



TIMBER SALES

A GUIDE TO SELLING TIMBER

Photo by Dave Jackson



PennState Extension

Timber harvesting is an important management tool. When conducted with care and planning, it allows owners to manage forests to meet multiple objectives. Landowners choose to conduct timber sales for a variety of reasons. The decision to harvest may be recommended in a management plan or it may be unexpected. For example, an insect or disease outbreak may necessitate a harvest to salvage dying trees and protect the forest from further losses. Regardless of the reason, a successful timber harvest that meets landowner goals begins with a forest resource professional developing a plan and should not be the result of a knock on the door or a letter in the mail.

Timber harvesting is not a process entered into lightly. Harvests involve complex decisions across many issues, including ecology, forest operations, business, law, taxes, marketing, and negotiation. They have both short- and long-term consequences for you and the forest. This publication is a first step in helping landowners understand some of these consequences and how you, as a landowner, can ensure a successful timber sale. Do not consider this a definitive “how-to” guide for conducting a timber sale. Much of the process will depend on the specific situation and individuals you are working with.

Should I Retain the Services of a Forestry Professional?

Unless you are well versed in many of the issues raised in this bulletin, you should seek assistance from a professional forester. They are the first stop in helping you understand your woods and prescribing science-based treatments. Professional foresters can provide invaluable services to guide you through the timber sale process.

Some landowners are skeptical of the need to procure a professional forester’s services. Some believe that using a forester does not add value or that any value it might add is lost in paying the forester. However, studies have shown that landowners who work with a professional forester in planning and implementing a harvest report greater satisfaction, increased revenue, and healthier and more valuable woods following the sale.

Listed below are some of the ways a professional forester can assist in conducting a successful timber sale:

- **Forestry expertise.** Foresters are educated and experienced in managing forests. They can help you decide what



It is important to plan for the future in the timber sale process. Timber harvests involve complex decisions across many issues.

Photo by Steve Williams

management options are possible and how those decisions will affect your forest. Even if your decision is to do nothing, a forester can explain likely outcomes.

- **Market knowledge.** Foresters have knowledge of local timber markets. Unlike landowners, who rarely sell timber, foresters know which mills are buying and which mills are paying better prices. Foresters can help you get a higher price for your timber.
- **Experience with loggers.** Along with their familiarity with local markets, foresters are also knowledgeable about the loggers who work in a particular area. They can help you select the right logger for your sale based on their practice, equipment, and site conditions.
- **Sale oversight.** Foresters understand timber harvesting operations. They will periodically check on the progress of your harvest and monitor for compliance with the contract, erosion control, and other best management practices (BMPs). Foresters try to address problems before they become serious. Research shows that compliance with BMPs is higher when a forester is involved in the sale.
- **Sale coordination.** Since foresters often work with many different clients in an area, they may know of other landowners wanting to sell timber at the same time. In this situation, the forester can market the sales together and possibly get all landowners a better price and sell marginal timber that might otherwise go unsold.
- **Sale closeout.** Foresters can ensure a site is properly retired and all roads and trails are properly stabilized. This ensures all postharvest activities meet contractual expectations.
- **Postharvest site monitoring.** Forestry expertise is invaluable in determining the next phase of action. This may include monitoring regeneration, competing vegetation, and deer impact or following up with two-stage harvests, such as shelterwood systems.

How to Obtain Lists of Foresters Working in Your Area

To find private consulting foresters and plan writers in Pennsylvania, go to <https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/Conservation/ForestsAndTrees/ManagingYourWoods/Pages/default.aspx>. The listing includes contact information, services offered, counties served, and professional certifications the forester has obtained. The same site also provides a listing of DCNR Bureau of Forestry service foresters by county. State service foresters provide free information and advice to forest landowners and are a resource for the citizens of Pennsylvania, helping to guide and direct sustainable forestry practices.



