



LAND OWNERSHIP GOALS AND MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

FOREST STEWARDSHIP MANAGEMENT NOTE #34

"We need trees. We need them for industry and building and paper...but we must never forget there is something in trees besides the practical."
-Sigurd Olson

WHAT ARE LAND OWNERSHIP GOALS AND MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES?

1. LAND OWNERSHIP GOALS - are the general, long-range aspirations landowners have for their land. They are derived from the landowners' ethics and the values they place on various aspects of their land (FSMN #35). Examples include:

- Good hunting
- Clean creek water
- Financial profit from timber harvesting

2. LAND MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES - can be conceived of as desired future conditions of the land that will enhance the ownership goals. Examples of such conditions for the above goals might be:

- Increased acorn production
- Reduced soil erosion from old logging roads
- Increased growth rates of crop trees

WHY ARE WELL-DEFINED GOALS AND OBJECTIVES IMPORTANT?

1. LAND OWNERSHIP GOALS - Ownership goals provide the guiding principles for making decisions about land management practices. Most management practices affect many aspects of the land (e.g., timber, wildlife, soil, water, visual quality, etc.). How then can practices be selected if the relative importance of the affected resources to the landowners has not been spelled out? Thus, landowners and their consultants need to thoroughly discuss goals and to prioritize them in their management plans.
2. LAND MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES - The purpose of management objectives is to provide a physical basis for evaluating the success of the selected management practices. Thus, objectives should be stated in terms of things that can be objectively measured, or at least directly seen.

HOW CAN OWNERSHIP GOALS BE CLARIFIED?

An attempt to define goals should be made at the start of the land management planning process. The Michigan Forest Stewardship Assessment Form, which is a required part of Forest Stewardship Plans, serves as an initial statement of goals. Following are some additional steps that may help landowners consider the options and further refine their ownership aspirations.

1. ASK KEY QUESTIONS -

- Why did you buy the land?

- What do you want to get from the land?
- How do you use the land?
- Who else uses the land?
- What do you want the land to look like?
- What do you plan to do with the land in the long-run?
- What is your favorite thing about the land?
- Where is your favorite place on the land?
- How do your parents and children feel about the land?

2. ALLOW GOALS TO EVOLVE - Defining goals requires landowners to look at their personal values (FSMN #35), their financial status, and the future of their family. It may also require information from consultants regarding the capabilities and limitations of the land (FSMN #4) and the impacts of proposed management activities. Thus, landowners' goals may evolve during the process of developing a management plan.
3. WALK THE LAND - One of the best ways to clarify goals is for landowners to discuss their interests with consultants while walking the land. Invariably, this activity provides insights into the landowners' attitudes and informs landowners about the land's capabilities and limitations and the management practices that may apply. Where walking the land is not feasible, discussing the area with the aid of maps and aerial photos is a reasonable substitute.
4. CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITIES - Another useful exercise is to review the following list of possible goals. Check all the items that apply, add notes about localities or other details. Some items may appear under more than one category.

CHECKLIST OF LANDOWNERSHIP GOALS

Income Goals (Resources marketed to make money):

- Timber Resources:
 - Immediate income
 - Periodic income
 - Future income
- Non-Timber Resources:
 - Real estate (investment, subdivide)
 - Alternative woodland crops:
 - Christmas trees
 - Maple sugar
 - Woodland mushrooms
 - Other
 - Lease for hunting or other recreation
 - Mineral resources
 - Farm crops
 - Livestock

Subsistence Goals (Resources used directly to save money):

- Timber Resources:
 - Fuelwood
 - Building materials
- Non-Timber Resources:
 - Real estate (building sites)
 - Alternative woodland crops:
 - Maple sugar

- Woodland mushrooms
- Other
- Mineral resources (gravel, stone)
- Farm crops
- Livestock

Biological Conservation Goals:

- Fauna:
 - Game (list species of interest)
 - Fisheries (list species of interest)
 - Non-game (list species of interest)
- Flora:
 - Species of interest
 - Vegetation types of interest
- Biodiversity

Environmental Conservation Goals:

- Soil
- Water
- Other Concerns

Recreational Goals:

- Consumptive Uses:
 - Hunting
 - Fishing
 - Foraging (berries, nuts, etc.)
- Non-consumptive Uses:
 - Aesthetics/Visual Quality
 - Non-motorized activities (hiking, skiing, observing, etc.)
 - Motorized activities (snowmobiling, ATV, etc.)

HOW CAN MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES BE CLARIFIED?

Once ownership goals have been established, the process of defining management objectives can be viewed as a 4-step process.

1. **ASSESS EXISTING CONDITIONS** - The first step is to assess the current status of the property in terms of the stated goals. For example, if "clean creek water" is a goal, an evaluation of the existing water quality and related problems would be in order.
2. **STATE OBJECTIVES IN TERMS OF DESIRED FUTURE CONDITIONS** - The next step is to determine what changes, if any, need to be made to enhance the stated goals. For example, if the creek is cloudy due to sedimentation from old logging roads, reducing the rate of erosion would be an important objective. By defining objectives in terms of "process rates" (e.g., erosion rates, tree growth rates), attention is focused on how the system functions rather than on specific management actions. This approach keeps landowners' and managers' minds open to alternative solutions and aware of the need to plan for natural changes.
3. **PROPOSE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS** - The third step is to propose specific management actions (prescribe practices) to affect the needed changes. For example, the installation of waterbars and geo-textile mats could be proposed to reduce erosion rates (the objective) and, thus, improve creek water quality (the goal).

4. RESOLVE TRADEOFFS - Sometimes, practices that enhance one goal detract from other goals. For example, installing erosion control devices would clean up the creek water, but the expense involved would reduce the profitability of the forest, at least in the short-term. On the other hand, practices proposed for one purpose may have other beneficial effects.

A simple way to check for such complications is to list objectives down the side of a page in rows and proposed management practices across the top in columns. Then go down each column and indicate (with symbols, numbers, or words) the effect each practice is predicted to have on each objective. Such a chart will not provide any answers, but it will help to clarify the tradeoffs involved in alternative action plans. At this point, the science of land management becomes an art.

REFERENCES

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

- #1 Perkey, A.W. 1991. So you want to be a private non-industrial landowner? Forest Management Update No. 12. USDA Forest Service, Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry.
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- #3 Pywell, N.S. 1983. What do you want from your woods? Selecting goals and making plans. Pennsylvania Woodlands Number 2, Pennsylvania State University Extension.

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