

## Woodland Management

# Marketing Forest Products: Understanding the Sale Process

There are many reasons for choosing to harvest timber on your land—both economic and non-economic. Landowners who choose to sell their forest products as fuelwood, timber, or pulpwood have the opportunity to generate income. This income can provide for special “life needs” such as a child’s education, retirement, or help with the costs of starting a business. However, depending on the landowner’s management goals, harvesting forest products can also create or modify wildlife habitat on the property; removing immature trees can promote the growth and vigor of residual trees; and natural events such as damage by gypsy moth and storm damage can provide an opportunity to harvest forest products and receive some revenue that would otherwise be lost.

Landowners who leave their woodlands alone may not produce optimal wildlife habitat. In an unmanaged forest, overcrowding often retards tree growth, makes forests more susceptible to disease and insect damage, and reduces the diversity of wildlife habitats. Woodland areas of any size can be managed to improve wildlife habitat and tree growth. In many cases, owners of adjacent properties can work together to improve management and reach shared goals.

This fact sheet is intended to guide the forest landowner through the timber marketing process. There are six basic steps to ensure a successful timber harvest:

- 1) Develop a forest stewardship plan.
- 2) Interview, select, and enter into a contract with a consultant forester.
- 3) Conduct preharvest planning activities—mark and tally the timber and lay out roads.

- 4) Solicit competitive bids on the timber.
  - 5) Select a logger and sign a written contract.
  - 6) Oversee the sale until logging is complete.
- Each of these steps is detailed in the text that follows.

### 1) Develop a forest stewardship plan.

Forest stewardship requires the management of forest resources in a way that meets the needs of current owners, but does not adversely affect future generations. Therefore, the decision to harvest trees should be part of a written forest stewardship plan and not the result of a sudden offer from a timber buyer. Forest stewardship plans describe the forest resources present on the property, the landowner’s management goals and objectives, and the recommended practices or activities to be carried out over the next 10 years on the land. The plan serves as a “roadmap” to guide your actions and can be developed by any professional forester. More information on the details of a forest stewardship plan can be found in Fact Sheet 625, “Developing a Forest Stewardship Plan,” available from Maryland Cooperative Extension.

What type of forester do I need? Maryland is one of the few states in this region that requires a professional forester to have a state license. To be licensed, the forester must have a 4-year forestry degree, have forestry experience, and complete eight continuing education credits every two years. There are four types of foresters:

- A public agency forester is typically based in a specific county or multi-county area and works for the State of Maryland DNR Forest Service.

They can develop forest stewardship plans but will not handle commercial timber sales.

- A consultant forester is an independent forester who works as the landowner's agent representing the landowner's interests. They work on a commission or fee basis. They can develop forest stewardship plans as well as work with the loggers to carry out the timber harvest. They provide other services as well.
- An industrial forester works for a particular mill and represents the interests of that mill..
- An extension forester is a professional educator who works for the state cooperative extension and provides educational materials, workshops, research, and other assistance.

A listing of state, consultant, and industrial foresters can be found at [www.naturalresources.umd.edu](http://www.naturalresources.umd.edu).

## **2) Interview, select, and enter into a contract with a consultant forester.**

The harvest of timber is an activity that most landowners will only do a few times during their lifetime. It is not recommended that you sell directly to a buyer who comes to your door and offers money for your timber. Most landowners lack the knowledge to know if they are getting an equitable financial return, what the impact will be on their future forest, and even what a good logging job looks like.

Instead, landowners are encouraged to use an agent or representative of their choice to guide them through the process of selling timber. In most situations, the landowner hires a consultant forester to act as the landowner's agent in the sale. A well-run timber sale includes three people: the landowner, the logger, and the professional forester. Using a consultant forester will usually result in a better job environmentally and a better financial return. A written sales contract is used to assure protection of the land resources. Ideally, the consulting forester should regularly check on the harvest progress and work with the logger to protect the landowner's interests. Normally, trees in the sale area are individually selected, marked, and tallied by type, size, and product. With specific volume and tree information developed by the consultant, the landowner knows what trees will be cut before the harvest and can visualize what the trees will look like. Finally, using a consultant forester will usually result in more income because the timber is properly

measured, evaluated and sold using a competitive bid, or "sealed" process with guidance from a knowledgeable professional.

