

How to Choose a Consulting Forester?

By Gary Burns

As a private forest landowner, you may eventually need assistance from a professional forester to help you with forest management decisions. Public agencies, such as the Texas Forest Service, can provide valuable forestry assistance and can provide a list of consulting foresters when needed.

So just what are consulting foresters? They are forestry professionals with a Bachelor of Science or higher degree in forestry who work directly for the landowner rather than for a timber procuring entity or public agency. Because they represent only the landowner, they can operate objectively without a conflict of interest.

Texas has no registration or licensing for foresters, so anyone can claim to be a forester in Texas and some timber buyers and logging contractors have used the term “consultant.” So, check their background and credentials.

The Society of American Foresters (SAF) is a national professional society for all foresters, private, industrial, or public. Members must have either a bachelor’s degree in forestry from a SAF-accredited institution or a bachelor’s degree in a field closely allied to forestry plus three years substantial forestry-related experience and must adhere to a code of ethics. The SAF has a Certified Forester program requiring five years of experience, testing, and continuing education in addition to a Bachelor of Science degree.

The Association of Consulting Foresters consists of consulting foresters who meet their education, experience, and professional reference requirements. They have a comprehensive Code of Ethics and do not allow their members to buy timber.

Here in Texas, we also have the Texas Accredited Forester Council which designates accredited foresters as those with a Bachelor of Science degree or higher from an accredited forestry institution and have a minimum of five years of professional forestry experience. Their members must meet continuing education requirements, apply best management practices, and abide by their code of ethics.

So how do you choose a consulting forester? You might check out educational background, years, and type of experience, as well as affiliations and certifications. Different consultants have different fields of expertise and different approaches. Find one that you can communicate well with – one that understands your goals. You want the best fit for you. Good consulting foresters

not only do a good job of representing your interests, but also make you more money than you could reasonably obtain without their services.