



WOODS WISE

Guide to Consulting Foresters

ONCE YOU READ THIS GUIDE, YOU WILL KNOW:

- What a consulting forester is,
- What a consulting forester does,
- How to find and choose a consulting forester, and
- How a consulting forester is different from other types of foresters.



Here are just a few examples of how a consulting forester could help you:

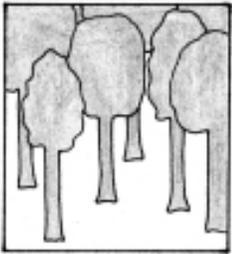
- Write a plan to make your woodland more valuable and enjoyable.
- Make arrangements for selling your timber and planting new trees.
- Give advice about prescribed burning and thinning, or almost anything else you want to do with your woods.

What is a consulting forester?

Consulting foresters help landowners plan and manage their woods. They are *consultants*, so you have to pay them. They are *foresters*, so they know how to take care of trees and the rest of the forest – like the soil, streams, and wildlife. In North Carolina, they are registered with the state.

What will a consulting forester do for you?

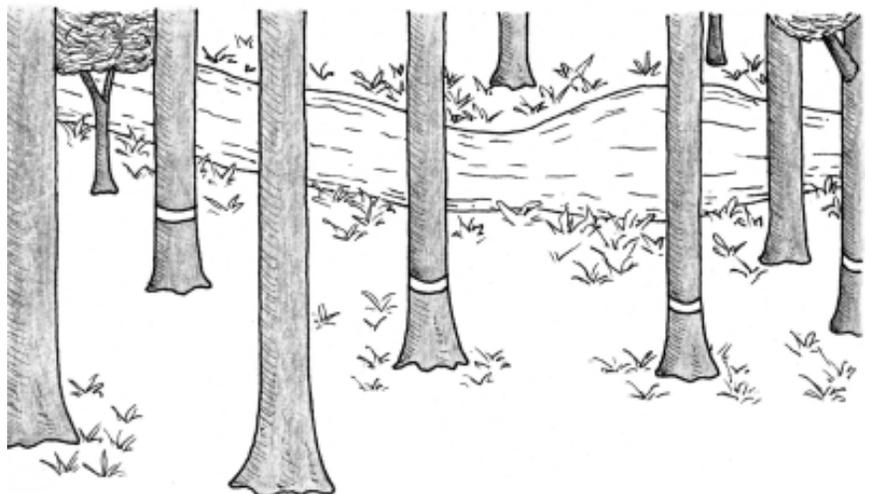
1. **Develop a management plan.** Many management plans involve growing, selling, and replanting trees. But you should have a management plan even if you don't want to cut many trees. For example, you could have a plan to lease hunting rights or sell pine straw. Or you may want a management plan just to make your woods



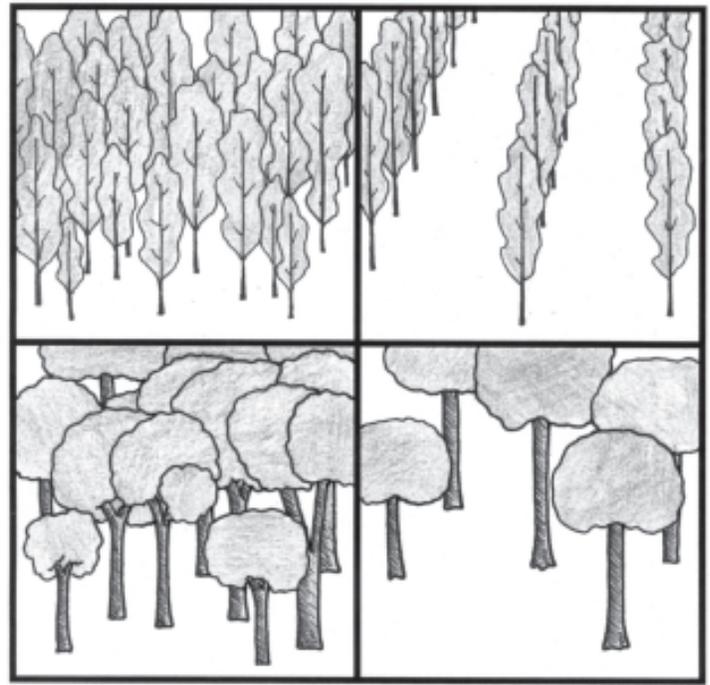
a place where you can relax and feel peaceful. Once you decide what you want to do with your land and trees, you are ready to write a management plan. Consulting foresters can write management plans with and for you. Such plans usually

describe goals for your land and trees and the steps you need to take to reach these goals. They describe how the forest looks now, the types of trees in the forest, how they are growing, and the size, volume (amount), and quality of your timber. The plan may also include information on the other plants and animals in your woods.

2. **Help you sell timber.** Consulting foresters can advise you on when to sell your timber. They can also "appraise" your timber, which means they calculate how much it is worth. For this appraisal, the forester walks through your forest, studies your land, and looks at the trees - their height, their width (diameter), what kind (species), and how many are there. Before a timber sale, the forester should mark areas to be protected, like "stream side management zones." The forester may also mark the best trees to cut. Consulting foresters can help you find timber buyers, get the best price, and prepare the timber sale contract. They also can advise you about financial assistance for replanting trees after the sale.



