



Harvesting Timber in Your North Carolina Woodlands

Harvesting timber is not only one of the best ways to preserve the health of your woods, but it also can provide income to support you and your family and to reinvest in woodland management activities to improve your forestland. Because trees take years to mature to the point where they can be sold, cutting them is usually a once- or twice-in-a-lifetime event. Getting the professional advice of a North Carolina consulting forester can help you manage your land for timber in a way that will benefit both you and your woods.



If you're contemplating a timber harvest, the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service (CES) recommends that you consider a number of basic questions, including:

- How is timber bought and sold?
- What trees should I sell and why?
- What is the growth rate of my trees?
- What is the fair market value of my timber, and what are the current market trends?
- Who and where are the appropriate timber buyers?
- How will the income on my timber be taxed?
- How should I reforest harvested areas?
- Where can I find the professional help I need?

As you answer these and other questions, an excellent place to start is the American Forest Foundation's website for woodland owners, <http://MyLandPlan.org>, which contains step-by-step guidance for planning and completing your timber harvest. Another excellent resource is the planning guide for landowners available for free download on the CES website at <http://content.ces.ncsu.edu/20230.pdf>

Why Sell My Timber?

You might want to harvest timber as part of your forest management plan, because harvesting is a powerful tool for improving the health

and vigor of your trees, creating vistas, trails and wildlife habitat, and encouraging forest renewal. You might need the income a harvest will bring. You may need to salvage some of the value of trees damaged by insects or a natural disaster, or you may be planning to convert land to other uses such as cropland. Whatever your reasons are, a timber harvest needs to be a thoughtful decision. If you hope to leave your land to future generations, they need to be involved in the decision too.

Enlisting Your Forester

Like any complicated business transaction, a timber sale requires the help of professionals whose job is to understand the North Carolina timber business. If you already work with a consulting forester to implement a management plan for your woods, he or she should be a key partner as you plan and complete your timber sale. If you need to hire someone, be sure to hire a registered forester who has an appropriate combination of education and experience, listens to you and understands what you need. A good working relationship with your forester will be key to your success. The resources section at the end of this fact sheet can help you find just the right person to support you in a timber harvest.

Finding and Hiring a Logger

A poor logging job can compromise the future health of your forest for



many years to come. Your job as a landowner is to invest the necessary time and resources into finding the right logger for your harvest. When hiring a logger, be sure he or she is familiar with “best management practices” for logging in North Carolina and has experience working in similar types of woodlands to yours. When looking for the right logger, word of mouth is a great place to begin. Start by asking your forester and other North Carolina woodland owners for recommendations. When it comes time to choose the logger for your own harvest:

- Check the qualifications and references of your top candidates,
- Request proof of insurance,
- Get multiple bids,
- Always negotiate prices, and
- Get it in writing! A signed contract is essential for every timber harvest.

Learn More!

- **MyLandPlan.org.** This website for woodland owners contains extensive, easy-to-understand information and resources on using timber harvests to keep your forest healthy and sustainably managing your woodlands to provide income from timber. You’ll need to consult a variety of professionals for help, but many resources to get you started are available here: <http://mylandplan.org/content/managing-successful-sustainable-timber-harvest> The site will guide you through the process of finding and selecting a consulting forester with the right education and experience to help you with your timber sale (<http://mylandplan.org/content/choosing-consulting-forester>) and finding a logger to cut and transport your trees (<http://mylandplan.org/content/loggers>).
- **North Carolina Tree Farm Program.** Your state Tree Farm Program offers many resources for North Carolina woodland owners, including field days and a network of forestry professionals and family forest owners who can provide support and information as you plan your timber harvest. With a growing market demand for third-party-certified timber, the North Carolina Tree Farm Program can help get you started on the process of managing your woodlands to meet the American Tree Farm System’s standards of third-party certification that so many timber buyers demand. Connect to the North Carolina Tree Farm Program here: <https://www.treefarmssystem.org/north-carolina>



- **North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service.** This website includes a wealth of information for North Carolina landowners who wish to harvest and sell timber. Find links to a variety of documents and resources here: <http://forestry.ces.ncsu.edu/forestry-selling-timber> An excellent 16-page planning guide to help you understand North Carolina timber markets and the decisions you must make before you cut can be found here: <http://content.ces.ncsu.edu/20230.pdf>
- **North Carolina Forest Service.** The N.C. Forest Service has a ranger in each county who can help you with questions you may have about your woods, including help with planning a timber harvest. A directory with links to professionals in your county is available here: http://ncforestservice.gov/contacts/contacts_main.htm
- **North Carolina Association of Consulting Foresters.** This state chapter of the Association of Consulting Foresters of America will help you find a forester who has a university degree from a program accredited by the Society of American Foresters, appropriate work experience in the field of forestry and commitment to a strict code of ethics. You can search for a qualified forester here: <http://www.acfnc.org>

Information for this fact sheet was compiled from a variety of sources, including the American Forest Foundation, North Carolina Tree Farm Program, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, North Carolina Forest Service and North Carolina Association of Consulting Foresters.