Some forest landowners are reluctant to hire a professional consultant forester because a fee is involved. However, experience proves that a higher sale price more than makes up for the forester's fee, often many times over, and the site is usually left in better condition for the future. An additional benefit to having a consultant forester assist in a timber sale is that fees associated with hiring a consultant are normally deducted as a sale expense. A consultant forester can help the landowner through all the steps of a timber harvest.

## **Steps to Selecting a Consulting Forester**

As with other professionals, some consulting foresters are better than others at representing the landowner's and the forest's best interests and following through on all duties. The following recommendations will help you select the best forester for your needs.

- \* First, it is highly recommended that you talk with other landowners who have used a private consultant forester. Word of mouth will usually help you find reputable foresters whom your neighbors have been satisfied with.
- \* Second, after selecting several consulting foresters, interview them on the phone about your forest stewardship objectives, their cost of services, availability, etc. You should ask for references, experience, and a prior job site to inspect. While they must be registered in Maryland, ask if they are a member of a professional association such as the Society of American Foresters or Association of Consultant Foresters.
- \* Third, have one or more of the foresters visit you on your property. Most will provide an initial visit at no cost. You should select a forester who understands and can fulfill your goals, provides a reasonable cost for services, has good references, and has a personality compatible with yours.
- \* Finally, sign a written contract with the forester regarding the services and fees and communicate with him or her regularly. The forester will become a partner in the stewardship of your land.

### 3) Conduct Preharvest Planning

#### Select a Harvest Method Based on Sound Silviculture

Silviculture is a planned process for tending immature trees and establishing new trees in a forest-how to grow them, how to maximize growth and return, and how to manipulate tree species compositions to meet landowner objectives. Silviculture plans are developed to enhance forest benefits including visual and scenic qualities, wildlife habitat, ecological aspects, water quality and quantity, wood production, and recreation enjoyment.

Perhaps it is worthwhile to mention what silviculture is not.

“High-grading” and “diameter-limit cutting” are not acceptable silviculture practices. High grading (often referred to as “select cutting”) is cutting only the highest value trees with smaller, defective, and lower value trees left for continued growth or as a potential seed source. Diameter-limit cutting means trees are not selected based on their individual attributes, but only on their diameter. Diameter-limit cutting can also be very confusing and difficult to administer because the location of the “diameter” that is being used for reference is often quite variable and may be based on the stump diameter rather than the actual size tree, which is normally calculated at breast height (4.5 feet above the ground). Since most forests in Maryland are even-aged the smaller diameter trees are usually the same age as the larger ones, but are slow-growing and lack the potential to form the new forest. When only larger, better trees are removed and the smaller, inferior ones remain, the quality of the forest declines rapidly. This seriously limits the economic and silvicultural potential of the forest. Often, a mix of trees of all sizes and quality should be included in a timber sale.

Silviculture looks not only at the current forest, but also at the effects of present-day harvesting on the next forest. Foresters are in a unique business in that they commonly make management decisions that can impact tree quality, wildlife habitat, and growth many years into the future.

Silvicultural harvesting methods can be categorized into three practices: uneven-aged management, even-aged management, and improvement cuttings. The three practices are described below:

#### Uneven-aged Management

Uneven-aged management harvesting systems-those that have a mix of trees of different ages, involve the removal of trees through either single tree selection or group selection. Single tree selection removes individual trees dispersed throughout the forest. Every 10 to 25 years, some trees of all sizes, quality conditions, or ages are removed. Small openings are created for the establishment of new trees. Also, by removing some of the trees, nutrients and growing space are available to the remaining trees.

With the group selection system, small groups of trees covering one-fifth to one-half an acre are removed to create an opening. The openings provide conditions for the establishment of new trees. Between the openings, the cutting will also remove scattered individual trees to thin the rest of the forest and promote the growth of the trees remaining. Repeated application of this system creates groups of trees of different ages, dispersed throughout a stand. Due to the locations and sizes of the groups, each of the age classes occupies a similar amount of space in the stand.