Unless you are well versed in many of the issues raised in this publication, the services of a professional forester are invaluable.
Photo by Steve Williams

Selecting a Consulting Forester

When hiring a consulting forester, it is important to interview several before making your decision. Be sure to ask about their education, work experience, professional certifications, and memberships. Currently in Pennsylvania, anyone can legally claim to be a forester or forestry consultant, regardless of education, training, certifications, or experience.

Local references can provide invaluable information and insights to help you make your decision about who to hire. Ask prospective foresters to provide at least three forest landowners as references, preferably from their previous three timber sales. Contact these references and ask if they were satisfied with the overall work, not just the income they received. If possible, consider touring the properties to see completed work firsthand.

Having a written agreement with your forester that outlines fee structure (hourly rate, percentage of sale, or flat fee), services, obligations, and terms is essential. The decision you make today in hiring a forester can either positively or negatively impact your ability to reach established goals for your woods and protect values important to you. A trusted professional forester is an asset for the tenure of your ownership and can assist with many other important aspects of woodlot management.

For more on selecting a consulting forester, visit <https://texashelp.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/ER-038-Selecting-a-Consulting-Forester.pdf>.

Seven Steps to Conducting a Successful Timber Sale

Once a landowner has a management plan and decides to move forward with a recommended timber sale, further planning is essential. A successful timber sale involves the following steps:

- Step 1:** Establish sale/property boundaries
- Step 2:** Determine and define access
- Step 3:** Identify trees to cut and appraise value
- Step 4:** Advertise the sale
- Step 5:** Execute a written contract
- Step 6:** Monitor active logging
- Step 7:** Close out the sale

Step 1: Establish Sale/Property Boundaries

Identifying and marking timber sale boundary lines is an important step in preparing a sale. Well-marked property and timber sale boundaries let buyers and loggers know they are on the proper site. In many cases, timber sale and property boundaries are identical. Property deeds, topographic maps, and aerial photographs aid in identifying and establishing

boundaries. Landowners may need to hire a professional surveyor if property lines are unknown and cannot be located.

Poorly marked boundary lines can lead to timber trespass—that is, harvesting a neighbor's trees. Timber trespass is not a minor offense in Pennsylvania (Title 42 § 8311). Courts can award monetary damages up to three times the value of the timber cut and removed in cases of intentional trespass or two times the value for negligent trespass. It is essential that you work with your forester and neighboring landowners in locating shared property lines before logging takes place.

Sale boundaries, whether they coincide with property lines or not, are important, as they define the scope of the harvesting operation. Timber harvesting prescriptions, prepared by a forester, are tailored to the specific site conditions. Sale boundaries help protect special ecological or personally important areas on a property. For example, sale boundaries can exclude springs and streams or your favorite deer stand that might otherwise be included in the harvest boundary.

One of the most common ways to mark a timber sale boundary is by tying colored flagging on tree branches or brush. Another way is to spray paint tree stems along the harvest unit border. In most instances, both flagging and paint



When hiring a consulting forester, local references provided by prospective foresters can offer invaluable insights in helping you make your decision. *Photo by Steve Williams*

are used to mark timber sale boundaries. Tree paint will remain visible on boundary trees for the duration of the harvest and cannot be torn down or moved.

Step 2: Determine and Define Access

Roads, skid trails, and log landings make up the transportation network to move logs out of the woods and to the mill (see the “Sample Harvest Site” illustration on page 6). Loggers move harvested trees on skid trails to a central location, called a landing, where logs are loaded onto trucks. The trucks then use the haul road network to access public roads.

For loggers, the best way out is often the quickest one. Since time is money, a quick route may even allow loggers to offer more money for the sale; however, the quickest way out is not always the best option for the landowner or the property. An important question to consider is, “How can I build a permanent road and trail network that will allow various activities well into the future?”

