



## Why Use a Professional Forester?

Most farmers have hard-earned knowledge about cows and grass, but how many of us understand our timber lands? Most of the decisions we make on our pasture land we will see in a few months or at the most, a year down the road. Decisions we make on our timberlands might show up 10-20 or even 50 years down the road. This “long range” thinking is different than our normal thinking process.

How many of us see our timber as a lump sum income that comes along once every 30-40 years? Does our management consist of getting our logger neighbor to cut down to a specific stump size while we take no active role in this harvest? Here are some points that I would like to make in regard to managing and harvesting your timber.

*Use a professional forester:* Farmers have no problem getting professional help to doctor their livestock and test their hay and soil, but how many use a professional on their timberland? Decisions we make on our timberland have a lasting impact on air, water and wildlife quality, and a professional forester will take some of the guess work out of our management process. Most professional foresters will give the landowner different options for sustainable current and future income.

*Take ownership of your timberland:* Most of us monitor our pastures or look at our livestock on at least a weekly basis, but how many of us watch over our timberland? Monitor and be aware of both good and bad things going on in your forest. Set goals to achieve desired results and follow through in meeting your objectives. Be prepared to make needed adjustments either through management practices such as controlled burns, timber harvests or thinning. If and when you accomplish some of these objectives, continue to monitor the land each year afterwards.

*Economic benefit:* Many farmer and timber owners don't appreciate the economic benefit a professional forester can add to the bottom line. There can be vast differences in amounts offered to landowners for their timber. Once again, taking an active role in the process of the sale and harvest can be the difference between getting a low price or a significant income. A professional forester can inventory and mark your timber or help carry out your entire timber sale.

*Where can I go for help:* The Missouri Department of Conservation is a wonderful source for both information and professional help. MDC can assist with inventories and marking timber. There are also private consulting foresters in most areas. There are programs through your local NRCS that can help with cost-share for management and many timber practices.

Don't make snap decisions on management of your timberland. The decision you make will not only affect timber quality and health in your lifetime, but generations down the road.

Article by: Eric Fuchs, Private Landowner, Eastern Ozarks Forestry Council

Submitted by Peter Maki, Forestry Communication Specialist, Top of the Ozarks RC&D