



FORESTRY

Leaflets

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Selecting and Working With a Consulting Forester

While the N.C. Forest Service and other public agencies can provide free advice and assistance to you for managing your forestland, there are limitations. If you wish to know the value of your timber or how much timber volume you have, a public agency staff person cannot provide this service. Forest owners are encouraged to obtain the services and professional advice of a Consulting Forester.

Defining and Locating a Consulting Forester

According to North Carolina state law, General Statute 89B-2, a “Consulting Forester” is defined as a registered forester who:

- Is competent to practice forest management, appraisal, development, marketing, protection, and utilization for the benefit of the general public on a fee, contractual, or contingency basis;
- Has not engaged in any practice that constitutes a conflict of interest or in any way diminishes his ability to represent the best interests of his clients; and
- Has filed annually an affidavit with the State Board of Registration for Foresters in accordance with state law.

A list of Consulting Foresters who conduct business in North Carolina is maintained on the N.C. Forest Service Web site www.ncforestservice.gov.

You can obtain a list for the entire state, or just for the county where your forestland is located.

Services Provided

Consulting Foresters can offer a wide range of services and assistance, depending upon their areas of education, expertise and preferences. Talk with the forester to understand how they may be able to assist you. Note: Consulting Foresters may be able to assist with the preparation of contracts for work on your land, but the contract should be drawn up and executed by an attorney. Consulting Foresters are not allowed to provide legal advice. Some of the more common forestry services offered include:

- Developing and writing a forest management plan or stewardship plan.
- Coordinating tree planting.
- Planning and overseeing a timber harvest.
- Appraising timber value and estimating volume.
- Assessing forest health (disease and insect) conditions.
- Recommending stand improvement practices.
- Prescribed burning.
- Controlling undesirable vegetation or invasive plants.
- Marking existing boundary lines (**Note: only a Registered Land Surveyor can establish lines**).
- Establishing and maintaining wildlife habitat and food plots.

Specialized fields of expertise from some consultants may include:

- Christmas tree management
- Estate planning and tax advice
- Forestland and real estate investment
- Pine straw production
- Urban/small woodlot management
- Recreation opportunities
- Ecological services
- Wetlands and stream enhancement or restoration

Cost of Services

The forest owner should execute a written contract when hiring a consulting forester, and any other time a person or company is hired to conduct services on their forestland. The fees charged by a consultant differ according to the consultant's preference or that of the firm which employs them.

Fees may often be based upon:

- Cost of personnel time and expenses to complete the work.
- A lump-sum payment contract for the work.
- A percentage of gross revenue from a timber sale, if the consultant assisted with the sale.

Benefits of a Consulting Forester

Forest management is challenging and can be intimidating even for those forest owners who may think they have a good understanding of how to grow or sell trees. Changing timber markets, regulations, tax law and improved technology in forest management are some reasons to retain the professional advice of a Consulting Forester, even if you think your forestland is 'too small' for a forester to help you with. Consider this: Growing timber to a mature age suitable for harvest takes decades, and a timber harvest may occur only once in your lifetime. In much the same way that most people hire a real estate agent to sell a home, or a stock broker to buy/sell stocks, you should consider the obvious benefits of hiring a Consulting Forester to handle a timber harvest and other forest management activities.

How to Select a Forester

Talk with the forester and meet with him or her. Explain your goals, objectives and desires of owning your forestland. Ask for references of other clients, and make follow-up contact with those individuals. Understand how the forester may charge for services and what educational or professional experience the forester has specific to your needs. The N.C. Forest Service cannot make references or specific referrals to individual consultants, but can provide you with a list of all consultants in your area. The performance and work of a Consulting Forester are not guaranteed by the N.C. Forest Service and no recommendation or sponsorship of any single consulting individual or firm is implied.



The North Carolina Forest Service is an equal opportunity / affirmative action employer. Its programs, activities and employment practices are available to all people regardless of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, handicap or political affiliation. This is a 'print-as-needed' document available at N.C. Forest Service offices and at www.ncforests-service.gov.