

A Forester: Your Partner in Forest Stewardship

If you are a regular reader of *Branching Out*, you often have read “consult a forester.” We have advised you to consult a forester to evaluate your forest resources, develop a forest management plan, assess your forest’s health, conduct a timber sale, and learn of cost sharing and other incentive programs. But who is a forester? What can a forester do for you? What kind of forester do you need? And how do you select one?

In Maryland, foresters are licensed professionals who can provide you a state license number. But requirements for foresters vary by state. In many of the states surrounding Maryland, there are no requirements and almost anyone can call himself or herself a forester. Landowners must be knowledgeable so they are not misled by someone who claims to be a forestry professional but lacks the identification and proof. The accompanying box lists state requirements for foresters.

Types of Foresters

Professional foresters are either public or private. The first forester many Maryland landowners contact is the **public forester**, or project forester, with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources-Forest Service. Project foresters are state employees, located in each county, who can visit your property and provide basic information on your forest and its potential, management alternatives, financial incentive programs, and programs to reduce your

Requirements for Foresters

- **Maryland:** State license requires a bachelor of science degree from an accredited forestry school, 2 years of acceptable forestry experience, and recommendations from five people who verify forestry competency. Eight credits of continuing forestry education every 2 years are required for license maintenance.
- **Delaware:** None.
- **Pennsylvania:** None; working on legislation.
- **Virginia:** None; working on legislation.
- **West Virginia:** State license requires a bachelor of science degree from an accredited forestry school and 2 years of acceptable forestry experience, or graduation from an acceptable 2-year forestry program, plus a bachelor’s degree and 4 years of related experience in forestry; requirements enacted in 1999.

property taxes. For a fee, they can write a forest stewardship management plan and provide other services but cannot conduct timber sales. They can guide you in the right direction and are a great place to start.

Private foresters

There are two types of **private foresters: consulting and industrial.** **Consulting** foresters are recommended for most

landowners to conduct a timber sale. They are independent, working alone or in small businesses. Because they are contracted and paid by you, they are your agent, representing you and your interests. If you are contemplating a timber sale, hire a consulting forester who will mark the timber, send it out to many buyers for competitive bids, and work with the logger to ensure the job is done correctly. Studies have shown that the fee you pay for a consulting forester easily is recovered in the increased price you receive for the timber. Previous issues of *Branching Out* have covered that topic.

Consulting foresters also can provide information and professional services dealing with all aspects of forest stewardship, not just timber sales. These services include writing stewardship plans, marking boundaries, inventorying timber, designing timber stand improvement, establishing a cost basis, providing tax and estate planning guidance, enhancing wildlife habitat, and planting trees.

For states that lack licensing of consulting foresters, there are national organizations with which foresters can affiliate. Members of the *Association of Consulting Foresters* must fulfill requirements of education, experience, continuing education, and ethics. All foresters who fulfill educational requirements can join the *Society of American Foresters*, a national organization of professional foresters. SAF also has a certified forester program that ensures a higher level of competency.

The other type of private forester in Maryland is the **industrial forester** who represents a sawmill or other forest products industry and has a responsibility to the employer to supply raw wood products. Some forest industry companies provide free management services in return for the opportunity to bid on any timber the landowner sells.

Selecting a Consulting Forester

Managing your forest land is a long-term endeavor with legal, financial, environmental, and personal considerations. When you are beyond the services of a DNR public project forester, choose a consultant forester to assist you. A list of private consulting and industrial foresters is available from your county Extension office or DNR project forester. Before selecting one

- Talk with other landowners who have used a private forester. Contact natural resources professionals for their suggestions.
- Select several consulting foresters from the list and talk with them about your forest stewardship objectives. Ask for references, experiences, and a prior job site to inspect. Determine if the forester is paid per diem, per job, or on a percentage basis, as for a timber sale

(typically 10-15 percent). As with most professions, consulting foresters have a variety of expertise and fees.

- Have one or more of the foresters with whom you feel comfortable visit with you on the property. Many, including those from outside your immediate area, will make a brief initial visit at no charge.
- Select a forester who understands and can fulfill your goals, provides a reasonable return on the cost of services, has good references, and has a personality compatible with yours.
- Sign a written contract with the forester regarding the services and fees. Communicate regularly. The forester becomes a partner in the stewardship of your land.