#### Even-aged Management

Even-aged management involves shelterwood, seed-tree, and clearcutting methods. The shelterwood system creates stands with trees all about the same age. Generally one-half to two-thirds of the mature trees are removed. This lightens the understory, but leaves a reserve of tall trees to serve as a source of seed and to partially shade the ground. New trees become established from their seeds. Then another cutting removes the remaining older trees when the new trees reach heights of 5 to 10 feet.

Seed-tree and clearcutting systems create stands with trees all about the same age, but using different methods. The seed-tree method removes all but a handful of widely scattered mature trees and these provide seeds for the new trees. A second cutting removes all of the mature trees when new trees reach heights of 5 to 10 feet. Clearcutting removes all the older trees at one time, providing an open environment for a new age class to become established and grow.

#### Improvement Cuttings

Improvement cutting includes a range of practices, such as commercial thinning, timber stand improvement, and crop tree release. The practice removes poorer quality trees, as well

as some of the better quality ones, to allow the remaining trees to take advantage of the growing space. The remaining trees use the available sunlight to produce more leaves, which increases the production of “food” in the leaves. This increase in food is used by the tree for growth, and results in a more rapid rate of diameter growth. It is important to understand that the purpose of improvement cuttings is not to regenerate the forest, but to increase the growth rate of the remaining trees and alter the species that will dominate the future forest.

### Mark and Tally the Timber to be Harvested

The forester should meet with you on the property to review the forest stewardship plan recommendations and explain how or why the plan may differ from his recommendation. A plan is only a guide. Your objectives, forest conditions, and other factors may have changed since your plan was developed or last revised. If no plan exists, you may want to ask that one be developed along with the timber sale work.

You will need to provide the forester with a map, survey, or other information so the boundaries can be clearly marked. The forester is typically responsible for generating or researching the map to accurately mark the boundaries. You want to avoid any potential problems with cutting trees on your neighbor’s property that could lead to legal action. The forester should be able to explain the silvicultural method being used and how it will benefit the forest and meet your objectives. Trees in the sale area should be selected for harvest based on their individual attributes, such as species, size, products, growth potential, and other factors. Trees are individually marked with paint about 4.5 feet above the ground, as well as with a spot of paint on the stump near the ground. When the tree is harvested, the stump mark will remain and verify that the tree was selected to be cut.

### Understanding Stumpage Value

The consultant forester will tally the trees that have been marked by species, diameter range, and quality. Timber is usually sold as “stumpage,” which is the price paid to the landowner for the standing trees. Stumpage values are expressed as the amount of money the landowner receives for 1,000 board feet of timber harvested. A board foot is a standard measure that is one-inch thick and one-foot square. After measuring the diameter of a tree in the forest at 4.5 feet from the ground

(commonly known as diameter at breast height or DBH) and determining the number of 16-foot logs that can be harvested from each tree, tables are used to determine how many board feet of timber would be produced from that tree if it were cut down and sawn into boards in a sawmill.

Landowners should know that different log rules are used to measure the amount of board feet in a standing tree. A log rule is a table or formula that estimates volume, usually board feet, in logs or trees based on the diameter and height measurements. The International 1/4” rule [AU: What is this measurement? It didn’t translate. See changes] rule is the most accurate, while the commonly used Doyle rule tends to underestimate the amount of board foot volume in standing trees, especially smaller trees. For example, if the average diameter of harvested trees was 20 inches, using the Doyle rule would result in only 3/4 [AU: What is this measurement?] of the volume in board feet compared to using the International 1/4” [AU: What is this measurement?] rule. If you are selling timber by the board foot, discuss and understand which rule is being used to measure the timber. If the timber is going to be sold using a lump sum sale, the type of rule used will usually not matter, because all buyers will be bidding on the same timber, and should understand the rule differences.

Stumpage prices are collected in various states and regions and can provide the landowner with a general idea of what the timber may be worth in the present market. Since timber usually is not a perishable product, the landowner should consider stumpage prices and their trends and schedule sales to take advantage of this information. The Maryland Stumpage Price Report can be found on the Maryland Cooperative Extension website at [www.naturalresources.umd.edu](http://www.naturalresources.umd.edu). Stumpage price reports are collected from consulting, industrial, and state agency foresters and are intended to serve ONLY AS A GUIDE in the marketing of standing timber. The actual value of a specific stand of timber may be influenced by numerous factors, including timber quality, volume to be cut, logging terrain, market demand, distance to the mill, season of the year, size of the average tree, and environmental restrictions.

