

10-30-2000

It's Your Woodland

Maine Forest Service
Forest Policy and Management Division

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalmaine.com/for_docs

Recommended Citation

Maine Forest Service, "It's Your Woodland" (2000). *Forest Service Documents*. 261.
https://digitalmaine.com/for_docs/261

This Text is brought to you for free and open access by the Maine Forest Service at Digital Maine. It has been accepted for inclusion in Forest Service Documents by an authorized administrator of Digital Maine. For more information, please contact statedocs@maine.gov.

2. TAX ASSISTANCE

Under the Maine State Income Tax Law, tax credits of up to \$200 to help pay for forest management plans are available. The credit offsets some of the expenses incurred in preparing a plan.

3. MAINE'S TREE GROWTH TAX PROGRAM

Finally, consider enrolling your woodlot in Maine's Tree Growth Tax program. Property tax savings may be realized if you manage your woodland for forest products (see page 8). However there are penalties if you cease to use the land for forestry.

*The Maine Forest Service,
established in 1891,
works to ensure the greatest
economic and social benefits
from trees and
the forest lands of the State,
for present and future generations
of Maine citizens*

For more detailed information on topics introduced in this booklet, please contact:

Maine Forest Service

ATTN: Forest Information Center
22 State House Station,
Augusta, ME 04333-0022

1-800-367-0223 (from within Maine) or
(207) 287-2791.

IT'S YOUR WOODLAND



AN OWNER'S GUIDE

Maine Forest Service
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION



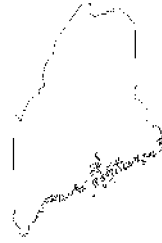


Your Woodland, Your Values:

Your woodlot, however small, is valuable to you, your family, to life in Maine and beyond. It is valuable as a place for outdoor recreation or aesthetic enjoyment. It can renew one's health, peace of mind and serenity of spirit. It produces wood and other commercially valuable forest products. Yet the natural services it provides may be worth even more. Your forest land protects and develops soils, watersheds and biodiversity while providing a home for wildlife. As trees take up carbon dioxide and release oxygen, they improve the air we breathe and even help mitigate global warming.

This booklet introduces you to ways to improve your woods that benefit you and the communities and natural systems of which you are a part. It lists contacts for assistance and more detailed information. Managing your woodlot is rewarding in many ways. With proper care, you can:

- Enhance its health, biological diversity and ecological integrity
- Improve its beauty and recreational value
- Improve wildlife habitat, soil and water quality
- Improve the rate of growth and quality of your trees and, thus, your timber profits
- Assure a steady supply of fuel wood
- Produce other valuable forest products
- Contribute to clean, healthy air and a stable climate.



• Help Improve Maine's Forests.

Maine is the most forested state. Yet our forests are threatened by subdivision, sprawling development, owner neglect, poor harvesting practices, insects and disease. Proper forest management promotes healthy, vigorous and valuable trees. It contributes the rich biological diversity so vital to the health of the forest and its wildlife. While you, the owner, benefit the most from careful management of your woodlot, you also contribute to Maine's environmental, ecological and economic resources.

Consider:

- Nearly half of Maine's 17.7 million acres of forest land is owned by private, non-industrial owners like you.
- These lands contribute about one third of Maine's annual timber harvest.
- Each year, about 80% of the State's residents use Maine's forest land for outdoor recreation such as camping, hiking, cross-country skiing, hunting, fishing, snow-mobiling or bird-watching.
- About 4.2 million acres of Maine's woodland are not yet actively managed.

As a careful manager of your own piece of the Maine woods, you may take added satisfaction knowing you are doing your part to sustain for future generations the same fine quality of life our forests presently provide for us.



Improving Your Woodlot:

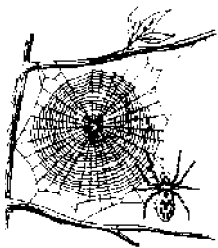
Establishing Objectives

Explore, discover, observe, reflect, ... get to know and appreciate your woods. Consider what it means to you, to the greater systems of which it is a part and to those it contains. Such understanding is fundamental to good forest management. Considering possible objectives and how specific actions might interact for the most satisfying results, will help you develop a management plan for your woodlot.

