



Foresters

and the Care of Your Land



Your Woods

Your woods are a complex, living ecosystem that is always changing. Trees grow, trees die. Wildlife species come and go over time. Insects and disease are always present. Even if you never cut a tree, or even visit your woods for years, it will not stay the same.

For any landowner, there are choices regarding the management of your woods and the future of your land. The key is to know what your options are and how to find local resources to help. Foresters can help you understand your options, recognize your opportunities, and design management strategies that meet your needs. By practicing sound woodland management, landowners can enjoy the full spectrum of benefits from their woods: timber products, clean water, abundant wildlife, aesthetics, and peace of mind.

No matter what you do with your land, the key to success is making informed decisions.

What is a Forester?



A FORESTER IS A PROFESSIONAL with a college-level education and experience in a broad range of forest-related topics, including forest and wildlife ecology, economics, legal issues, and the growing and harvesting of forest products. Foresters in Massachusetts are required to hold a state license, which is generally based on experience, training, and ongoing continuing education. Foresters in Connecticut are certified by the state, which requires passing an examination and ongoing continuing education.

People often confuse the professions of forester and logger. To understand the difference, consider the roles of an architect and a builder. An architect works with a client to design the kind of home he or she would like. Based on the desires of the client, the architect develops a design that incorporates a host of options: Tile or linoleum? Skylights or track lights? One or two bathrooms? The architect's plan is implemented by a builder who then turns it into reality. The best blueprint isn't worth anything if it isn't in the hands of a good builder. And if an architect does a poor job drawing up the blueprints, even the best builder in the world will construct a flawed home.

Foresters can serve as woodland "architects," helping landowners develop goals and understand available options for their woods. Foresters outline alternatives based on the landowner's goals for the property—timber management for income, wildlife habitat enhancement, recreational trails, or a mix of these benefits—and draw up plans to achieve those goals. A logger is in the business of cutting down trees, cutting them into logs, removing the logs from the woods to the roadside, and transporting the logs to the sawmill. The logger is like the "builder" and may be involved with the implementation of the forester's plan or "blueprint" if timber harvesting is involved.

Types of Foresters



WHEN CONSIDERING options for your woods, you may first want to contact a public service forester. Employees of the state's forestry agency, public service foresters can visit your land and provide you with on-the-ground advice for no fee. They provide basic information on your woods, its potential for different benefits and products, and specific information on programs that affect property taxation. While enlisting the help of a public service forester is a great place to start, many landowners need more detailed information and assistance than a public service forester's limited time can provide.



Forester and landowner discussing management options

Private foresters build on what you and the public service forester begin together. They can provide answers and help you make sound stewardship decisions.

Unlike public service foresters, private foresters charge for their services, but are well worth the investment. The timber from even small properties can be worth thousands of dollars. What other asset of such value would you own without knowing more about its potential rate of growth, the extent to which it might be at risk, or alternatives for management?

Often the only difference between rewarding, enjoyable woodland ownership and poor, even disastrous decisions is good information.

There are two types of private foresters: consulting foresters and industrial foresters. Consulting foresters generally work independently or in small firms and are paid directly by the landowner. Industrial foresters are private foresters employed by a sawmill or other wood-using industry.

Services Provided by Private Foresters

Managing a wooded property can be complicated and time consuming. As they work with you and for you, foresters can provide advice and assistance to help you understand alternatives, supply information so that you can make informed decisions, and provide some or all of the following services:

- **Developing a forest management plan:**

A forest management plan is a good way for a landowner to define and organize his or her objectives. The plan describes and maps the natural resources of the property and defines a program

of activities for a specified period of time. Potential components of a management plan include timber harvesting, fostering of wildlife, recreational use, scenic beauty, and protection of water quality.



Forester measuring tree for management plan development



Management planning is a requirement for participation in each state's "current use" property tax program (MA: Chapter 61, CT: Public Act 490, RI: Farm, Forest, Open Space Program [FFOS]).

• **Selling timber:**

For most landowners, the process of harvesting and selling timber is foreign and unknown. It can be a complicated and somewhat intimidating process in which everyone but the novice landowner seems to know what they're doing. Timber harvesting requires expertise—such as knowledge of current price information and familiarity with markets, jargon, contracts, and environmental regulations that apply to the operation—that most landowners do not have.

Ignorance of these issues can lead to serious and expensive mistakes.

Landowners can avoid these pitfalls by retaining a private forester and benefiting from professional advice.

Foresters identify which trees should be harvested to accomplish the landowner's objectives. They determine how much volume will be removed and how much value or income will be received. They can also draft a contract and supervise the harvest to meet the landowner's goals, protect the landowner's interests, and ensure compliance with environmental regulations.

Private foresters have proven to be well worth the money. Research has shown that the average landowner makes more money in a timber sale by relying on the expertise of a competent private forester than by selling timber on their own. A

Several points to remember

- Never conduct a timber sale without the involvement of a forester.
- Never sell timber without a written contract.
- Never reach an agreement that results in an unsupervised harvest.

consulting forester will usually sell timber on a competitive basis to a number of different loggers or sawmills. An industrial forester will usually purchase standing timber without charging direct fees. The supervision provided by a competent private forester during the timber sale ensures that the woods are left in excellent condition with the landowner's concerns for aesthetics and

wildlife habitat taken into consideration and that the timber sale conforms to environmental regulations.