### 4) Solicit Competitive Bids on the Same Timber

The forester will prepare an invitation to bid

based on the information collected that will be mailed to many potential buyers in the area.

The invitation to bid provides needed information to all potential buyers, in addition to the diameter, species, and estimated number of board feet. This includes the name of the owner and forester, location of the property, terms of the sale, a time and location when the forester will meet with interested parties to tour the sale areas, and when the bids will be opened. The owner typically reserves the right to reject all bids. A sample invitation to bid is provided in the appendix.

The forester and owner will meet at the specified time and open all the bids received. Depending on the size and quality of the sale, there may be many bids or a few. The consultant forester can provide advice on the pros and cons of selecting various bids. In some cases, the size of the sale, markets, location, or other factors may result in few or no bids. In these cases, the consultant forester may be able to contact a few buyers directly and negotiate a sale at an acceptable price, or the sale may be postponed.

The use of an invitation to bid allows the landowner to receive bids on the same timber. Landowners often receive unsolicited offers from timber buyers through the mail or personal contact; however, it is impossible to compare the financial aspects of different offers, since each buyer may be interested in different trees.

## **5) Select a Logger and Sign a Contract**

During the logger selection process, consider using a Maryland Master Logger current in his training. This voluntary training program offers instruction in forest management principles, forest ecology, proper harvest design and layout, safety practices, and lifesaving skills. In addition to the training courses, Master Loggers must attend one continuing education course on a related topic per year. This ensures that Master Loggers are up-to-date on the most recent laws and techniques in the industry. Additionally, Master Loggers understand the principles of forest stewardship and can partner with the forester in accomplishing your objectives. For more information on the Maryland Master Logger Program, visit the website of the Maryland Forests Association at [www.mdforests.org](http://www.mdforests.org).

Once you have selected a logger, sign a written contract guaranteeing the rights of all parties.

All timber sales, regardless of size, should be accompanied by a written contract. There is usually some percentage of the sale price paid at the time of the contract signing. However, the type of sale method will control how you get the rest of your money. Most timber sale contracts allow for 6 months to 2 years to harvest the timber. A sample timber sales contract can be found in Appendix C.

The method of payment agreed upon in the contract should be carefully considered, because it can have serious tax implications. There are three basic types of sale methods:

- **Lump Sum Sale**-The buyer and owner agree on a price for the total sale, based on marked timber volume and value. The buyer will typically provide a significant portion of the money at the time of signing, with the owner receiving all the money before any timber is cut. This is the most common and preferred method by landowners.
- **Sell by Unit**-The buyer offers a price per unit- so much per thousand board feet-which is measured at the landing or at the mill. This method assumes that all the wood harvested will go to the mill you have selected. If the logger or mill go bankrupt or have financial problems, it may be difficult to collect your money in a timely manner. There must be a high level of trust with the logger and mill to justify this method. The buyer must also understand which rule is being used to measure the volume given the large differences.
- **Percentage Basis**-Provides the seller with 30 to 60 percent of the profit from sale to the mill. Similar to the previous method, this requires a high level of trust with the logger and mill. In general, most landowners benefit from the lump sum sale method. Because payments received in a percentage sale are normally based on the amount of volume that actually makes it to the sawmill, utilization of harvested trees and corresponding income can be extremely variable and is very dependent upon the ethics and professional demeanor of the harvesting contractor. However, if you are in the timber sale business, lump sum sales will prevent you from claiming that status on your taxes.

It is essential to consider the timber tax implications of the sale method used, and spreading the sale out over multiple years to

reduce capital gains, but there are other basic tax considerations, such as deductible expenses, capital gains treatment, determining the basis, tax credits for boundary marking in the year of the sale, and asset depreciation. More information on the details of timber tax planning can be found in Fact Sheet 630, "Tax Planning and Estate Planning for Maryland Forest Landowners," and in Extension Bulletin 360, "Forest Management Account Book," both available from Maryland Cooperative Extension.