The road and skid trail network should support your management plan objectives. For example, roads and trails can provide access for management activities, like controlling invasive plants, or recreational activities, like hunt-

ing and hiking. Recreation aside, the network should also minimize ecological impacts. Different soils and slopes tolerate harvesting equipment differently. Roads, trails, and landings near or crossing streams or wetlands require additional special considerations. For guidance, follow the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection’s publication *Timber Harvest Operations Field Guide for Waterways, Wetlands, and Erosion Control* (see “Regulations and Permits” on page 10). This publication assists timber harvesters in preparing and implementing soil erosion and sediment control plans and working around streams and wetlands. It contains information on BMPs for protecting water quality and laws related to timber harvesting operations in and around waters of the Commonwealth.

Above all, be flexible in planning the transportation network. Individual loggers and harvesting systems have different capabilities. Forcing a one-size-fits-all approach may result in greater site damage and a lower price for your timber. In some cases, roads, trails, and landings are located after the contract is awarded and the limitations of your logger’s harvesting equipment are known. It is essential for you and your forester to work closely with the buyer and logger.



The road and skid trail network should provide access for future management and recreational activities like hunting or hiking.
Photo by Steve Williams

Sample Harvest Site

- Trees marked with a white dot indicate the property boundary.
- Trees marked with a red dot indicate the harvest boundary.

Primary skid trail: A permanent trail used multiple times by the logger to haul logs to the landing.

Secondary skid trail: A temporary trail used for a single harvesting operation.

Stumps: From recent harvest.

Stream: It is best, and possibly required by law, to leave an unharvested buffer around streams, springs, and wetlands.

Main access road: Property road network used to access public roads.

Log landing (log deck): Cleared area where harvested logs are processed, piled, and loaded onto trucks.



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Step 3: Identify Trees to Cut and Appraise Value

For harvests that do not remove all trees, mark individual “cut” and/or “leave” trees. This will ensure the harvest operation only removes trees chosen for cutting. Typically, trees are marked with paint at chest height and close to the ground, below where the tree will be cut. Selecting which trees to harvest is complex. It must balance sound science and desired future condition of the forest (e.g., species, quality, seed source, and desired wildlife habitat) with market and operational realities.

A forester’s knowledge of silviculture (forest management) and the capabilities of different harvesting equipment inform tree selection. The forester must balance landowner objectives and proper forest management prescriptions with desires for economic return, all while minimizing damage to the site.

In some cases, particularly in stands with trees of low market value, individual trees are not marked but instead designated by size and/or species in the contract. Marking individual trees requires a great deal of time. In low-value stands, marking individual trees may increase sale preparation costs too much. In this situation, it is not uncommon to mark the trees to be retained rather than those being sold.

As an example, the forester may prescribe and include language in the contract stating, “All merchantable black birch trees less than 12 inches in diameter at breast height (DBH) shall be cut.” In these situations, sale oversight requires greater care to ensure loggers correctly follow cutting instructions.

Trees for sale are typically marked with paint at chest height and close to the ground, below the stump height, which is usually less than 12 inches above the ground. *Photo by Dave Jackson*



Another exception to individual tree marking is with clear-cut regeneration harvests, which remove all trees to encourage sun-loving regeneration. In clearcut harvests, well-marked sale boundaries become even more important to ensure trees in adjacent stands, on reserve islands, and protecting special sites are not harvested.

When marking, it is not enough to simply put paint on trees, draw maps, and hope the logger will understand. Both the landowner and the forester must convey this information to the logger verbally and in the written contract. Clear communication about sale markings helps avoid problems on the ground.

As trees are marked, they are also measured to provide an estimate of volume and value. Timber should never be sold unless the seller has an independent appraisal of its worth, referred to as stumpage value (see “Stumpage Value” on page 8). The buyer should not make that estimate; your forester has the expertise to best estimate the sale value. To appraise timber value, it is necessary to complete an inventory of the species, size, volume, and quality of trees being sold so an accurate assessment of their worth can be determined.