The following sections describe various objectives you might have as a woodland owner and suggest actions you can take to achieve many, often interrelated objectives. In many cases, activities which achieve one objective may also improve it in other ways. For example, a timber harvest can not only provide income, but the access trails created may also benefit wildlife, recreation or the regeneration of more diverse species. Yet some objectives must be weighed against each other. For example, you must weigh time and costs against the social and environmental considerations of hiring a traditional logger with horses versus one with machinery. However you decide, the care you give your decision-making will lead to long term satisfaction with the results.

A. Improve Forest Ecosystem Health

You and your woods are part of a greater web of life, dynamically weaving earth, sun, water and air into interdependent human and biological communities. Just so, your



forest land is alive with communities of creatures engaged in life processes with far-reaching consequences. Each species, however seemingly insignificant, plays a role - often not fully understood - within the whole, integrated life of the ecosystem. You can foster your forest's ecological health if you:

- ♦ manage to foster a diversity of native species
- ♦ protect or plant regional rare and endangered species
- ♦ weed out diseased or defective trees and aggressive, habitat-destroying invaders
- ♦ make ecological integrity a priority while pursuing all other objectives.



B. Support Recreation

You can improve your woodland for outdoor recreation if you:

- Create or maintain trails for hiking, riding, biking, skiing, bird-watching, hunting, cross-country skiing, etc.
- Plant or maintain forested buffers along lakes and streams, improving water quality for fishing, swimming and other water sports.



C. Enhance Forest Beauty

A healthy forest is beautiful. Visiting it is a continuing source of health and happiness. Some of the many ways you could enhance your woodlot's natural beauty or your ability to enjoy it are to:

- Plant or maintain a variety of species and ages of trees and shrubs around visible landscape features like waterways, public roads or where your yard meets the woods

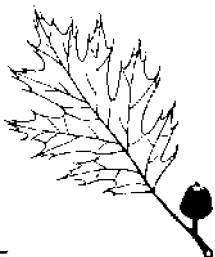
- Use low impact forestry methods (See www.acadia.net/lif)
- Plant or manage selectively to add the beauty of flowers in springtime, or colorful fruit and foliage in the fall
- Develop a wildflower or shade garden
- Maintain scenic vistas or access trails by beautiful features of your woods, like a pool in a brook, a mossy log or patch of ferns.
- Dispose of trash, pile woody debris for wildlife.



D. Improve Wildlife Habitat

The forest provides habitat for wildlife. The variety of species, numbers and condition of the wildlife population depends on management options. To support abundant wildlife, it must offer space, a plentiful supply of good food, water and protection from predators and weather. The following measures can be used to enhance wildlife habitat:

- Avoid monocultures: keep a variety of species, ages and sizes of trees to insure continuous supply of food and shelter.
- Leave some "wildlife" trees: hollow logs or standing trees that provide roosts, nesting sites and food for birds and small mammals.
- Pile brush, slash and woody debris to provide cover for small animals and birds.
- Weed, thin or prune to favor trees and shrubs that produce food like acorns, nuts, fruits, and berries for wildlife.



- Seed native grasses on logging roads, trails, road banks, wood yards and in woodland

openings to provide food for wildlife and ground cover.

- Conserve shore land and wetland areas for wildlife habitat.



E. Conserve, Improve Soil and Water Quality

Leaves falling to the ground from trees continually create and enrich the forest loam. Tree roots help tiny creatures break up the woodland soil, making it porous, so it safely holds enormous amounts of moisture. Water from rain and snow filters through the soil. There it provides drinking water and nourishes plant and animal life as it moves slowly downhill to feed lakes, streams and underground reserves in the watershed. Consider from where and to where your woodland drains. Practices that protect your watershed, ensure cleaner water and reduce soil erosion are to:

- Keep forested buffers along lake shores and stream banks to cool water and guard against silt and agricultural pollution
- Take special care in locating and constructing roads, skidways, landings and trails, so as to minimize soil erosion. Replant disturbed ground cover
- Use Best Management Practices (BMPs) installing water bars, culverts, diversion ditches and other measures to hold soil.

Most water bodies are regulated to protect water quality. Observe all state and local ordinances for water crossings and timber harvesting operations near lakes and stream.



Atlantic Salmon.

F. Improve Timber & Wood Production



Just as an untended garden seldom produces bumper crops, so a

neglected woodlot seldom produces large quantities of high-value timber. There are several measures you can take to improve the value of timber on your woodlot.

- Weed your young stands to remove unwanted tree species. Use firewood.
- Thin maturing crop trees, removing overtopping, crowded and defective trees to increase growth of best trees and produce firewood or other products.
- Prune the stem or bole (up to 17 feet) on select trees to produce high value, knot-free sawlogs and veneer logs.
- Harvest in ways that enhance natural regeneration, like leaving high quality seedtrees and well-formed young trees as shelterwood to protect the quality and development of the future stand.

