

ForestHER podcast trailer 2020

Welcome to the ForestHER podcast. My name is Becky Barlow and I am a Forestry Extension Specialist with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System

I am a forester who's first job was working for a major timber company. I loved that job. Being able to work in the woods. Working with great people who really wanted to do the right thing for the resource. But there was always something in the back of my mind. A feeling like I needed to do more. And looking back, I think it came from something that happened to my grandma when I was still in college.

My grandmother was not your typical, Southern, "sweet little old lady". She came of age in the early 1900s and lived through the depression and the Second World War. As she aged, she was known for the "5 C's": coffee, cigarettes, Cadillacs, cards and cursing – and not necessarily in that order. She was no shrinking violet. But unfortunately, I also remember my grandma for another "C-word". Conned.

My grandparents lived small community where friends and neighbors would come and check on them from time to time. At one point, my grandmother was befriended by a local timber buyer. He would stop by to check on my ailing grandfather. He would bring my grandparents food from the local café. Then after several months it came up that he bought timber trees. He asked grandmother about the forestland she owned - land that had been in her family since the early 1800s. He told her he could cut it for her, and it would make her some money. She thought he would be harvesting only the little trees, but in the end her land was clearcut and she was paid very little for it. Afterwards, the timber buyer would not return her calls and he never again came by to visit. What could my grandmother have done differently? She needed information about forestland management.

I know that everyone in the forest industry is not like the person who interacted with my grandma. What he actually told her, and how that translated to her understanding of the situation I will never know.

But what I do know is that in my current position as an Extension professional, I meet so many women who rely on their spouse or other family members to do most of the land management decision-making. These women are not familiar with the property that they own, or how it is managed. And as the general population of landowners age, women are increasingly being left with decision making responsibilities. They need basic knowledge to help them make wise land management choices. And that is why we are launching the ForestHER podcast.

Ok, I know bad pun. In 2016 we started the ForestHER workshop series, which is focused primarily on getting forestland management information out to women landowners. So a podcast seemed like the natural next step to provide information that will inspire all landowners to actively manage their forest. We want to help landowners step out of their comfort zone and make informed decisions for their land about things like forest inventories, reforestation, water quality, wildlife management, and timber harvests.

One of the things I like about a podcast format is that we will be able to share conversations with you. Conversations with land management professionals, research scientists, and most importantly other landowners. The folks who have been there and done that are often the best teachers!

I hope you will join us when the ForestHER podcast debuts in a few weeks. Because we want to empower you to **find your voice, to be bold, and to do good things for your land.**