

Branching Out: Maryland's Forest Stewardship Educator

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Branching Out is published quarterly and distributed to 7,800 woodland owners, resource professionals, and others interested in forest stewardship. Calendar and news items are welcome. Items must be received by September 20. The sponsoring agencies' programs are open to all citizens without regard to race, color, sex, age, religion, national origin, or disability.

Supported by the Maryland Tree Farm Committee.

Who Owns America's Private Woodlands?

A new study by the USDA Forest Service has revealed some interesting facts about the nation's private woodlands and its owners. The study surveyed nearly 12,000 private owners of forested land. According to the results, individuals are by far the most common type of owners, compared to corporations, partnerships, clubs, etc.

An estimated 9.9 million private ownerships control 73 percent of the 490 million acres of timberland in the United States. In Maryland, 90 percent of the timberland is privately owned.

The number of landowners with small woodland properties has grown, as has the size of their holdings. The largest percentage of woodland owners - those with fewer than 10 acres - increased from 11 million to 16.6 million. The number of owners with 10 to 49 acres more than doubled from 1978 to 1994. And, although forests of larger than 500 acres make up roughly one-quarter of the private forests, they are controlled by less than one percent of the owners.

The study also indicated an apparent increase in land turnover, with many private woodland owners being relatively new to forest ownership (Figure 1). Nationally, 40 percent first acquired their forest land after 1978 and they own 23 percent of the forest land. Although only 10 percent of private owners have held their property since before 1950, they control 30 percent of the forest acreage. This steady turnover of ownerships makes communication of information about forests and their management more challenging.

The demographics of landowners are also changing. There has been an increase in the percentage and acreage of forest land owned by retirees. Additionally, the amount of

acreage owned by farmers and "blue collar" workers has decreased dramatically since 1978. Overall, the "new" private owners is better educated, younger, and has a higher income than the owners of a decade ago.

Few owners hold their land primarily to produce timber. Most own it as part of a farm or residence, or for recreational or aesthetic enjoyment. Enjoyment tops the list of benefits most owners expect to reap over the next 10 years, with land value increase and farm and domestic use also ranking high. Nevertheless, more than half the owners surveyed have harvested timber and this group controls about 78 percent of the forested land. About one-third of owners expect to harvest timber over the next ten years and they hold some 63 percent of the forested land. Those who never intend to harvest control only 12 percent of the forested land. The survey information indicates that while most owners do now own land specifically to produce timber, they are not opposed to harvesting timber at sometime.

The key to good forest stewardship is clear objectives and good management planning. Unfortunately, only 5 percent of private landowners surveyed had a written management plan; 87 percent have no plan at all. Although the 5 percent with management plans holds about a third of the land area, that still leaves nearly two-thirds of the nation's private forest land without formal direction for forest management and probably with little or no professional assistance. - L.B.

Test Your Harvesting I.Q.

1. **T or F** - Cutting only trees above a certain diameter, such as a 14-inches on the stump, is a good forest management technique.
2. **T or F** - The only factor that determines timber value is the total tree volume offered for sale.
3. **T or F** - If a prospective buyer approaches a landowners with what seems like a high price for his or her timber, the landowner should sell the timber, collect the money, and save the time and energy involved in getting additional offers.
4. **T or F** - It is easy to grow yellow-poplar, white oak, and white ash from seedlings to maturity by using the selection system of silviculture.
5. **T or F** - Yellow-poplar and red oak trees cannot be naturally regenerated by using the clearcutting method of forest management.

*The preceding statements are **all false**. Here's why:*

1. Diameter limit cutting is only a method of selecting trees for harvest. It does not take into consideration the species or quality of the trees in the overall forest. Therefore, strict diameter-limit cutting is not a good forest management practice.
2. Several factors determine the timber value of a given stand, and consequently influence the price a prospective buyer is willing to pay. First, knowing the total tree volume is not enough to determine total value; you must know by which rule the timber is measured, since each rule provides a different estimate of log volume. Secondly, the

price offered will vary based on the grade and quality of the trees, the bidder's proximity to the logging site; what road construction is necessary; what other timber is being offered for sale at the same time; and finally, what markets are available to the prospective buyer.

3. Based on what you learned in question #2, you should realize that the price a buyer is willing to pay varies considerably for many reasons. Thus, the recommended procedure for determining the best possible prices for timber and logging practices is to have competitive bidding on the same trees handled by a consulting forester hired by the landowner.

4. The silvicultural selection system maintains an uneven aged forest. Single tree selection maintains different age classes by cutting both mature and immature trees to provide more sunlight and resources to stimulate the growth of young seedlings and residual trees. The single tree selection system favors shade-tolerant trees such as American beech and sugar maple. Group selection removes 1/2 to one acre areas of trees and allows commercially valuable, sunlight-demanding species such as yellow-poplar, white oak, and white ash to thrive.