A Third Partner

For forest landowners who have income from timber sales as an objective, the stewardship partnership with a forester expands to include a third party, the logger. Landowners may confuse foresters and loggers. To understand the difference, consider architects and builders. An architect works with a client to design the kind of building the client would like and specify how it should be built. A builder implements the architect's plan. The best architectural plan doesn't work if it's not in the hands of a good builder. Likewise, the best builder cannot construct a good building if the architectural plan is not sound. Foresters are "forest architects," helping landowners realize their goals. Loggers are the "builders" that make the plans a reality. The private forester and the logger work together to help you realize your goals.

Your forest land is a valuable asset. With other assets of comparable value you probably seek advice from a professional. You should do no less for your property. Consult with a professional forester. A forester can provide the information and guidance to make stewardship of your forest a rewarding, enjoyable experience.



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Published quarterly and distributed to more than 4100 forest landowners, resource professionals, and others interested in forest stewardship. For a free subscription or to send news items, dates, and comments, phone 301-432-2767 x310; fax 301-432-4089; e-mail vs12@umail.umd.edu; or mail to *Branching Out*, Maryland Cooperative Extension, 18330 Keedysville Road, Keedysville MD 21756. Deadlines are the 10th of January, April, July, and October. The sponsoring agencies' programs are open to all citizens without regard to race, color, sex, or physical ability.

Those Blue Paint Stripes

Have you noticed blue paint stripes on trees? Blue paint is one way of marking your property to aid hunters and others. It is as valid as a posted sign and much easier to maintain. The paint stripes indicate your property is off limits to people without permission.

Now is a good time to mark your property. The stripes of blue paint must be at least two inches wide and eight inches long, positioned from three to six feet above the ground or water along entrances, public roads, waterways, and adjoining lands. They must be close enough that one can see the next paint stripe.

Paint marks are less damaging to trees than mounted signs. Maryland hunters learn about blue paint stripes in guidelines they receive when they purchase a hunting license. A related fact sheet *How to Determine Your Property Boundaries* is available from your county Cooperative Extension office.

When Should You Sell?

Some times are better than others to sell timber. Timber prices fluctuate and can vary widely over several years. Because timber does not have to be harvested at a specific time, investigate the market before you sell.

A recent check with foresters throughout the state confirmed that timber prices vary depending on the season and various demand factors. Since overseas buyers are major purchasers of timber, the economic situations in other countries create demand or depression for this commodity. Furniture preferences also drive the timber market. This was shown recently in the trend away from the popular lighter woods, resulting in less demand for ash and maples.

Summer generally is a period of lower demand when large furniture companies retool for the new fall styles. Fall can bring increased demand, especially for veneer, as the sap moves into the roots and the quality of the timber improves. Fall also brings a demand for harvesting jobs in locations easily accessible during the winter months. Different species dominate the regions in Maryland and can affect the marketability of your timber.

If producing income from timber is one of your stewardship objectives, be certain to learn about the market. Again we recommend, "Consult a forester."



"We don't inherit our land from our ancestors—
we borrow it from our descendants." Unknown.

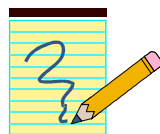
Education for Landowners

Fall brings many forestry related educational events and programs. Forest landowners are encouraged to take advantage of these opportunities, particularly the three stewardship seminars held across the state in October and November. Each seminar has speakers and workshops on a wide variety of topics. They are a great source of information for people contemplating owning forest land, beginning forest stewardship, or refining the management of their property.

This year's seminars are Central Maryland, October 23, and both Delmarva and Mid-Atlantic, November 6. See the calendar for registration information.

Eagle Off Endangered List

The bald eagle was removed from the endangered species list this spring. Near extinction in the 1960s, it began its recovery in 1972 after the banning of the pesticide DDT which caused infertility and thinning of eggshells, impairing the eagles' ability to produce young. Habitat loss also was a factor in the decline. In 1960, there were fewer than 400 nesting pairs of eagles in the lower 48 states. Current estimates place the population at more than 4,500 pairs.



Take Note

Agroforestry publications: *Farming Exotic Mushrooms in the Forest; American Ginseng Production in Woodlots; Economics and Marketing of Ginseng; and Forest Production of Goldenseal.* Free copy of each from USDA National Agroforestry Center, 402-437-5178; fax 402-437-5712; or www.unl.edu/nac.

Financial Planning for Loggers video, educational materials, and workbook will be used in continuing education for loggers in the Maryland Master Logger Program this fall. One-hour modules include record keeping and financial planning, taxes and depreciation, retirement and estate planning, and business planning and management. Contact Dave Wigglesworth, 410-822-9300, or the Maryland Forests Association, 301-895-5369, mfa@hereintown.net.