Foresters use an assessment called a “timber cruise” to estimate value. A timber cruise is simply a survey method used to measure and estimate the quantity of timber being sold on a given area according to species, size, quality, and potential products. To complete a cruise, individual trees are measured to determine size class and volume and assessed for quality and various product classes.

Step 4: Advertise the Sale

A prospectus serves as the primary advertising tool for selling timber. This document describes what is for sale and where and when it will be available. The prospectus mirrors the contract. In fact, sometimes the contract is part of the prospectus. This allows prospective buyers to know the details of the contract before submitting an offer.

A prospectus includes all necessary information for a buyer to make an informed offer. Typically, this includes species, size, and estimated volume of trees to be removed. It also describes total acreage, location, sale type (lump sum or pay as cut), date by which sealed offers need to arrive, and length of time buyers have to remove the timber.

In addition, the prospectus includes information on payment expectations. Timber can be expensive and on large sales there may be a payment schedule. Or, in some cases, the prospectus might require payment “as you cut.” In this case, the buyer pays for trees removed as they are cut and scaled at the mill. This approach obviously involves a different level of trust.

The prospectus should include any additional information that might affect an offer (e.g., road-building requirements, since they can greatly increase harvest costs). It should convey any equipment restrictions or requirements. Many prospectuses also contain a statement that the seller can reject “any or all” bids. If there are too few offers or all offers are below the estimated value, this clause allows the timber to be withdrawn from sale. It also provides an “out” for the seller to reject the top bidder if for some reason they do not want that person to conduct the harvest.

Lastly, the prospectus may include information relating to expected costs. For example, a performance bond may be



Selecting which trees to keep and which to sell is complex and must balance desired future condition for the forest with market and operational realities. This white oak was marked to keep. *Photo by Dave Jackson*

Stumpage Value

Webster's Dictionary defines stumpage as "standing timber with reference to its value," or "the value of such timber." The word is derived from "stump" + "age," implying that older trees have a higher value "on the stump." Stumpage value is the monetary worth of trees as they stand in a woodlot, and it is what the timber owner receives from the buyer.

Stumpage value varies by species, tree size, tree quality, stand composition, stand volume, site access, market access, geographical region, season, weather, and many other factors. There is no "blue book" reference to look up stumpage values, which can vary widely based on individual situations. Penn State Extension publishes a quarterly *Timber Market Report* showing stumpage price trends by species across four regions of the state, which can provide some assistance in estimating stumpage value.

Timber buyers estimate value "on the stump" after deducting costs associated with logging and other variable and fixed costs. Costs vary with equipment, maintenance, fuel prices, insurance, labor, markets, logging conditions, timber volume, road conditions, hauling distance, and other variable costs. Foresters have experience "cruising timber" (i.e., measuring timber volume) and determining stumpage value, making them an important partner in this step.

As a landowner, how do you know if an offered stumpage price for your timber is fair? The best way to have confidence in the price offered is to hire a professional forester to mark, measure, and appraise the tree volume being sold. The timber is then advertised to solicit bids. Landowners will almost always achieve a higher stumpage value when multiple buyers are pursuing the same timber. Only through aggressive marketing is a "fair" stumpage value obtained.

required. This bond is paid before starting work and held in escrow by the seller or the seller's representative. Bonding ensures the successful buyer will close out the harvest according to the contract and do the work on time. If either of these conditions are not met, the buyer forfeits the bond.

Consulting foresters maintain lists of potential buyers and mail the prospectus to those individuals. While sales may also be advertised in newspapers and trade journals, direct mailings work best. Ultimately, true market value is only obtained by casting a wide net to potential buyers with the prospectus.

One option for selling timber is to use sealed bids. Bidders formulate their bid by visiting the site, reviewing the prospectus, and using their own market knowledge. The bid is submitted to the owner or the owner's representative and all bids are opened at a specified date and time.

