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## Matre Forestry Consulting, Inc.

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Dear Matre Forestry Newsletter Subscribers,

With fall fast approaching, I thought I would share a few deer, and general wildlife, management tips, and debunk some common wildlife management misconceptions. Even if you are not a hunter but you are a landowner, enhancing your properties wildlife habitat can add significant property value, increase hunting lease rates, and add to overall land ownership enjoyment.

This topic is on my mind not just because its almost fall, but also because I just completed a QDMA (Quality Deer management Association)/Clemson continuing education class for my forestry license. The class is available to anyone, and I highly recommend it. For more information, see <https://www.qdma.com/steward/>.

**Misconception 1:** *My woods should be a thick nasty jungle to have a good hunting property and big bucks.* Wrong! Deer, turkey, quail, and most other game and non-game wildlife thrive with early successional habitat, and thick unmanaged woods do not provide that. Woods, especially upland woods, are a great source of early succession habitat as long as the forest floor has adequate sunlight, the woods have occasional disturbances (periodic timber thinnings or clearcuts, and burning, even occasional storm damage), and undesirable species in the under and mid story are controlled (usually via selective herbicides). Some areas should be left thick for additional escape cover, but the majority of your woods should be definitely managed for early succession habitat to have a property teeming with healthy wildlife.



Above: "Manage your woods to become this salad bar for deer and other wildlife"

**Misconception 2:** *I should spend my wildlife management money mostly on food plots and/or supplemental feeding.* Wrong! You need to also spend money in your woods when you are serious about game management, and for every dollar spent on woods management, you get a lot of bang for your buck (pun intended). From the QDMA class I just took and presented by wildlife biologist Dr. Craig Harper of the University of Tennessee:

- On average, a 1 acre quality food plot provides the same forage as 25 acres of unmanaged woods (typically thick overgrown woods).
- On average, a 1 acre quality food plot provides the same forage as 9 acres of burned woods (thick overgrown woods that are periodically burned).
- On average, a 1 acre quality food plot provides the same forage as 5 acres of thinned woods (woods were logged by harvesting some trees to increase sunlight to the ground, and hopefully to improve the timber stand by leaving the best trees).
- On average, a 1 acre quality food plot provides the same forage as 3 acres of thinned and burned woods!!!! Add some periodic selective herbicide treatments to control undesired woody species in your timber stand under and mid story, and improve the natural forage even more.

So say you have a 25 acre block of woods that are unmanaged, that block is approximately equivalent to a 1 acre food plot. But say you manage that 25 acre block by periodically thinning timber as needed to manage sunlight and periodically burning (usually every 2 to 4 years, preferably not all acres in one year), that block of managed woods is about the same as having +-8.3 acres of food plot!!! It cost a lot of money to plant an 8+ acre food plot, and most timber thinnings will put money in your pocket! And, there are private consultants like us and some government agencies that can do your burning for a fee, and some landowners learn to do their own burning. Most southern states have prescribed burning classes that you can take. We have actually trained some of our clients to do their own burning. Check with your state forestry agency and your local USDA office for cost share programs for these practices.

**Misconception 3:** *I should never harvest hardwood.* Wrong! Most landowners understand thinning and clearcutting pines, but they often wrongly think they should never harvest hardwood.

*Hardwood in Upland Pine Stands:* Except for high quality scattered co-dominant and dominant oaks that seldom are present in a pine stand, get rid of hardwood in your pine stands. Suppressed hardwood in the mid and under stories of pine stands are providing almost no benefit for deer, and are just competing with your pines for moisture and nutrients, and are shading out that highly desired early succession habitat.

*Upland Hardwood Stands:* Upland hardwood stands should be managed. If you are fortunate enough to have a fully stocked mature oak dominated hardwood stand, you probably have full shade on the forest floor at high noon and no ground cover. Thin it, focusing on leaving the best oaks. You will promote early succession habitat, and you can even increase mast production. If it is a large stand, consider also creating a clearcut as well and plant pines to improve future timber revenues and create more habitat diversity.

*Bottomland Hardwood Stands:* Same as above applies to bottomland hardwood stands that have a "hard bottom" that conventional logging equipment can operate in. Areas of "soft bottoms" that require swamp logging equipment are more difficult to thin, but it can be done. A few years ago we "row thinned" a thick cypress/gum swamp by having clearcut rows cut by a swamp logging crew about every 50', plus some select harvesting between the clearcut rows. The result was significant money in the landowners pocket and greatly improved deer and duck hunting. Also consider some hardwood bottom clearcuts and/or select harvests for increased habitat diversity and natural hardwood regeneration. A combination of various hardwood harvest techniques (thinning, select harvest, group harvest, shelterwood, seedtree, strip clearcut, small block clearcutting, larger scale clearcut) and some areas of leaving as is can create very diverse habitat, and diversity is a great thing for wildlife management.



*Above: Example of a mature closed canopy hardwood stand with virtually no early succession habitat on the forest floor. Early succession habitat could easily be developed by select harvesting this stand, focusing on leaving quality oaks. Some*



*areas could be left as is, some areas could be clearcut, some areas select harvested for habitat diversity.*

Some "timber stand improvement" harvests generate significant money, some generate a little money, some generate no money, and some can even cost you. But all harvest, if done right, can improve wildlife habitat and your hunting experiences. To find a forestry consultant in your area that can help you implement a harvest according to your management objectives, visit the [Association of Consulting Foresters](#) to find a consulting forester near you.

