



## Missouri Department of Conservation & Top of the Ozarks RC&D Forestry Committee

The following column is the third in a series intended to benefit woodland owners.

### **WHY FOREST MANAGEMENT?**

**By Tom Draper**

People view forests through a variety of lenses.

Some see them as a place to enjoy nature's beauty. Others see a place that offers recreational activities for their family and friends. A number of people envision forests as a periodic source of income from sale of forest products and others find comfort while gazing at the forest their ancestors once owned.

Despite which lens you use, it's important to remember that everyone is responsible to ensure natural resources like forests exist for future generations.

Forests are not only important to the current stewards but to society in general. An ancestral proverb of Native Americans states that the current generation of natural resource users does not own those resources but are borrowing them from their children and grandchildren. With increasing human population, the concept of being a wise steward of natural resources such as forests is essential.

It is well demonstrated that healthy forests provide clean water, clean air, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities and income.

Forested landscapes provide clean water. Our clear water Ozark streams are evidence of how a forest protects water quality.

Forests may also help reduce the impact of the "greenhouse effect." Healthy, fast-growing forests act as carbon storage areas.

Missouri is home to about 730 species of wildlife, many of which live in the forest during part of their life. White-tailed deer, wild turkey, salamanders and neo-tropical migrant song birds are found in Missouri's forests.

Forests are important to the millions of Missourians who hunt, hike, camp, enjoy scenery, watch birds, canoe or photograph nature.

Progressive forest management also makes good financial sense.

If you are a cattleman or dairyman actively managing the herd, you know that active management maintains herd health but provides for optimal financial return.

If you run a business, you must know the current inventory status of your product or service, you must understand existing and potential markets and you must have a plan on how to maintain and improve your business for optimum success.

The same goes for the sustainable management of your forest. While financial returns from a forest land holding may be more periodic in nature, it still pays to actively manage your forest landholdings.

Depending upon a forest landowner's objectives, active management can improve wildlife habitat, protect water resources, restore native plant and animal communities and maximize financial returns.

Forest management isn't a complicated process, but it does take a systematic approach, beginning with a plan of action.

Call an expert at the Missouri Consultant Forester Association, a local Natural Resource Conservation Service office or your local Missouri Department of Conservation office. They'll help you start a plan of action. After all, future generations depend on it. Submitted by Peter Maki, Forestry Communication Specialist, Top of the Ozarks RC&D