Bids can differ significantly. Different bidders have different markets and needs for wood. Several factors determine market value; species, potential products, and volume are important. Equally important are the operability and accessibility of the harvest site and local market conditions. These factors, among many others, may make bids for the same sale very different.

Based on the bids presented, the seller can choose to select one bidder or refuse them all if the offers fail to reach a minimum acceptable value. It seems logical that a seller would always accept the highest bid above the minimum threshold. While the highest bid may be most tempting, it is important to consider whether the highest bid will meet both the sale and landowner objectives. In selecting the winning bid, the logger's reputation, professionalism, skill, equipment, and ability to do the work are as important as the dollar amount.

If all bids are rejected, it is common practice to offer the minimum acceptable value to the highest bidder. If they decline, then the opportunity is extended to the next highest bidder and so on until a bidder accepts. If this fails, then the seller can offer the timber to anyone outside the current set of bidders. This could also mean the timber is overpriced and may need to be reevaluated.

There are also sales where you might choose to hire a logger directly and a sealed bid would not be appropriate (see "Competitive Bids Versus Negotiated Sales" on page 9). These include sales of low-quality wood and cases where the logger is paid to remove trees. In other cases, you may be selling specialty products with a limited number of potential buyers.

In selecting the winning bid, the logger's skill and professionalism are as important as the dollar amount.
Photo by Dave Jackson





There are important income tax considerations for timber sales. The income may qualify for capital gains treatment and as such be taxed at a lower rate. Visit timbertax.org for more information.

Photo by Dave Jackson

Step 5: Execute a Written Contract

Having successfully navigated the marketing process, it is time to execute a timber sale contract with the successful buyer. A timber sale contract is essential in the timber sale transaction. It defines expectations and commitments applicable to both parties. It is a legally binding document that outlines the relationship between the seller and buyer; it seeks to protect both from misunderstandings.

Logging has obvious implications for the health of remaining trees, wildlife habitat, soil disturbance, water quality, road maintenance, aesthetics, and a host of other considerations important to the seller—but not necessarily to the buyer. Since the buyer, if not the logger, will be responsible for hiring and managing the logging, the sale contract may be the only opportunity to specify how and when logging will occur.

The complexity of the contract depends on the type of timber sale and payment method. Key elements include:

- Identification of buyer and seller and their responsibilities
- Property identification, including legal and sale area description
- Description of material sold for harvest
- Type, terms, and length of contract
- Notification of start and completion of logging
- Terms of payment and deposits
- Insurance and performance bond requirements
- Guidelines addressing site and residual tree damage penalties
- Maintenance and condition of access roads and landings
- BMPs to protect soil, water, and other forest values
- State and federal legal requirements (see “Regulations and Permits” on page 10)
- Liabilities, indemnity, and safety regulations
- Procedures for arbitration and dispute resolution
- End-of-sale requirements

Competitive Bids Versus Negotiated Sales

Private landowners typically use one of two methods when selling timber: competitive bids or negotiated sales. Both types of sales can be sold lump sum or by “pay as cut,” also referred to as scaled product sales. The method used depends on several factors but is primarily based on demand for the material sold.

In general, competitive bids occur when selling high-value timber that is in demand by local markets. With competitive-bid sales, the successful buyer is selected from the bids received. Negotiated sales are typically used when selling small-diameter or low-quality timber, timber that has poor markets and little demand. To sell this type of timber you may need to “negotiate” the price(s) with a local buyer.

Both negotiated and competitive-bid sales can be sold based on a lump-sum price for all timber offered for sale or as pay as cut, where prices are agreed on in advance for each specific species and end-product type (e.g., sawlogs, pulpwood). It is more common for competitive-bid sales to be sold lump sum and negotiated sales to be sold on a pay-as-cut basis. However, it is not that unusual to accept bids based on prices per unit volume by species and product (e.g., price offered per ton or cord for pulpwood sales).

