

Designing Sustainable Forest Landscapes

Simon Bell and Dean Apostol. Taylor & Francis, 2008.
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In Europe the outlines of landscape ecology began to develop at least 60 years ago. However, until the late 1980s, foresters and most ecologists in North America focused on plant communities (or stands) and circumscribed habitats as discreet entities with more or less clear boundaries.

In this book we garner the knowledge of two Continents. Dr Simon Bell is Senior Research fellow at Edinburgh College of Art. He is a forester and landscape architect with special interest in public access to the outdoors, forests and remoter landscapes. He has been involved in recreation design projects in the UK, Canada, Ireland, Latvia and Russia. Dr Bell is also Associate Professor at the Department of Landscape Architecture, Estonian University of Life Sciences, at Tartu, Estonia. Dean Apostol is a landscape architect and ecological restorationist with 30 years of experience. He is a Professor of Landscape Architecture at the University of Oregon, and is currently active in the design of a new city (Damascus, Oregon). He was chief landscape architect for Mount Hood National Forest in Oregon and has been active in the Society for Ecological Restoration International.

The book is neatly divided into three sections; section one deals with the key concepts for forest design. Section two deals with the process, techniques and implementation of forest design. Finally, section three deals with forest design application. This section which considers the design of plantation forest is most relevant to Irish conditions.

This book is a definitive guide to the planning, design and management of forest landscapes; it reviews the theory and principles of forest design as well as providing practical guidance on methods and tools. It focuses on ecosystem regeneration, the landscape planning of natural forests and the design of plantation forests. The reader is presented with a variety of international case-studies. The authors use visualisation techniques, design process and evaluation techniques to promote landscapes that are designed to optimise the balance between human intervention and natural evolution. Overall, it is a comprehensive, practical and accessible book essential reading for all those working in forestry, natural resources and the landscape.

Foresters who ignore this new thinking do so at their peril. There are many other professions with an interest in the countryside and they will not allow foresters to develop new areas of woodland which ignore the wider ecological and landscape consequences. Failure to consider the wider landscape inevitability leads to time consuming and expensive conflict.

John Mc Loughlin

(John Mc Loughlin is the Executive Director of the Tree Council of Ireland and the current Vice-President of the Society of Irish Foresters.)