• Conducting forest inventories and appraisals:

An owner (or potential buyer) of woodland may need to know the volume and quality of the timber on a property. The forester can provide this information by doing a timber cruise or forest inventory with a site analysis.



Forester marks trees to be cut in preparation for timber sale

• Doing timber stand improvement:

Timber stand improvement (TSI) may include any combination of treatments designed to improve the growth and quality of timber. Thinning constitutes most of the TSI work performed in New England forests. However, TSI work may also include pruning and planting.



Foresters discussing conservation opportunities with a landowner

• Assisting with estate planning and taxation matters:

The woodland planning horizon extends many decades into the future—often well beyond the life span of the current owner. Land values are resulting in estate taxes so large that, unless careful estate planning is done in advance, the land itself must be sold to pay the inheritance taxes. While estate planning is complicated and requires expert legal and financial assistance, most foresters are familiar with its important elements and can suggest where to go for additional information.

Other forester services include finding and marking property boundaries; using GPS and GIS technology to map boundaries and other special features (forest types, trails, streams, habitat locations); enhancing wildlife habitat; monitoring conservation easement; and taking an inventory of the age, health, and condition of your woods.

Finding Foresters

Managing your property is a lifetime endeavor with serious legal, financial, and environmental implications. Choosing a private forester to assist you is an important process.

Step 1.

Start by contacting your public service forester who can make a free "first visit."

Step 2.

Shop around when choosing a private forester to work with and get bids from multiple foresters. Talk to friends and neighbors to find out who they use. Like many other professions, there are a wide variety of capabilities and price structures. Many foresters will make a brief first visit at no charge. Also ask foresters for references of satisfied clients and ask if you can visit a prior job site of theirs.

Step 3.

Ask how the forester will be paid (per diem or per job) and always have the payment method stated in the service contract. If a timber sale, fees can be based on a percentage basis of revenue generated, by the volume of timber marked, by the hour of service, or some other method. Fees can also be based by the hour, by the acre, or by the mill purchasing the lumber.

Step 4.

The most important thing is to find a private forester you can effectively communicate and work with. Find one with the skills and talents that you need and who can listen and understand your needs. Remember: it's your property. You must determine your goals, the nature of the work, and the desired end result.

Step 5.

As in many aspects of life, there are good and bad consulting foresters, industrial foresters, and loggers. In all cases, it pays to get multiple bids, talk to friends, and check references. Shop around.

"No matter what you do
with your land, *the key*
to success is making
informed decisions.
Foresters are local
professionals that
can help you evaluate your
options and make a
decision that's right for you."

The Future of Your Land



LANDOWNERS FACE decisions about more than their trees, timber, wildlife, or recreation options. Escalating real estate values make annual property taxes and potential inheritance taxes a serious financial burden. Landowners often want to keep their land wooded, pass it on to their heirs, or make sure it stays natural, but lack a full understanding of their alternatives.

Conservation easements are one tool that extinguishes all or some of the development rights, thereby ensuring that the land will remain wooded into the future. These development rights can be sold or gifted to a private land trust, conservation organization, or state agency. With the development rights on some or all of a property removed, the assessed value of the property is lower, thus reducing property and inheritance taxes. The property can still be privately owned and sold or passed on in an estate, and landowners can retain rights to hunt and exclude the public. Conservation options can also be written to allow woodland management and other agricultural uses. Land protection specialists are professionals who work with land trusts, conservation organizations, or state agencies, and provide assistance to owners considering an easement or other conservation tools for their land.

Landowners interested in conserving their land should work with a conservation organization whose mission is compatible with the landowner's objectives and the conservation value of the land.

Foresters can help landowners find conservation organizations that share the same values as landowners.

Foresters can also help facilitate conservation projects by providing information and maps about the natural resources of the land.

Find a Land Trust in Your Town

Connecticut:

Connecticut Conservation Clearinghouse
<http://www.nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/states/connecticut/news/news2207.html>

Massachusetts:

UMass Extension
<http://www.masswoods.net>

Rhode Island:

Rhode Island Land Trust Council
(401) 331-7110



How to Contact Your Public Service Forester and Find Local Resources

Connecticut

UConn Department of Extension Forestry Program
<http://www.canr.uconn.edu/ces/forest/>

- Contact an extension forester
- Information on forest management, forest products marketing, and related topics

Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Forestry
www.ct.gov/dep/forestry

- Contact information for your local public service forester
- Use value property tax program information
- Listing of Connecticut certified foresters

Massachusetts

UMass Extension—Forest Conservation Program
www.masswoods.net

- Find the public service forester, private foresters, and land trusts in your town
- Information on selling timber, including developing a contract
- Forestry Program: Ch. 61 and Forest Cutting Practices Act

MA Department of Conservation and Recreation's Service Forestry Program

For program information go to: www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/forestry/service/index.htm
or call: 1-800-783-2311 to leave a message for the public service forester in your town.

Rhode Island

Department of Environmental Management
Division of Forest Environment
1037 Hartford Pike
North Scituate, RI 02857
401-647-4389 or 401-647-3367
<http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/bnatres/forest/>



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Foresters are excellent local resources to help landowners make informed decisions about the management and conservation of their land. This pamphlet describes:

- What a forester is;
- Types of foresters;
- Services provided by foresters;
- How to find a forester in your town.