Lump-sum sales are the simplest way to sell timber. Typically, the sale is put up for bid and each potential buyer submits an offer for the designated timber. Lump-sum sales require buyers to have accurate volume estimates by species and product type to establish their bid. They may use the volume estimates provided in the prospectus as a starting point and make adjustments based on experience and practice. In some cases, buyers are responsible for estimating the volume themselves. The winning bidder may make a single lump-sum payment or several partial payments as outlined in the prospectus. In general, the seller is paid in full prior to any timber removal.

Pay-as-cut or scaled product sales are based on prices per unit volume (e.g., dollars per thousand board foot [MBF], ton, or cord), species, and product. For example, a buyer would agree to purchase all white oak saw logs for \$300 per MBF, red maple saw logs for \$120 per MBF, and hardwood pulpwood for \$4 per ton. Prices are typically agreed on and paid by volume and species regardless of quality.

Pay-as-cut sales, whether bid or negotiated, are more complicated and require greater diligence and a level of trust. The seller is paid after the logs are delivered and scaled at local mills. This involves accounting for each load of logs and pulpwood removed from the property. It is not uncommon for a forester to administer scaled product sales on behalf of the landowner.

Regulations and Permits

The construction and use of roads, skid trails, stream crossings, and log landings necessary for timber harvesting operations raise the potential for soil erosion, stream degradation, ecological impact, and water pollution when carelessly planned, built, and maintained.

Pennsylvania has environmental regulations designed to protect soil and water resources during earth-disturbance activities, including timber harvesting. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) administers these regulations. In many counties, DEP has delegated at least some of their authority to the local Conservation District. Clearing ground for haul roads, skid trails, and log landings is a regulated earth-disturbance activity that requires the use of BMPs to prevent disturbed soil from eroding into wetlands and waterways.

Pennsylvania's regulations require the development of a site-specific written Erosion and Sedimentation (E&S) Control Plan for all timber harvests. The plan describes where and how BMPs will protect soil and water resources during the timber harvesting operation. If the anticipated disturbance reaches 25 acres or more, the activity will also require an Erosion and Sediment Control Permit. In addition, there are regulations for crossing stream channels. Stream or wetland crossings almost always require a permit and must follow established specifications.

Timber harvesting operations are also subject to regulations enforced by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. These regulations protect aquatic organisms, both plants and animals, and their habitats. In addition, harvesting operations may be subject to other types of regulations and permitting requirements. Local municipalities might have codes and ordinances that regulate timber harvesting activities in their jurisdiction. Public roads may require bonds, and haul roads connecting to public highways may need an occupancy permit. Lastly, the presence of threatened and endangered species or their habitat may alter when and how the harvest is conducted.

Meeting regulations is complicated, and violations may result in significant environmental and legal consequences. Always use knowledgeable forestry professionals and seek out additional assistance when uncertain situations arise.

Contracts convey standing timber from seller to buyer. The buyer assumes the responsibility for harvesting, yarding, and transporting trees to targeted mills. Contracts for lump-sum sales may be relatively simple since a detailed description of the product sold is unnecessary. A pay-as-cut or scaled product sale requires more specifics, particularly if prices vary by species and product class.

Timber sale contracts are complex. Lawyers are not always familiar with timber sale specifications, and foresters are not always aware of all legal and liability concerns. A landowner should consider consulting both a forester and an attorney to ensure the contract covers all sale aspects. The contract is legally binding and requires knowledgeable and experienced attention in its preparation.

Step 6: Monitor Active Logging

Inspecting and monitoring the sale during operations for contract compliance is good for both you and the buyer. It is a good idea to review the terms of the contract onsite with the buyer and logger before harvesting begins. Often the logging crew working on the harvest is not aware of all contract terms. Review contract elements such as tree markings, boundaries, location and size of landing(s), haul road and skid trail locations, riparian buffers, and any stream crossings. In addition, be sure to discuss any special contractual requirements, such as residual tree damage, how tops will be handled, any historical sites such as cemeteries, and any special reserve trees or areas.