F. Develop Special Forest Products



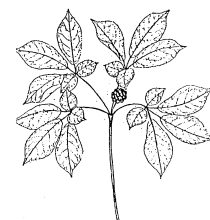
Special forest products include such items as Christmas trees, fir balsam tips for wreaths, burls for crafts, maple syrup, nuts, fruits, berries, floral supplies, gums and resins. These and other non-timber forest products can provide income while the trees are growing. Some of the ways you can increase production and improve the quality of special products from your woodlot are:



- Thin stands of sugar maple to grow better crowned, healthier trees with more sap.
- Remove brush and thin, prune or shear balsam fir

to obtain tips and well-shaped Christmas trees.

- Thin to favor nut or fruit producing trees and shrubs like pine, walnut, hazelnut or cherry. Other possibilities are:
 - ♦ growing ornamental trees,
 - ♦ keeping bees for honey
 - ♦ cultivating valuable mushrooms or medicinal herbs like ginseng (right) or goldenseal.



Developing a Management Plan

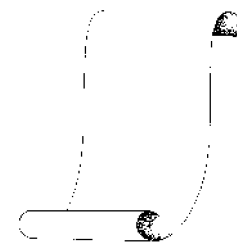
Once you have considered your aims and objectives, their potential impact and how they might best work together - you may be ready to draw up a concrete plan to improve your woodland.

Why Plan?

A management plan drawn up with the assistance of a licensed forester is required to qualify for a lower property tax rate under Maine's Tree Growth Tax Law.

Even when not required, a well considered multiple use resource management plan is a valuable tool for woodlot owners. Such planning, particularly with professional advice, can:

- aid in establishing aims and objectives
- help you avoid unforeseen costs and unintended consequences
- alert you to environmental laws which may apply (Activities on your woodlot must conform with state and local natural resource laws and the Maine Forest Practices Act.)

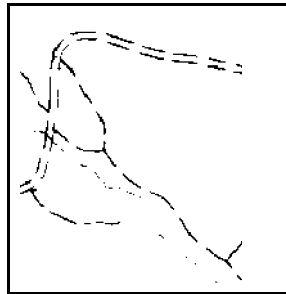


- It should describe the current condition of your woodlot and identify its potential to increase in value.

A management plan usually contains a map locating your property lines, an inventory of your woodlot's resources, your objectives, an evaluation, and recommendations. It should contain an implementation schedule of activities designed to help you plan your time most efficiently and profitably.

1. Boundary Lines

A licensed forester or surveyor can work with you to find your boundary lines and to make sure they are well marked and maintained. If the boundaries are not known or are unclear, you may wish to employ a registered surveyor to undertake a formal survey of your land.



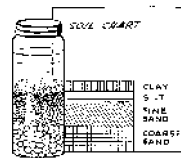
If you plan to cut timber on more than 10 acres, Maine law requires that your boundary lines be marked. Timber trespass has become a serious problem. To protect your land and to avoid the liability of accidentally cutting on your neighbor's land:

- **clearly mark your boundaries.** You are liable for damages if you cut on a neighbor's property
- **notify your neighbors** before you begin harvesting. You both should
- **agree on the exact location of your boundary lines.**
- Also **observe all ordinances** pertaining to trespass and slash disposal near property lines (detailed in MFS Information Sheet on Boundary Lines).

2. Inventory

The inventory of your woodlot will help you determine what areas are best for harvesting fuel wood and other timber products, building trails, providing important wildlife habitat, and other uses.

A licensed forester can inventory or “cruise” your woodlot for you and report, describing what type of stands you have, their species, ages and locations, their volume and productivity. The inventory can also note other features of your woodlot that interest you such as streams, bird and game habitat, soil conditions, vernal pools, wildflowers, *etc.*



Consider using maps that identify soil types, boundaries, topography and the locations of key

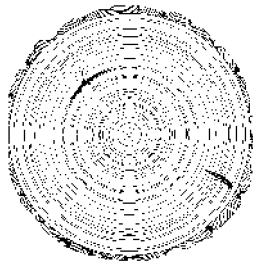
land features when your woods is inventoried. An aerial photograph or map can help you keep track of where you are on your wood lot.