## 6) Oversee the Sale

A timber harvest takes time and planning. Roads must be constructed to protect water quality, and stream buffers and wetlands require best management practices (BMPs). The number and variety of agencies and regulations involved in the timber marketing process are good reasons why most forest owners should use a professional forester to assure the timber harvest is done properly. However, it is ultimately the landowner who is responsible to see that harvesting complies with any and all regulations.

The use of forestry BMPs is required in forest harvest operations to help reduce sediment and nutrient runoff into streams and rivers. BMPs also protect sensitive areas and wildlife habitat. Your professional forester will ensure that BMPs are being practiced. After your harvest, it is important that the landowner maintain the roads and stream crossings to control possible erosion. Forestry BMPs can be grouped into five main categories:

1. Haul roads and skid trails-the location, construction and use of haul roads and skid trails; maintenance of surface water drainage; and soil rutting caused by tires.
2. Stream crossing-the number of stream crossings, the amount of stream bank disturbance, and the maintenance of surface water drainage.
3. Streamside management zones-the retention of required forest buffers, the amount of disturbance in these areas, and the amount of logging debris in the stream channels.
4. Landings and log decks-the location of landing and log decks relative to stream channels, maintenance of surface water drainage, and the amount of litter left on the site.
5. Soil stabilization-surface erosion control on cut-and-fill slopes, landings, and skid trails.

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources has a very informative website that contains more information on BMPs as well as information on the Chesapeake Bay, public lands, and wildlife and plants. Log on to the site at [www.dnr.state.md.us](http://www.dnr.state.md.us).

## Where to Get Help

If you are ready to harvest your timber, the first call you should make is to your state forester with the Department of Natural Resources Forest Service. Regional DNR Forest Service offices are provided below. A full listing of state, consultant, and industrial foresters is available from your state forester or local Maryland Cooperative Extension office (<http://www.agnr.umd.edu/MCE/offices.cfm>).

A full range of educational information and resources on forest stewardship can be found at the Maryland Cooperative Extension website at [www.naturalresources.umd.edu](http://www.naturalresources.umd.edu).

DNR Headquarters & Regional Offices (<http://www.dnr.state.md.us/forests/phonelist.html>)

- Headquarters & Southern Region Office (Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Prince George's, and St. Mary's), Tawes State Office Building, E-1, 580 Taylor Avenue, Annapolis, MD 21401, 410-260-8540, TTY 410-260-8835.
- Western Regional Office (Allegany, Frederick, Garrett, and Washington), 3 Pershing Street, Room 1011, Cumberland, MD 21502, 301-777-2137.
- Central Region Office (Baltimore, Carroll, Cecil, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, and Baltimore City), 2 S. Bond Street, Bel Air, MD 21014, 410-879-4500, ext. 4557.
- Eastern Regional Office (Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico, and Worcester), 201 Baptist Street, Suite 22, Salisbury, MD 21801, 410-543-6595.

Maryland Cooperative Extension-Extension Forester, 18330 Keedysville Road, Keedysville, MD 21756, 301-432-2767, ext. 323.

# APPENDIX A

## Selected Timber Management Terminology

**Clearcut**-a regeneration technique that removes all the trees, regardless of size, from an area in one operation. Clear-cutting is most often used with species like yellow-poplar, pine or black cherry, which require full sunlight to reproduce and grow well, or to create specific habitat for certain wildlife species. Clear-cutting produces an even-aged forest stand.

**Diameter-limit cut**-a timber harvesting treatment in which all trees over a specified diameter may be cut. Diameter-limit cuts often result in high-grading.

**Even-aged stand**-a group of trees that do not differ in age by more than 10 to 20 years or by 20 percent of the rotation age.

**High-grading**-a type of timber harvesting in which larger trees of commercially valuable species are removed with little regard for the quality, quantity, or distribution of trees and regeneration left on the site.

**Release**-removal of overtopping trees to allow understory or overtopped trees to grow in response to increased light.

**Regeneration**-the replacement of one forest stand by another as a result of natural seeding, sprouting, planting or other methods; also young trees that will develop into the future forest.

