



Consulting Forester – What They Can Do For You

Most people who have forest land do not have the time, money or knowledge to manage them; they either have jobs or other farming interests. They know they would like to earn income from the forest and still have a forest they can enjoy, either by hunting or watching wildlife in that forest.

My husband and I had a management plan on our farm, and my husband had done most of the work to reach those goals in the plan. I helped with tree plantings mostly and enjoyed trips through the woods to check on the progress. The time came when I had to decide if I could proceed with that work on my own. My first thought was that I could not tackle the job. The forester we had worked with in the past came forward with a revised plan, and I have continued with our tree farm's work.

We have managed to have a yearly income, through marking and harvesting mature and diseased trees. We have continued with the timber stand improvement (thinning out the less desirable trees and planting new seedlings). There is also natural regeneration. The logger said after cutting one area and returning a few years later, the deer and turkey population had increased. The forester (now a consulting forester) made all the difference in my accomplishing the necessary job.

The main reason people hesitate about hiring a consulting forester is that they foresee a huge expense. If you only want to do a one time timber sale, the forester can help you with the marking and identifying timber, bid preparations, contract terms and tax liabilities. He can, by wording of the contract, ensure that your roads and land around the timber site will not be abused, causing soil erosion. By being aware of timber prices and the footage you are selling, he can assure you obtain a fair market price. We became aware of the vast differences in bid prices after one of our first timber sales. We had bids ranging from \$7,000 to around \$15,000. The amount we finally received was over \$25,000. The difference between \$25,000 and the \$15,000 will pay for a forester to do his job and still leave the customer with a substantial difference.

If, however, you have long range goals, the consulting forester can guide you through the process by: helping write a management plan to meet your goals; inventory; stand identification; assisting with researching whatever programs are available to benefit you; work on timber sales; and keep you abreast of new ways you can realize income from your forest. The management plan you create will serve you over a

period of many years. As your goals change, you can revise the plan.

The University of Missouri Extension Office and the Missouri Department of Conservation are a couple of good resources available to help you recognize your goals.

This is a personal view of the benefits of hiring a consulting forester. Our forest, I hope, will be healthy, productive and beautiful for years to come, so that our family and the wildlife can enjoy them as I do now.

Jo Dixon
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