

UVM FACULTY AND GRADUATE STUDENTS WORK ON SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY ISSUES IN UKRAINE

By Jared Nunery and Associate Professor William Keeton

In late September three Rubenstein School graduate students embarked on a two week journey to Eastern Europe, led by Associate Professor William Keeton

(Rubenstein School) and Assistant Professor Josh Farley (CDAE). Offered as a travel course, UVM faculty and students participated in an intensive problem-solving workshop (called an “atelier”) sponsored by a grant from the Trust for Mutual Understanding (Bill Keeton, P.I.). UVM’s Gund Institute has pioneered the use of ateliers around the world. These bring together professionals, scientists, economists, and stakeholders at all levels, including local community members. Participants work together to assess a particular problem and identify potential solutions based on stakeholder input. Our atelier explored opportunities for integrating principles of sustainable forest management (SFM) ecological economics into Ukraine’s post-Soviet transitional economy. We focused on the Carpathian Mountain region, which has been recognized as of global cultural and ecological significance.



UVM-led workshop participants working in the field in the Transcarpathian region of Ukraine. A cultural landscape typical of the region is shown.

SFM and ecological economics are particularly relevant to Ukraine’s transitional economy. As the country emerges from a decade of severe economic depression and

debates membership in the European Union, critical SFM issues are emerging. These include the potential consequences of changing land tenure (e.g. privatization of public forestlands), promotion of community based forestry systems (including traditional forest uses), and policy reforms (e.g. changes in national forest practice codes) needed to promote provision of non-market ecosystem services, such as carbon sequestration.

The atelier brought together students and faculty from several U.S., Swedish, and Ukrainian universities as well as international and Ukrainian non governmental organizations, Ukrainian State Forestry Ministry officials, community council members, and other local stakeholders. Graduate student involvement was encouraged at all levels. Rubenstein School students Michelle Baumflek, Sarah Crow, and Jared Nunery as well as several graduate students from the Swedish University of Agricultural Science, and nearly a dozen Ukrainian graduate students were all involved in every step of the atelier. Ideas and recommendations developed at the atelier will be published in a journal special issue and in popular media both in Ukraine and internationally. Perhaps the most significant result, however, was the dialogue and exchange that occurred among atelier participants. This event and continued collaboration between UVM and the Ukrainian National Forestry University will help develop connections in the former Soviet Republics, which comprise an extremely vital part of the world with tremendous cultural and ecological resources hanging in the balance of an uncertain future.



From left to right: Jared Nunery, Prof. Bill Keeton, Michelle Baumflek and Sarah Crow in a European beech forest in the Carpathian Mountains of Ukraine.