5. Clearcutting, a regeneration method, provides full sunlight to the forest floor and enables the seeds of shade-intolerant species, such as yellow-poplar, red oak, and pine to germinate and grow rapidly. Thus, if viable seeds exist in the forest litter, these species can be reestablished by natural regeneration through the process of clearcutting.

Adapted from "Logging Practices Quiz" by David W. Taber, Cornell Cooperative Extension.

Enterprising Income Opportunities

Many woodland owners at some time consider developing an alternative enterprise on their property to supplement or diversify their income. These enterprises differ from traditional farm and forest enterprises in that they usually center on value-added or specialty products or services. Many alternative enterprises start as hobbies and evolve into businesses after the owner gains knowledge about marketing, production, and profitability. Some ideas that may come to mind are growing shiitake or other mushrooms, Christmas trees, fish, or ginseng; offering fee hunting or fishing; and operating a bed'n breakfast, sporting clays, custom sawmilling, or kiln drying business.

Unfortunately, many people have good ideas and the motivation to act on them, but fail in their efforts. The lack of good production, marketing, business, and financial information is a big problem, but lack of planning is one of the major factors.

To improve the potential for success, landowners should consider a few enterprises, then evaluate each, taking the following factors into consideration: personal, family, and business goals; inventory of your resources; local and regional markets; and enterprise budgets and cash-flow considerations. The workbook entitled, *Farming Alternatives: A Guide to Evaluating the Feasibility of Farm-Based Enterprises* is available from your local Cooperative Extension Service Office for \$6 and will guide you through these steps. A video on natural resource income opportunities that includes interviews with actual

entrepreneurs is also available for loan or purchase (\$18) from the same source.

After deciding on an enterprise, visit a few similar operations if they exist, talk to producers and possible buyers, and take advantage of programs and available information. There is no need to reinvent the wheel. After all this, you may decide to take advantage of various educational programs being offered (see "Stewardship Update" on the back page). The new fact sheet entitled *Alternative Income Enterprises - Resource List (FS626)* contains a wealth of information.

Long-term forest stewardship includes a commitment to the future. When land produces an economic return through a natural resource-based enterprise, it provides a model for sustainable long-term ownership and stewardship. - J.K.

Forest Tent Caterpillar

Populations of the forest tent caterpillar, a native of U.S. hardwood forests, are on the rise. In 1994, they defoliated 3,000 acres on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, feeding mostly on oaks, black gum, sweet gum, and maple.

Outbreaks of these insects can cover extensive areas with defoliation occurring in mid- to late-spring. Trees may die following three years of defoliation. Forest tent caterpillars are black with blue stripes and white dots; they do not spin tents, but gather on mates on tree trunks.

Although natural factors usually control populations, control by spraying or other means may be necessary in high-use areas. Contact your local Cooperative Extension Service office for more information. - L.B.

Master Logger Program

The Maryland training program for loggers was developed by the Maryland Eastern Shore RC&D Council in cooperation with the Maryland Forests Association. The program helps loggers meet the requirements of the American Forest & Pulp Association's Sustainable Forestry Principles and OSHA regulations. It also provides landowners with the means to identify loggers who have sought training. A Master Logger must complete 20 hours of training in best management practices, logging aesthetics, safety, and CPR.

For more information, contact: Maryland Forests Association, P.O. Box 599, Grantsville, MD 21536, (301) 895-5369.

NWOA Announces Forestry Hotline

The National Woodland Owners Association (NWOA) has established a toll-free "private forestry hotline" for America's private woodland owners. The hotline provides information on the Forest Stewardship Program, the National Forestry Network, the American Tree Farm System, Forestry Extension Education Opportunities, Landowner Assistance Programs, and several other programs and issues. Call (800) 476-8733.

Take Note . . .

The following publications on deer damage and woodland management are available from your local Cooperative Extension Service Office:

NEW! *Controlling Deer Damage in Maryland* (EB 354): 21-page bulletin with information on fencing, repellents, population management, IPM for deer, etc. \$1.50/copy.

Resistance of Woody Ornamentals to Deer Damage (FS 655): Information on feeding habits and which plants deer are likely to damage. Free.

NEW! *Maryland's Forests: Past, Present, and Future* (FS 627): Interesting information on the forest resource and who owns it. Free.

NEW! *Alternative Income Enterprise Resource List* (FS 626): Organizations and resources on natural resource-based enterprise opportunities. Free.

The Forest Resources System Institute (FORS) is a non-profit association that promotes the use of computers in natural resources. Membership benefits include: *The Compiler*, a journal dedicated to computer technology in natural resources management; a directory of forestry and natural resources software; workshops. Membership is \$100/year. Nonmember prices available. For information contact: FORS, 122 Helton Court, Florence, AL 35630.

Forest Stewardship Planning Guide Program is a windows-based computer software designed to guide the user through the process of selecting forest stewardship goals. It offers information about forests and their management and makes limited recommendations on how to manage a forest for specific goals. The disk and guide are available for a small fee from Maryland Cooperative Extension Service, 18330 Keedysville Road, Keedysville, MD 21756. (301) 432-2735.