VegSpec helps landowners/managers make sound decisions on what to plant on specific sites, e.g., reforested areas, buffer strips, and wildlife habitats. It also provides native plant alternatives to traditional introduced plant materials. Access it at www.plants.usda.gov, or contact Keith Ticknor, 202-720-8578.



Upcoming Stewardship Events

September 2: Maryland Tree Farm Action Council and Tree Farm Operating Committee joint meeting, western Maryland; for all tree farmers, especially those in the region; speakers and field tour. Contact Howard Anderson, 888-455-7400 (toll free).

September 23-26: Coverts Cooperator training, Sharpsburg, 301-432-2767, vs12@umail.umd.edu.

September 24-25: State Association of Forest Conservancy District Boards meeting, Kent County. Contact Maryland DNR, 410-260-8531.

September 30-October 1: "Green Forest Certification," Hagerstown; speakers and topics on green certification and its implications for foresters, landowners, and industry; continuing ed credits; sponsored by Society of American Foresters. Contact Jonathan Kays, 301-432-2767 x323, jk87@umail.umd.edu.

Income Tax for Woodland Owners Workshops are scheduled in Pennsylvania in October and November. For dates and locations, contact Penn State School of Forest Resources, 814-863-0401.

October 13-15: Eastern Native Grass and Grasslands Symposium, Baltimore; speakers and topics on the use of native grasses and associated plants; sponsored by USDA NRCS. Contact Diane, 607-562-8404.

October 14-15: Urban Forestry Workshop, Gettysburg PA; for all interested persons; sponsored by Penn State Cooperative Extension. Contact Bill Elmendorf, 814-863-7941.

October 15-16: Maryland Forests Association annual meeting, Salisbury; "Endangered Species--Cooperative Perspectives," national speakers on the Endangered Species Act and its impact on landowners and the forest industry; tour of Nassawango Preserve, exhibits, awards, silent auction, socials, continuing ed credits; something for everyone; non-members invited to attend. Contact Karin Miller, 301-895-5369, mfa@hereintown.net.

October 16: Walnut Workshop on interplanting with paw paw, berries, etc.; Keedysville; for walnut growers and all interested. Contact Tom Niblock, 301-874-2883, tniblocksr@aol.com.

October 23: Central Maryland Forestry Stewardship Seminar, Monkton; for all forest landowners; \$10 by October 8, \$12 at the door. Contact Robert Halman, 410-638-3255, rh6@umail.umd.edu. Article on page 3.

October 23: Ruffed Grouse Society banquet, Frederick. Auction and raffles of wildlife-related articles benefit Society programs, including the Coverts Project. Contact Bob or Kay Small, 301-695-6419, pineybottomtreefarm@erols.com.

November 2: Timber Income Tax Workshop, Jessup, 8:30 am-5 pm; for accounting professionals, foresters, and forest landowners; federal income tax, capital accounts, record keeping, and the impacts on income tax of reforestation, passive loss, cost sharing, timber sales, depreciation, timber loss, and Christmas trees; \$75. Contact Maryland Association of Certified Public Accountants, 800-782-2036, www.macpa.org.

November 6: Delmarva Forestry Seminar, Georgetown DE; for all forest landowners; speakers and field tours; fee. Contact Bob Tjaden, 410-827-8056, rt20@umail.umd.edu, or Rebecca Marasco, 302-697-4000. Article on page 3.

November 6: Mid-Atlantic Forest Stewardship Seminar, Frederick; for all forest landowners; \$19, includes lunch. Contact Terry Poole, 301-694-1594, tp8@umail.umd.edu. Article on page 3.

November 8: Estate Planning for Forest Landowners by Stephen Small, author of *Preserving Family Lands*; University Park PA; \$60. Contact Peggy Ketting-Olivier, 814-863-7912; fax 814-865-6275; pxk146@psu.edu.

November 16: Global Positioning Systems, Blacksburg VA; continuing education credits; fee. Contact Barbara Falls, 540-231-3122, bfalls@vt.edu.

November 17-19: Forest fragmentation conference "Balancing the Landscape - Retaining Forests in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed", Annapolis; for natural resource managers, scientists, community leaders, land use planners, decision makers, and others; \$125, includes meals. Contact Katrin O'Connell, 410-956-3712, katrinoc@erols.com.

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