3. **Show you how to grow better trees.** Sometimes it helps to invest in timber stand improvements, such as "thinning" to get rid of poor quality trees and give the remaining trees more room to grow. These activities will improve the health, growth, and quality of the remaining trees. A consulting forester can tell you which activities make sense on your land and when they should be done.



4. **Help you decide about controlled burning.** There are several reasons you might burn your woodland. One is to get rid of unwanted competing trees or shrubs, as a "timber stand improvement." Another is to prevent the build up of dead trees and leaves that might result in a major fire. Some landowners burn their woodland to benefit wildlife. Consulting foresters can mark the area to be burned, make sure that it is surrounded by good "fire lanes" (clear spaces that prevent the fire from spreading), and actually conduct the burn.



5. **Mark your boundaries.** You may not be able to see the boundary between your land and your neighbor's land. Consulting foresters can help you review your boundaries or find a surveyor to check the boundaries. Knowing your exact boundaries is important if you sell timber, lease land for hunting, or conduct "controlled burning." It is also useful if your neighbor is planning to sell trees.

How do you find a consulting forester?

The North Carolina Division of Forest Resources keeps a list of consulting foresters. They have an office in every county. You can find the phone number under "forestry" in the North Carolina state government pages in your local phone book. The county ranger or other Division of Forest Resources staff has a list of consulting foresters in your area and can help you choose a consultant. The Cooperative Extension Center in your county might also have a list of consulting foresters and can discuss your forestry needs. You can also find a list of consulting foresters on the Division of Forest Resources web page: http://www.dfr.state.nc.us/tending/tending_consulting.html.

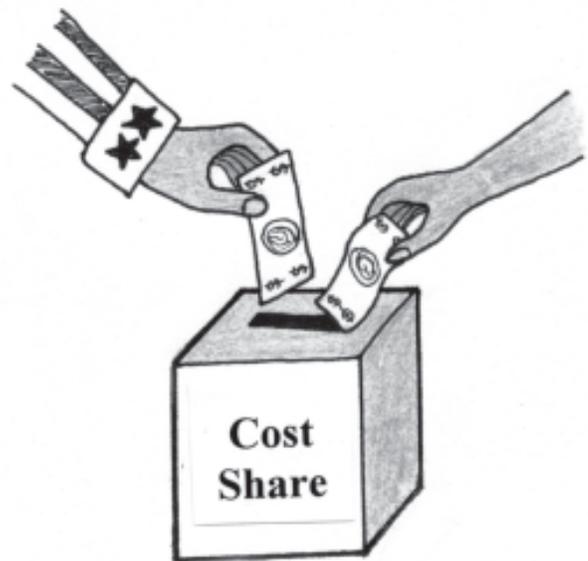


How do you choose a consulting forester?

Foresters have different skills and experience. Some might specialize in work with small landowners, and others work mostly with big landowners. Some might specialize in "timber stand improvements" and some in managing for wildlife. Most consulting foresters can help you plan for anything that you want to do with your woods. You should talk to several consulting foresters before choosing one. Tell them how many acres you have, and what you would like to do with your woods. You also want to make sure that you can get along with the forester. Most consulting foresters will visit your land and meet with you the first time for free.

When you call or meet a consulting forester for the first time:

1. Check that the consultant is registered with the state. The State Board of Registered Foresters makes sure that its foresters have basic forestry skills and follow rules for good consultants. Consulting foresters who are registered with the state must work only for landowners, and not for forestry companies or some other business interest. Consulting foresters may also be members of the Association of Consulting Foresters or the Forest Stewards Guild.
2. Tell the consultant what you want to do with your woods – or what kind of advice you need. Then ask if they have helped other landowners do similar things. You might ask for names of other landowners who can tell you about the consultant's work. Call them and ask if they were happy with the consultant!
3. Ask the consultant if he or she knows about taxes and about government programs that will help you pay for improvements on your land. Ask them which cost share programs they would recommend for you.
4. Ask the consultant about his or her fees. Depending on the services you need, a consulting forester may charge a flat fee, may charge by the hour, or may take a percentage of the timber or the revenue made from a timber sale.
5. Finally, compare their answers. Then pick the consulting forester who you think will do the best job for you! Once you choose a consulting forester, you should sign a written contract. It should clearly state what the consulting forester will do, when it will be done, and how he or she will be paid.



Who else can provide advice about my forest?

Each county has a forest ranger from the NC Division of Forest Resources. They can help you write management plans, or they can help you find a consulting forester. Their services do not cost anything. This is a good place to start looking for advice.

You can also seek advice from your county Extension agent, and from the county representative of the Natural Resources Conservation Service. You can find these and other agency representatives at the USDA County Service Center.



What if a "procurement forester" contacts you?

These foresters work for forest industry. They buy timber for a single company, or for several companies. Sometimes they give advice about replanting trees, but they work for a company. They may not look out for your best interest.

What if independent loggers or contractors visit you?

These people buy timber. Some are well trained and interested in the health of your forest. Others are more interested in getting the most profit instead of helping you maintain a healthy forest.

If you decide to sell your timber, you will probably make more income by hiring a consulting forester to help you with the sale. The consultant will help you contact several different loggers to find who will pay the best price for your timber.

Be Woods Wise! *Check off these steps:*

- ✓ Get the names of several consulting foresters from your local county forest ranger or local Extension agent.
- ✓ Think about your goals for your land.
- ✓ Talk to more than one consulting forester about how they can help you reach your goals.
- ✓ Choose a consulting forester and check if he or she is registered with the state.
- ✓ Sign a written agreement with your consulting forester.



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