 parcel records
 - ◆ 16,160 eligible parcels (20– 500 acres)
 - ◆ Focus on disadvantaged communities (DACs)
 - ◆ Random selection 3,000 landowners to survey



Methods | Survey

- Stratified random sampling of private non-industrial forest landowners (20-500 acres) in the Adirondack-North Country region, with a focus on disadvantaged communities
 - ◆ Disadvantaged communities as defined by NY Climate Justice Working Group
 - Indicators such as potential climate change risks, potential pollution exposures, areas with history of discrimination or disinvestment, and other socioeconomic factors
- Pretested, and mailed (with QR code option) using Dillman's Tailored Design Method, four contacts over 4-6 weeks.
- Survey will be hosted on Qualtrics and analyzed using SPSS

Methods | Focus Groups

- Recruitment via survey respondents and snowball sampling
- Four targeted populations:
 - ◆ Consulting foresters and DEC staff
 - ◆ Landowners who have participated in state forest management programs
 - ◆ Landowners who have heard of but are not interested in participating in programs
 - ◆ Landowners who have heard of and are interested in participating in programs
 - ◆ Landowners who have never heard of the programs
- Held by video conference to encourage broad participation
- Data will be analyzed using MAXQDA

Dissertation Format & Projected Publications

→ Format:

- ◆ 3-article model with 5 chapters including an introduction and conclusion

→ Projected publications:

- ◆ 1 white paper and 2 fact sheets for program administrators, policymakers, participants, and the public
- ◆ Peer-reviewed journal publications
 - Potential journals: *Small-Scale Forestry*, *Journal of Environmental Management*, *Journal of Forestry*

Forests are both ecological and human systems