**Misconception 4:** *I should never cut my gorgeous mature forest because it is just too majestic and pretty.* If you are serious about game management, wrong! Deer and other wildlife do not care about pretty. Substantial acreage of heavily stocked mature closed canopy forest is just not providing much for game (*see Misconception 1*).

Select some special gorgeous and majestic areas to leave as is if you want to, but go ahead and harvest some timber in the rest of the stand to benefit your wildlife, and your cash on hand!

**Misconception 5:** *We are managing bucks well as long as we only allow the taking of bucks with 8 points and better with spreads outside the ears.* Wrong, because you are missing something critical in that rule - AGE! The most important factor in managing your bucks is age. Train you and your fellow hunters to age deer in the field, and first consider age, and then consider antlers. QDMA has some great resources, such as deer aging posters you can hang at your camp. Think about like this, as your wildlife management improves you will see more and more 2.5 year old bucks meeting your minimum antler specs, but if you and your fellow hunters can age it as only 2.5 years old, you can let him walk and mature.

See <https://www.qdma.com/aging-bucks-on-the-hoof/> and <https://shop.qdma.com/selective-buck-harvest-poster.html>

**Misconception 6:** *I should harvest "cull bucks" to improve the genetics of my deer herd.* Wrong, because it is impossible for hunters to measurably affect genetics of free ranging deer. Also, most antler deformities are from injury and/or poor nutrient availability, not genetics. Simply put, the deer population and their traveling range, especially during the rut, is too great for us to affect the genetics of free ranging deer. Following are some legitimate reasons to harvest a deer: meat, trophy, population management, doe to buck ratio management, child or adult new to hunting and taking their first deer, sickly deer, significantly injured deer. Genetic improvement does not make the list.

There is more we could discuss, but I am getting writing fatigue and you should probably get back to work.

We hope these tips are helpful, and have a great hunting season, visit QDMA website, and do not forget to site your guns and bows in! Please let us know if we can ever help you with land sales, acquisitions, and/or management.

**ATTENTION LANDOWNERS: MATRE FORESTRY HAS CLOSED SEVERAL OF OUR LAND LISTINGS RECENTLY, SO WE NEED NEW LAND LISTINGS!!! CONTACT US TO DISCUSS A MARKETING AND SALES STRATEGY FOR YOUR LAND. IN THE LAST TWO MONTHS WE HAVE SOLD OVER \$1,500,000 WORTH OF LAND PROPERTIES ON BEHALF OF OUR CLIENTS, AND WE WANT TO HELP YOU TOO.**

**ATTENTION LAND BUYERS: CONTACT US TO LET US KNOW WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR. WE MAY HAVE IT, KNOW WHERE IT IS, OR WE MAY BE ABLE TO FIND IT. IN THE LAST MONTH WE HAVE ASSISTED CLIENTS IN THE ACQUISITION OF OVER \$300,000 IN LAND PROPERTIES.**

**ATTENTION LANDOWNERS: TIMBER PRICES AND DELIVERY QUOTA HAVE REALLY SUFFERED IN THE FIRST HALF OF 2017, MAINLY DUE TO STORM DAMAGE AND DROUGHT RELATED MORTALITY SALVAGE LOGGING. QUOTAS ARE NOW BETTER, AND PRICES ARE IMPROVING, SO CONTACT US IF WE CAN HELP YOU SELL SOME TIMBER. DURING THE FIRST HALF OF 2016 WE HAVE HANDLED THE SALE OF APPROXIMATELY \$500,000 WORTH OF TIMBER ON BEHALF OF OUR CLIENTS. ABOUT 20% OF THAT VOLUME WAS UNFORTUNATELY SALVAGE LOGGING. WE ALL PREFER PLANNED TIMBER SALES, NOT UNPLANNED SALES THAT ARE A RESULT OF STORMS AND/OR EXCESSIVE MORTALITY BROUGHT ON BY DROUGHT. WE ARE HOPING FOR A STRONG FINISH TO 2017, NOW THAT DELIVERY QUOTA IS BETTER FOR LOGGERS, AND PRICING IS IMPROVING FOR LANDOWNERS.**

**ATTENTION LANDOWNERS AND OTHERS: FALL IS A GREAT TIME TO CONDUCT A TIMBER INVENTORY AND APPRAISAL. CONTACT MATRE FORESTRY IF YOU WOULD LIKE A PROPOSAL TO GET IT DONE RIGHT, AT AN AFFORDABLE PRICE, AND QUICKLY. WE USUALLY INVENTORY AND APPRAISE 1000'S OF ACRES OF TIMBER PER YEAR, BUT IT HAS BEEN A SLOW YEAR FOR TIMBER APPRAISALS, SO WE WANT TO IMPROVE ON THAT FOR THE REMAINDER OF 2017 AND BEYOND. WHETHER YOU ARE A LANDOWNER, A LAND/TIMBER/HUNTING PRESERVE/FARM MANAGER, A BANKER, AN ATTORNEY, AN ACCOUNTANT, A FAMILY PARTNERSHIP, A GOVERNMENT AGENCY, INDUSTRY, A REAL ESTATE APPRAISER, A BROKER, FARMER, LAND INVESTOR/BUYER, LAND SELLER, ETC. - WE WANT YOUR TIMBER INVENTORY AND APPRAISAL BUSINESS.**

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Sincerely,

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