**Regeneration method**-a timber harvest designed to promote and enhance natural establishment of trees. Even-aged stands are perpetuated by three regeneration methods: seed tree, shelterwood, and clear-cutting. Uneven-aged stands are perpetuated by selecting individual or small groups of trees for removal.

**Residual stand**-trees remaining following any cutting operation.

**Salvage cut**-the removal of dead, damaged, or diseased trees with the intent of recovering maximum value prior to deterioration.

**Sawlog**-a log large enough to yield lumber. Usually the small end of a sawlog must be at least 6 to 8 inches in diameter for softwoods and 10 to 12 inches for hardwoods.

**Seed tree method**-a regeneration technique

where mature trees are left standing in a harvested area to provide seed for regeneration of the cut-over site.

**Selection method**-a regeneration technique designed to create and perpetuate an uneven-aged forest. Trees may be removed singly or in small groups. A well-designed selection cut removes trees of lesser quality and trees in all diameter classes along with merchantable and mature high-quality sawlog trees. Should be differentiated from "select" or "selective" cuts, which often equate to high-grading.

**Silviculture**-the art, science, and practice of establishing, tending, and reproducing forest stands.

**Silviculture treatment**-altering the existing composition and structure of a stand to achieve a given management objective, such as thinning a timber stand.

**Site quality**-the inherent productive capacity of a specific location (site) in the forest affected by available growth factors (light, heat, water nutrients, anchorage); often expressed as tree height at a base age.

**Stand**-a grouping of vegetation sufficiently uniform in species composition, age, and condition to be distinguished from surrounding vegetation types and managed as a single unit.

**Stumpage**-the commercial value of standing trees.

**Succession**-the natural series of replacements of one plant community (and the associated fauna) by another over time and in the absence of disturbance.

**Thinning**-removal of trees to encourage growth of other selected individual trees. May be commercial or pre-commercial.

**Timber-stand improvement (TSI)**-a combination of intermediate treatments designed to improve growth and composition of the forest.

**Understory**-the smaller vegetation (shrubs, seedlings, saplings, small trees) within a forest stand that occupies the vertical zone between the overstory and the herbaceous plants of the forest floor.

**Uneven-aged stand**-a group of trees of a variety of ages and sizes growing together on a site.

APPENDIX B

Sample Bid

The following sample invitation to bid statement is what loggers will receive and use as a guide to provide you and your forester with a price quote.

Owned by: Joe Landowner

1234 Tree Lane

Forest City, MD 22229

Marked by: Paul Professional Forester; Forests-R-Us-MD LPF #33

4444 Dirt Drive

Forest City, MD 22229

NOTICE OF INVITATION TO BID ON FOREST PRODUCTS

Forests-R-Us is offering for sale an estimated 125,000 board feet of timber and 75 cords of pulpwood/fuelwood. Trees to be sold have been marked with blue paint. The trees marked for cutting will be sold on a lump-sum basis, using the International 1/4" Rule. [AU: Measurement?] Timber has been marked on approximately 35 acres.

Timber Description (A more detailed timber description is attached.)

Species Estimated Volume

No. of Trees	Avg. Vol/Tree	
Red Oak	21,420 BF	102
	210 BF	
Yellow Poplar	47,357 BF	135
	350 BF	
Black Oak	10,106 BF	24
	421 BF	
Black Walnut	8,123 BF	50
	162 BF	
Black Cherry	1,671 BF	7
	238 BF	

The timber is located on the Landowner property at the address above. The timber will be shown on January 19, 2003 at 8 a.m. Interested buyers should meet at the Forest City Post Office. See attached map.

- Sealed bids should be sent to the address listed above. Bids should contain the lump sum amount offered for the marked timber. Bid envelopes should be marked "Bid-Landowner" and will be accepted until 4 p.m. on February 9, 2003, at which time they will be opened and read. All bidders will be notified of the results within one week. The landowner reserves the right to reject any and all bids.
- The successful bidder will be expected to sign the timber sale contract within 10 days. Full sample contracts will be available at the showing.

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by  
Authors

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