



TIPS FOR OUTDOOR FIELD EXPERIENCES WITH WOMEN LANDOWNERS

Sun and Shades - Position yourself to be the one to look into the sun so participants don't have to squint. Wear a hat or visor if needed so you can handle the sun. Sunglasses obscure their view of your eyes making you appear less trustworthy and prevent you from building/maintaining community using eye contact.

Gone with the Wind - Windy days are the worst for outdoor teaching - it can be hard to hear you and participants get tired of trying and head for the bus. Hearing loss is common among older women and wind and hearing aids don't always mix well. Speak slowly and distinctly and cut your comments shorter.

Set the Pace -If you lead the group by striding out ahead a bit they will follow more quickly. If you hang back with the group and are leisurely, they will also wander slowly. You can set the pace with your movement and manage the time accordingly. If the group is strung along a narrow linear path and you have a small thing to show, ask the first one or two to stay there and make sure everyone in the line can see the thing and then they join the end of the line until you wait for the group at the next main stop. Teaching something is a great way to learn it.

Describe the Details - if you're looking at something at a distance, help your participants look precisely at what you're seeing by describing textures and color differences. Help them see as you're seeing, and if you have other experts there ask them also to describe how they're looking at the same thing using their discipline. For example if there's a windbreak, foresters "read" trees differently than biologists, than watershed specialists, than entomologists, etc.

Remember the Shy - If you are walking with one or two people who are eager to ask detailed questions who stick close to you, it's easy to get drawn off and forget that others might find the information interesting. Remember to restate the question and give the answer when the group is together to build and maintain community which is important to the women. It takes discipline to attend to the entire group. Mix with everyone equally if possible.

Stop Before You End -Try to conclude your last point before the group can either see the bus or parking lot or before you've turned towards the bus. Once the group senses you are done it can be very difficult to get their attention again.

Share the Toys -After you have demonstrated use of any field equipment, even a simple spade, hand it to the women to use and explore. This reinforces the concepts that they are completely capable of doing conservation and understanding and making decisions for their own land.

Listen and Connect- Be sure to convey a relaxed and conversational atmosphere that allows women to show their expertise and also be brave enough to ask what they don't understand. Take the time to point out other ecological connections you understand that show that we, and our agricultural practices, are part of the community. Identify birds, wildlife signs, soil critters, plants, and talk about land producing clean water and clean air - all beyond property lines. Women "get" community and neighboring and will appreciate the linkages that you highlight.