



WORKING WITH FORESTERS AND LOGGERS

FOREST STEWARDSHIP MANAGEMENT NOTE #18

INTRODUCTION

Private landowners who want to be good stewards of their land generally need assistance from natural resource professionals. Foresters, wildlife biologists, fisheries biologists, landscape architects, and/or other natural resource consultants may be needed to develop management plans depending on landowners' interests. Loggers, tree planters, and physical management contractors also play a key role in the implementation of many management plans. The degree of satisfaction landowners obtain from managing their woodlands depends on finding foresters (and/or other consultants) who understand and represent their interests and loggers (and/or other contractors) who will follow specifications skillfully and carefully.

This Note introduces the types of foresters who are available to help private landowners. It outlines the steps landowners should take when seeking assistance from foresters or loggers, and it summarizes the timber sale process. Sources of further information are listed.

JUDGING FORESTERS QUALIFICATIONS

In Michigan, the profession of forestry is not regulated, so anyone can call him- or herself a "forester". There are, however, several ways to determine if a forester is qualified to assist landowners.

1. REGISTERED FORESTERS - Many, but not all, qualified foresters in Michigan are "registered foresters", meaning they have voluntarily been evaluated and have been approved by the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulation (#6).
2. CERTIFIED FORESTERS - Some Michigan foresters are "certified consulting foresters", meaning they are members of the Michigan Association of Consulting Foresters (MACF) which requires nomination and evaluation by peers (#5).
3. SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FORESTERS - Many foresters are members of the Society of American Foresters (SAF) which requires nomination by other SAF members. SAF membership indicates a serious interest in forestry, but members are not necessarily qualified to assist landowners.
4. REFERENCES - Finally, it is always possible to ask foresters and loggers for landowner references and/or for the location of sites where the results of their previous work may be seen.

TYPES OF FORESTERS

1. GOVERNMENT FORESTERS - At the federal level, the U.S. Forest Service runs the National Forests, conducts research, and distributes information on forestry matters (FSMN #43), but it does not provide much direct assistance to private landowners. At the state level, the Forest Management Division of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has a few Cooperative Forest Management (CFM) foresters statewide who primarily administer the Commercial Forest Act (a tax reduction program for parcels of 40 acres or greater that are devoted to timber production) and the Stewardship Incentive Program (SIP). These "service foresters" also provide limited direct assistance to landowners in some areas, including the development of management plans.

The main source of public forestry assistance in Michigan is through county Conservation Districts (CD's). Several CD's in the heavily forested parts of Michigan have staff foresters who advise landowners on forestry matters, conduct annual tree sales, and provide technical assistance for federal cost-sharing programs (FSMN #43). These services are generally free of charge but limited in their extent.

2. **CONSULTING FORESTERS** - Consulting foresters are professional foresters who offer a wide range of forestry and related services to the general public on a fee basis (#2,5,10). They are usually self-employed or affiliated with private consulting or real estate firms. Fees may be set according to time spent, area or distance covered, amount of wood sold, a percentage of the timber sale receipts, or other method. The main advantage of consulting foresters is that their job is to represent the landowner's interests. Thus, consulting foresters are more likely to give serious consideration to wildlife habitat, visual quality, and other non-timber values, if landowners make these goals clear, and if their fee is not based solely on timber sold.

3. **INDUSTRY FORESTERS** - Paper mills, sawmills, and other wood-using industries sometimes employ procurement foresters to secure a constant supply of wood. Arrangements vary, but industry foresters typically offer to develop management plans and sometimes to provide other forestry services in exchange for long-term cutting rights or the right of first refusal on salable timber (#2). The advantage of working with an industry forester is that there is a guaranteed market for the wood, and the services are free, at least in the sense that there are no out-of-pocket expenses for the landowner. Landowners should be clear, however, that such foresters are really working for the industry, and their primary job is to keep the wood flowing to the mill.

STEPS TO TAKE WHEN SEEKING FORESTRY ASSISTANCE

Good land management starts with good planning. For most landowners, the best approach is to have a Forest Stewardship Plan (FSP) developed by an approved plan writer. FSP's are detailed, 10-year plans that consider wildlife, water, soil, and other resources, in addition to the timber resources usually emphasized in forest management plans. Approved plan writers include most consulting foresters, some DNR foresters, some industry foresters, and some SCD foresters (in which case there is a charge).

1. **CONTACT THE COUNTY CD FORESTER** - In most cases, landowners should start their search for forestry assistance with their county CD forester. CD foresters can supply general information about forestry issues and the various assistance programs that may apply. If the landowners are not eligible for, or interested in, the Forest Stewardship Program, the type of basic management plan SCD foresters prepare would be a good starting point. Landowners should also check with their local DNR office to see what assistance is available.

If the landowners already know they will be conducting a timber harvest, or other project requiring assistance beyond basic planning, it generally makes sense to have a Forest Stewardship Plan written by the consulting or industry forester who will implement the plan. In any case, CD and DNR foresters can supply information about other foresters and related services in their area.

2. **CONTACT SEVERAL CONSULTING AND INDUSTRY FORESTERS** - Whenever landowners need assistance beyond the preparation of a management plan, they should contact several consulting and industry foresters to discuss services and rates. Landowners who are unsure about who to work with should ask to meet in person with the foresters they are considering, preferably on the property. The factors to consider include fees, training, experience, and good communication skills, especially listening skills (#2). A good technician who ignores landowners' interests may do more harm than good.

