

Am I Ready To Harvest?

In Maine, thousands of small woodlots, from 5-150 or more acres, are harvested each year. For most landowners, having a timber harvest happens only once every few years – or even just once in a lifetime. The more you plan ahead for your timber harvest, the more likely it is that the harvest will be successful in meeting your goals and leaving your property in good shape for the future.

Getting Ready:

Forests take decades to grow. A few steps will help you understand what's in your woods, how you can harvest it now, and how it will grow in the future:

My forest ownership goals and objectives are clear to me. Yes No

I have a written description of my goals that I can show to others. Yes No

I have a professional recommendation or “prescription” about how to harvest my forest – ideally from a licensed forester that’s working for me. Yes No

I have a written Forest Management Plan (or similar planning document) that identifies what I have in my forest, and the need for a particular type of harvest in specific areas, given my goals. Yes No

I understand how a harvest would meet my goals for the short term and for the future. Yes No

I know how the forest will grow after the current harvest – and roughly when the NEXT harvest will be, after this one. Yes No

My property lines are well-established and clearly marked. Yes No

I have permission (if needed) to cross or use another owner’s land. Yes No

Can I do the harvest myself?

Logging is skilled, physically demanding, and often dangerous work. In addition, if you are selling wood products yourself, you should make sure in advance that you have enough knowledge of markets and wood transportation.

I have the equipment (including safety and personal protection gear) to cut and yard trees safely. Yes No

I have the training, experience, and knowledge to get the results I want. Yes No

I have enough time to devote to the harvest to follow the recommendations and reach my goals. Yes No

I know which specific markets are available and open for all the tree species and products I will be cutting (except those I will use myself), I know roughly how much volume of each product I will cut, and I know what a fair prices are for these products.

___Yes ___ No

I know how I will transport the trees to these markets (or who can truck them for me).

___Yes ___ No

If I cannot harvest the trees myself:

I have identified (with my forester's help) a skilled, professional logger with the appropriate equipment to do the harvest.

___Yes ___ No

I have looked at the logger's previous harvests and spoken with the landowners involved, to see what I can expect for results.

___Yes ___ No

Working with Professionals

Working with your forester (often, the same forester that wrote your Forest Management Plan) will help you decide how the job will get done correctly. If you do not hire a forester to help you with these steps, someone – you or the logger – may have to accomplish them, or they will happen by default.

I have a professional services contract with my forester which identifies which tasks he/she will perform, and how much they will cost.

___Yes ___ No

Forester services could include:

___ Preparing a more detailed Harvest Operations Plan

___ Flagging boundaries and/or harvest area limits

___ Determining what trees will be cut

___ Marking trees to be cut (or trees to leave)

___ Estimating timber harvest volume and value, including fair prices for all the species/products that will be harvested

___ Designing erosion control measures and stream crossings at/near waterbodies

___ Planning/laying out roads, log landing areas, major trails

___ Researching legal requirements, obtaining permits (if needed)

___ Filing notifications, year-end reports

I have a good understanding of the harvest's anticipated income and costs.

___Yes ___ No

Developing a Timber Harvest Contract/Timber Sale Agreement

A written contract is an essential communications tool – it allows the landowner and the logger to have a common understanding of how the harvest will take place, what the cost/income will be, and who is responsible for making sure the harvest is successful for all parties. Your forester can help walk you through this process.

I have negotiated (with my forester's help) a Timber Harvest Contract with the logger that communicates all expectations and responsibilities for the harvest. Yes No

Contract provisions could include:

Parties to the contract - names of Seller (landowner), Buyer (typically, a logger), and Forester/Agent for the landowner (if applicable)

Contract begin and end date

Restrictions on operations based on season, soil and/or market conditions (if any)

Property's exact locations, how boundaries and harvest area limits are marked

What trees are to be cut, and how they are marked or otherwise identified (the trees to be cut or left should be sufficiently clearly identified so there is little room for disagreement)

Stumpage prices to be paid to the landowner, for each species and product combination

When the landowner will be paid (scale or mill slips for each truckload must be provided to the landowner or their agent)

Access systems: what roads, log landings, major trails, and stream crossings will be used or constructed, with what design requirements, and who will bear the cost.

Legal restrictions/requirements on the harvest

"Close-out" – in what condition roads, trails, "slash", leaning/trees, etc. will be left after the harvest

Clarify logger's status and show a certificate as an independent contractor (or show evidence of a Worker's Compensation insurance policy)

Show evidence/a certificate of logger's liability insurance policy

Ability of either party to terminate the contract under defined conditions

SIGNATURES (a contract must be signed by all parties to be valid)

Other information; maps, special services or provisions

Implementing a Successful Harvest

Once the harvest is underway, staying in communication is essential to help make sure things go smoothly and are completed. Staying on top of things and communicating well can avoid misunderstandings near the end of the harvest. Your forester can provide these services and walk you through the process of a successful timber harvest.

I am able to supervise the timber harvesting (or have hired my forester to help supervise the harvest) while it's happening and at "close-out" of the job. Yes No

I understand how and approximately when wood will be trucked, to which mills/markets. Yes No

I understand all the recommended practices (known as Best Management Practices) and legal requirements for protecting water quality; what's needed and where. Yes No

I understand the species, units, and prices for all products to be harvested, and how/when they will be paid for. Yes No

I am able to understand the scale/mill slips and payments for the wood being harvested (or have hired my forester to help.) Yes No

I have considered notifying my neighbors and abutting landowners about the harvest. Yes No

I have confidence in the forester and logger I have chosen to work with. Yes No

I have a clear idea of the results I want and am confident the harvest will achieve those results. Yes No

The above outline is not a quiz, just a guide for some of the issues you as landowner may want to address. Ultimately, you as the landowner have to have confidence that the harvest will meet your goals, and that the people you are working with can do the job safely and professionally. If you take the time to plan ahead and work with reputable, skilled people, you greatly increase the chances that you will be satisfied with the results.

Should you have questions about identifying your goals for your woodland, working with professionals, developing contracts and agreements, implementing a successful timber harvest, or any other aspect of your woodland, contact the Maine Forest Service.

Andy Shultz, Maine Forest Service Landowner Outreach Forester (207) 287-8430
Morten Moesswilde, Maine Forest Service Midcoast District Forester (207) 441-2895