Regular visits to the logging site by the forester ensure the harvest is proceeding according to contract. By monitoring how the harvest is proceeding, questions and concerns are detected and addressed early, before they become something more serious. All matters of importance should be dealt with directly between the seller's forester and the buyer. You are likely to resolve most unexpected problems by respectful communication.

During site visits it is important to ask for feedback from the logger, who may have suggestions that could expedite the harvesting process. While the seller and their forester should work cooperatively with the logger, the seller should not feel obligated to give in to requests to change the contract.

It is important to keep good records throughout the harvesting process. For example, if the logger is asked to adjust the harvesting operation to comply with the contract, record in writing the nature of the discussion and agreed-on decisions. The forester should notify the buyer and logger of the agreement with written notice and retain a copy in the harvest record. Documenting what is done and why during harvesting is essential for clear communication and resolving disputes.



A written E&S Control Plan is required for all timber harvesting operations in Pennsylvania. It must outline where and how BMPs will be used to protect soil and water resources. *Photo by Dave Jackson*



Damage to residual, or leave, trees is common during logging operations. It is important to define what is “excessive” damage and set compensation terms in the contract. *Photo by Dave Jackson*



Visiting the harvest area frequently is important to ensure the terms of the contract are followed and to address concerns early, before they become more serious problems. *Photo by Dave Jackson*

Step 7: Close Out the Sale

When harvesting is complete, it is time to retire the site and implement any required postharvest activities. A final inspection is necessary to satisfy both the seller and buyer that contract terms have been met. Schedule an inspection before the logger removes equipment from the site. Loggers generally are

eager to move on to their next job; therefore, timely communication is critical as logging nears completion.

If any issues require additional work by the logger, now is the time. Once the operator leaves the site, it may be difficult to get them to return. A common contract provision is to hold a performance bond until all contract requirements are met.

In some cases, the bond may pay for neglected contract provisions or repair damages.

Sites are most vulnerable to erosion right after harvesting is completed. Proper erosion control practices are essential to protect the site and prevent water pollution. Postharvest BMPs include seeding trails, roads, and landings to stabilize the soil and installing other erosion control practices such as water bars and broad-based dips on trails and roads. In most contracts, the buyer is responsible for these activities.

Additional items to inspect include landings to ensure removal of all merchantable logs and trash, that all slash meets contract specifications, and roads and trails are properly graded, seeded, and returned to their original condition.

Once all contract provisions are fulfilled, the buyer is released from further obligation. As with other parts of the harvest, release the buyer from the contract with a written letter and return the performance bond if one was held.

Summary

Selling timber is complicated and requires substantial time investments and a thorough understanding of the industry. Timber sales have the potential to impact site productivity, wildlife habitat, water quality, aesthetics, income, taxes, estate planning—the list goes on. Those lacking the proper level of experience should consider seeking professional assistance and use this publication as a reference to understand what their forester is striving to accomplish on their behalf.

A satisfactory harvest experience is no accident; it is the result of thoughtful planning and hard work. Planning is critical to ensure positive outcomes that meet sustainability guidelines. As with most endeavors, involving the right professionals makes all the difference. To ensure a successful timber sale, select vigilant and conscientious foresters, buyers,



Postharvest BMPs include installing water bars and broad-based dips, and seeding trails, roads, and landings to stabilize soil.

Photo by Dave Jackson

and loggers who understand stated goals and objectives and can help you attain them for you, your family, and your forest.

After the sale revenue has paid bills, college tuition, or vacation expenses, you will live with and be judged by what is left behind, not by what was taken. To end, consider this quote from Aldo Leopold: “Your woodlot is, in fact, a historical document which faithfully records your personal philosophy. Let it tell a story of tolerance toward living things, and of skill in the greatest arts—how to use the earth without making it ugly.”

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