

Since the early decades of this century when farms began reverting to forests, New York's landscape has become increasingly tree covered. In recent decades, those even-aged forests that dominate in New York have become mature. At the same time, our demand for forest products has increased. Consequently, with greater supply and greater demand, there are ample opportunities to sell timber from your forest or woodlot, yet many landowners are apprehensive. Apprehension often results because most owners don't know the value of their timber and don't want to sell too cheaply; owners fear their woodlot or forest will be ruined as a result of timber harvesting; or owners think that timber harvesting causes environmental damages. While all these fears can be true they can easily be avoided through some advance planning.



Selling timber is a complex process, and many factors should be taken into consideration. There are several strategies that will help New York forest owners who are interested in selling timber to make informed decisions about their valuable forested property.

Step 1: Make sure a timber sale is consistent with your written forest management plan. Selling timber too soon may not allow you to achieve your management objectives. Your management plan should describe the timing, location, and intensity for a timber harvest.

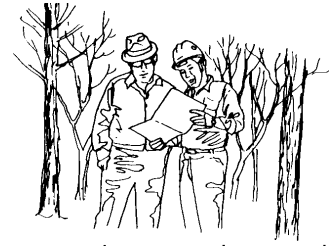
Step 2: Locate competent help. An initial contact might be a Master Forest Owner (MFO) volunteer through your county association of Cornell Cooperative Extension or a Department of Environmental Conservation professional forester. A MFO volunteer can give you information and help you contact reputable people, while a DEC professional forester can provide the same information plus give you technical advice.

Step 3: Contact a consulting or industrial professional forester who will help you find a logger. A forester will also be able to make sure you get a fair price for your timber while representing your interests. Ask for references, and check them, before you begin working with a forester and a logger. Many forest owners find it to their advantage to have their forester mark their timber and then put it for bids from several reputable loggers. You might now want to select your logger based only on the value of their bid, but also consider whether the logger has participated in the New York State "Trained Logger Certification" program and other evidence of professionalism and commitment to forest stewardship.



Step 4: Discuss how you can get more cash from the timber sale by considering your management objectives. If you are interested in wildlife then discuss leaving large mast trees for wild turkey, making small patch cuts and leaving large downed logs for ruffed grouse, or leaving or creating snags for cavity nesting birds. If you are interested in recreation and property access, discuss ways to route the skid and haul roads so you can use them for skiing, hiking or bird watching.

Step 5: Discuss any concerns you have regarding how timber is harvested and how your forest looks after the harvest with your forester. This is important information the forester will need to develop a timber sale contract that reflects your interests. Many of these concerns are commonplace and known as best management practices (BMPs). For example, you will likely want your road system marked in advance of harvesting to minimize damage to the residual trees and to have the fewest number of stream crossings (using bridges or culverts where necessary) to maintain water quality. Other sale contract language may include the condition of the road and landing following the harvest, the payment style and schedule, penalties for harvesting unmarked trees, the height of trees tops left in the woods, and the amount of the performance bond. Samples of timber sale contracts are available through the DEC. Read the contracts closely to make sure they meet all your needs. Remember that the stipulations you add to the timber sale may reduce the amount of money you receive. Require the stipulations that are appropriate, but consider each one carefully.



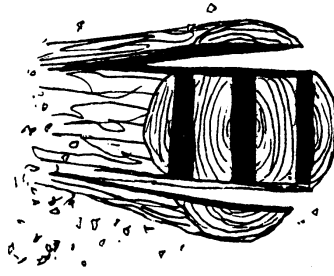
Step 6: Discuss environmental stewardship concerns with your forester and logger, in order to maintain the health and productivity of your forest and woodlot. If you have "classified wetlands" or streams, special precautions must be taken before harvesting trees near these areas. (Not – legal restrictions may apply in some situations, consult your DEC forester) Make certain your forester and logger consider the need to encourage the regeneration of desirable tree species. Discuss the time of year that harvesting will occur and the need to avoid skidding trees during the mud season to minimize damage to soils and erosion. Be certain your boundaries and the harvest area boundaries are clearly marked.

Having a timber sale on your forested property can be an exciting and profitable event that, if done correctly, can increase your ownership enjoyment without reducing the environmental quality of the land and waters. However, a timber sale is not an activity you should hastily pursue. The actions you take in your forest will be evident for decades and will determine the future benefits you and others receive from your forest. A timber sale will be your signature on the land.



Several good brochures and sample timber sale contracts are available through your local office of the DEC and several good publications through your county association of Cornell Cooperative Extension. Good publications are Logging Aesthetics, the video Biodiversity for Farms and Forests, and Cornell Cooperative Extension Conservation Circular volume 21 No. 5: Guide to Selling Timber.

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(607) 255-2814

✓ Check your phone book for local
DEC and Cornell Cooperative
Extension office phone numbers.

Woodland Owner Associations:
New York Forest Owners
Association: (800) 836-3566
Catskill Forest
Association: (914) 586-3054
Tug Hill Resources Investment
for Tomorrow: (315) 376-5595

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got trees? Selling Timber

A GUIDE TO FOREST MANAGEMENT
FOR NEW YORK STATE
WOODLOT OWNERS

Whether you own 5 acres or 5000, assistance is available to help you make informed decisions about harvesting timber from your woodlot.