3. **HAVE A WRITTEN CONTRACT** - Landowners should always insist on written contracts for any type of forestry services, except, of course, free ones. Such contracts should spell out the details of the services included, the fees involved, the duration of the agreement, and a statement regarding the forester's ethical responsibilities (FSMN #35). Normally the forester will provide a standard contract, but landowners should feel free to request modifications. See Reference #2 for sample contracts with consulting and industry foresters.

OVERVIEW OF THE TIMBER SALE PROCESS

In order to protect their interests, landowners need to understand the elements that make up a good timber sale before they make any commitments. The process may vary slightly, but each of the following steps should be included in some form.

1. CHECK FEASIBILITY - Verify that there is an adequate amount of timber that should be cut at the present time to enhance the landowners' objectives (#8,11,12, FSMN #15) and that the timber is physically and legally accessible (FSMN #4).
2. DETERMINE PROPERTY BOUNDARIES - Locate and clearly mark any property boundary lines near the sale area (FSMN #1).
3. DETERMINE STAND BOUNDARIES AND HARVEST METHODS - Locate and clearly mark the boundaries of the harvest areas and determine the type(s) of harvesting to be done (FSMN #17).
4. DESIGN ROAD SYSTEM - If an adequate road system does not already exist, one should be planned (FSMN #5).
5. DESIGNATE TREES - Where only certain trees are to be cut, these should be clearly marked on their trunks and on their bases, so it can be determined which trees were marked after they are cut. It may also be important to mark, with different colors or symbols, the trees that should be specially protected for wildlife (FSMN #28) or other reasons.
6. ESTIMATE TIMBER VOLUMES - To advertise the timber to be sold, estimates of the amount of wood to be sold must be made by species and product type (pulpwood, sawlogs, veneer logs, etc.) (#3, FSMN #15).
7. ADVERTISE THE SALE - The best way to obtain a good price for timber is usually to advertise for competitive bids (#2,3,9). Brief adds may be placed in suitable places, but a more detailed timber sale notice (prospectus), which includes timber volumes, specifications for harvesting and other work, a map, and the terms of the sale, should be prepared for potential buyers who express a serious interest. Consulting foresters typically mail such notices to all the reputable loggers in the area.

Timber sales are usually either "lump-sum sales", meaning a single dollar amount is paid for the total contract based on the estimated amount of wood available, or "scaled sales", meaning the amount paid depends on the actual amount of wood taken to market (#1,2,3). In the latter case, bidders offer specific rates for each type of wood. Both methods have advantages and disadvantages, but the lump-sum method is generally recommended (#13).

8. SELECT LOGGER - A logger should be selected based on the bids received and the ability to do a good job. When in doubt, ask loggers for the names of landowners they have worked for and for locations where the results of their work can be seen.
9. DEVELOP A TIMBER SALE CONTRACT - It is essential to have a written timber sale contract that details all aspects of the job. Landowners should review sample contracts (#2,9,13) and feel free to add any provisions they feel are important regarding aesthetics (#4, FSMN #33) or other issues. For example, a provision might be included stating that the "best management practices" be used to protect water resources (#7). However, any unusual provisions should be stated in the sale notice so loggers can adjust their bids accordingly. It should also be kept in mind that more restrictions will usually result in lower bids.
10. SUPERVISE HARVEST - Before logging starts, the consulting forester (or the landowner if no forester is involved) should meet with the logging crew to emphasize key points in the contract, answer questions, and establish a cooperative atmosphere (#3). The forester should also inspect the operation periodically at unannounced times to ensure compliance with the contract. If it is necessary to talk with the logger, it is best to do this when there is a break in the work.

Supervision is especially important near the beginning of the operation, to ensure that specifications are understood, and again near the end of the job, so that the roads are stabilized, and the clean-up provisions of the contract are met before the loggers leave.

REFERENCES

FSMN #'s refer to other Forest Stewardship Management Notes in this series.

- #1 Barbour, P. 1994. Selling stumpage? Protect your investment. National Woodlands, January 1994.
- #2 Beattie, M., et al. 1993. Working with your woodland: A landowner's guide. University Press of New England.
- #3 Blinn, C.R. and L.T. Hendricks. Undated. Marketing timber from the private woodland. University of Minnesota Department of Forest Resources.
- #4 Jones, G.T. 1993. A guide to logging aesthetics. Practical tips for loggers, foresters, and landowners. Northeast Regional Agricultural Engineering Service, Ithaca, NY. NRAESÄ 60.
- #5 Michigan Association of Consulting Foresters (MACF). 1993. Professional assistance for forest landowners. MACF, 5700 Orchard Hwy., Manistee, MI 49660 (616)723-9946.
- #6 Board of Foresters. Undated. A registered Forester can help you! Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulation, P.O. Box 30018, Lansing, MI 48909 (517)373-3880.
- #7 Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Forest Management Division. 1993. Water quality management practices on forest land (A manual for Michigan's forest landowners, managers and users). This publication is generally referred to as the "Best Management Practices" (BMP's).
- #8 Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Forest Management Division. Undated. Managing the hardwood woodlot, when should I harvest my trees? Forestry Information Bulletin No. 6-6.
- #9 Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Forest Management Division. 1986. Timber sale guidelines for the private woodland owner. Forestry Information Bulletin No. 6-2.
- #10 Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Forest Management Division. 1986. Should you hire a consulting forester? Forest Management Bulletin No. 6-1.
- #11 Solomon, D. 1988. So, you need some cash from your farm woodlot? Michigan State University Extension, Forestry Fact Sheet 04.
- #12 Solomon, D. 1988. Cutting and selling timber from your farm woodlot. Michigan State University Extension, Forestry Fact Sheet 05.
- #13 Szydzik, J. and J.E. Gunter. 1993. Timber sale contracts. Michigan State University Extension Bulletin E-1656.

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