3. Evaluation and Recommendations

Once the inventory is complete, you, together with a licensed forester, can evaluate opportunities to achieve your objectives for your land. Together you can schedule the activities necessary to achieve your objectives. For example, if timber harvest is a primary objective, the plan should include a cutting schedule for all activities ranging from the early thinning of small trees to improve growth, to the harvesting of mature trees for

sawlogs and/or pulpwood. The cutting schedule may also include partial cuts to encourage the natural growth of new seedlings. It should make optimum use of the seasons, such as pruning hardwoods during the dormant seasons or skidding when the ground is frozen to minimize its impact on soils.

A licensed forester's evaluation would also recommend improvements you could make on your wood lot. It could suggest, for example, a plan to protect from fire, insects, windthrow, or disease. Or it could recommend where or how to build trails or bridges, identify species or natural areas worth protecting, *etc.*



4. Implementation

When your careful planning is complete, you should have an idea of how to proceed with implementation. Use similar care in selecting professional assistance to achieve your aims, such as a forester or landscape architect. If timber harvest is a component of your plan, the services of a licensed forester are especially valuable. A forester can help you identify competent and reliable loggers - preferably a certified logging professional - to harvest your timber. By representing your interest in timber sales, a licensed forester can also provide supervision to ensure your land is logged properly, and put you in touch with Federal, State and private organizations offering other technical assistance and, in some cases, financial support. Even if you select a logger by yourself, it is important to always secure a **written contract**. A

sample contract is available from the Maine Forest Service.

Information and Assistance

More information on these and other topics related to managing your wood lot, is available from:

Maine Forest Service

22 State House Station,
Augusta, ME

04333-0022,

1-800-367-0223 (from within Maine) or
(207) 287-2791.



The MFS can advise you on forest management, fire and insect protection. The MFS can also advise you on a number of other public and private agencies and organizations which can provide assistance and advice to woodlot owners. They also can provide a list of foresters licensed in Maine. Check out the Maine Forest Service website at www.state.me.us/doc/mfs

Another good source of information is your local **University of Maine Cooperative Extension** office.

Call 1-800-287-0274

for information and

services on: surveys,

insect and disease control, wildlife

management, timber trespass, product

marketing, aerial photography, harvesting,

tree planting, timber sales, and much

more. www.umext.maine.edu



Licensed Foresters

For on-site, professional, technical management advice about your woodlot, consult a licensed forester. A forester will inform and advise you; but the decisions about managing your woodlot are always your own. Foresters licensed by the State of Maine are trained to properly manage forest land. Like other professionals, they often specialize, so *select a forester who has specialties and experience that match your objectives*.

The Maine Forest Service or your local MFS Service Forester can also give you a list of licensed foresters in your area who can offer advice and services. Also the

Association of Consulting Foresters of America offers a listing of member foresters at www.acf-foresters.com

Another website of interest is www.foreststewardsguild.org

Maine Tree Farm Committee

P.O. Box 785

Augusta, ME 04332

arranges for professional foresters to certify Tree Farms: land of 10 acres or more managed for the sustainable production of forest products, while recognizing the importance of water, wildlife and recreation.

You may also wish to work with a private or consulting company forester offering assistance to private landowners. Before you hire a consultant or take advantage of a company assistance program, check references and make sure the forester you plan to use can meet your schedule. Inquire about and compare fees and / or obligations to the company.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) or your local Soil and Water Conservation Districts

advise on soil and water conservation practices to protect and improve your wood lot. NRCS can also provide information about aerial photographs and equipment available through their offices. For more information call your county NRCS office (See U. S. Dept. of Agriculture in directory.) or for General Information, call: 207-990-9100 on the Internet at: nrcs.usda.gov

Courses and Workshops are offered by Maine Forest Service, Maine Cooperative Extension, NRCS / SWC Districts and by the **Small Woodland Owners Association of Maine** (SWOAM).

SWOAM is a non-profit organization educating and advocating for the sound management of the 7.5 million acres of forest land owned by Maine's families and individuals. Its 9 local chapters offer some fifty educational tours and workshops annually throughout Maine. Members receive a 16 page monthly newsletter about many interesting topics. SWOAM also participates at festivals, fairs, and field days, and in research and policy forming groups.

SWOAM 207-626-0005
P.O. Box 836 www.swoam.com
Augusta, Maine 04332 swoam@mint.net

Financial Assistance:

1. COST SHARING

Consider applying for cost share grants for forest management planning. To participate, contact the Maine Forest Service.