

Forest Management: A Long-Term Investment

A Few Things to Keep in Mind About Your Forestland

Know Your Boundaries

- You need know where your property is
 - Foresters and timber harvesters need to know which trees are yours
 - Old barbed-wire fences or stone walls are not good enough
 - A boundary line should be clearly blazed and painted
 - Clearly identifying your boundaries is the first step in any forest management activity
- If need be, hire a surveyor to conduct a through-the-woods survey and identify the property boundaries and corners.
- Proving that your boundaries were clearly marked is important for resolving any potential timber trespass or property dispute. Remember: “Good fences make good neighbors.”

Management Plans

- Management plans help you determine and follow through on your long-term management goals for your forest.
- Objectives are formulated by
 - Inventorying:
 - Tree species
 - Tree size
 - Tree density and spatial arrangement
 - History of land use
 - Association with surrounding properties and landscape
 - Soils and geology
 - Waterways and wetlands
 - Understory plants
 - Presence of endangered species or unique habitat
 - And incorporate the inventory data with what your management goals are for:
 - Timber and pulpwood
 - Firewood
 - Recreation and aesthetics
 - Wildlife
 - Water resources
 - Remember: not every management objective can be met on every piece of land
- A basic management plan should include:
 - Forest stand descriptions
 - Management practices needed to achieve your goals
 - A timeline for when objectives should be completed
- Forest management goals take many years to complete (Long-Term)

Why Conduct a Timber Harvest?

- Your trees are worth money
- To improve your stand for future harvest opportunities
 - Increase stand growth rate
 - Increase quality of timber
- For a specific management objective
 - Growing high quality timber
 - Fuelwood production
 - Change current species type, i.e: convert a plantation to a mixed hardwoods stand
 - Storm or pest damage remediation
 - Improve wildlife habitat
 - Add recreational trails or improve access

If Planning a Timber Harvest:

- Know the difference between a forester and a logger
 - A forester uses science based silvicultural techniques to help you best manage your woodlot. A logger harvests trees.
 - For more information go to www.forestry.about.com or <http://www.na.fs.fed.us/spfo/stewardship/index.htm>
 - If a logger knocks on your door and waves a wad of cash at you, think: “This offer is too good to be true.” Unsuspecting forest owners are often taken advantage of and left with only low-quality standing timber. Foresters will sell both high and low value timber, leaving you with a healthy forest that may be ready for another harvest in as soon as 10-15 years. Often times, the low-value timber that is sold by foresters, but left by loggers, will cover the forester’s fees.
 - It is not uncommon for a forester to be able to get up to 50% more money than what a logger would offer you up front.
 - Remember, your trees are worth money.
- Hire a forester to inventory and mark your trees, AND conduct the timber sale.
 - Foresters:
 - Understand proper silvicultural techniques
 - Will get you fair market value for your trees
 - Are familiar with any state, county, and local regulations that may apply
 - Selling Timber
 - Have a signed contract with the forester that states the forester’s responsibilities and payment agreements
 - A forester will then send requests for bids from loggers or may market timber to brokers.
 - **Have a signed contract with the logger.** Contracts are negotiable and this brief summary barely scratches the surface, but some of the most important elements include:
 - starting harvest and payment dates and amounts
 - requiring a performance bond in addition to full payment
 - Many additional conditions may include: 1. Will the roads and landings be cleared of debris? regraded? seeded? 2. All marked timber will be cut. 3. What are the penalties for unnecessary damage or cutting of unmarked trees.
 - Loggers should be able to show proof of current worker's compensation and public liability insurance for not only himself, but ALL of his employees AND anyone that the logger may subcontract with. **Put it in the contract!**
 - The forester should do site visits during the harvest
 - Request to meet with the Forester and Logger before the cutting begins.
- Know About Best Management Practices (BMPs)
 - BMPs are forest practices that help to protect water quality, keep soil erosion at a minimum, and reduce lasting effects to your forest ecosystem. Ask your forester if he includes BMP’s in his management decisions.

After the Harvest:

- Realize that the aesthetics of your property will be changed, but many of these changes (depending on the type of harvest) are short term.
- Follow up with the forester AND follow through on your management plan.

Remember that YOU are the boss; this is YOUR property. The forester and the logger work for YOU.

**Often, loggers get a bad rap, remember not all loggers are dishonest.
But, once the trees have been cut, it’s too late to call a forester--or to change your mind.**

And finally, you can always contact your local New York State DEC Forester or a Master Forest Owner Volunteer (Cornell Cooperative Extension) to request a free on-site visit to discuss management options for your woodlot.