

# 1.3 FOREST MANAGEMENT PLANNING

## BACKGROUND

**Most forest land in New Hampshire is privately owned, and the duration of ownership of any piece of land is short compared to the life of a forest. Forests are complex mixes of resources deserving long-term care. Developing a plan can improve the outcome of forest management actions.**

Private landowners own nearly 80 percent of New Hampshire forest land. Individual actions contribute to the sustainability of the state's forest, one woodlot at a time.

The trees we see today are here because of climate, topography, soils, and past uses of the land. Today's owners influence what tomorrow's owners will see on the land. Forest management and silviculture (the art and science of establishing and tending trees and forests) give us the tools to help shape what our forests will look like in the future.

Managing a forest using this manual to meet current landowner objectives without negatively affecting its use by future generations, requires active involvement, a sense of responsibility, knowledge of the opportunities, an awareness of the consequences of actions, and a clear set of objectives. The more known about the land, the better. Good stewards of the land consider water quality, aesthetics, fish and wildlife habitat, timber, recreation, soils, wetlands and other unique places, rare plants and unique natural communities, forest protection, and cultural and historical features.

A forest management plan is a working guide with recommendations. Developing objectives for the land is integral to planning (1.2 Setting Objectives). The plan describes the natural resources of a property in light of the landowner's interests and objectives. It normally includes maps and a written report with recommendations, prioritized with suggestions for timing.

The forest is mapped and described by stand (a grouping of trees similar in species, age, and site). Maps can be hand-drawn or computer-generated. They can be developed using remotely sensed information such as aerial photographs, based on field explorations, or some combination. A good map represents what exists on the land. Plans typically include the following composite or separate maps:

- Property—perimeter sketch or survey map with known boundary information such as stone walls or monuments, significant land features, access points, roads, landings, trails, or surface water.
- Forest type—tree species and species groups, size classes, etc.
- Wildlife habitat—significant and critical wildlife habitats and features such as deer wintering areas, heron rookeries, wetlands, beech stands showing heavy bear use, and habitat for species in greatest need of conservation.
- Recreation, aesthetic, water, cultural and other resources—existing and potential sites for recreation, vantage points, trails, historic sites, natural-heritage elements.
- Soils—based on the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) soil survey information.
- Property location (locus map).

Written stand descriptions and management prescriptions (recommendations) are based on field-data collection. The level and type of inventory and field data gathered depends on the owner's objectives and budget. Stand descriptions include species, density, quality, accessibility, age class, understory vegetation, insects, diseases, and wildlife habitat such as snags, canopy closure, vegetative diversity, nonforest, wetland and other features. Management prescriptions are based on objectives and characteristics of the stand. They specify the likely results and consequences of suggested actions.

### OBJECTIVE

Help landowners determine their objectives, assess the resources on their woodlot and develop a long-term plan. The desired outcome is a well-tended woodlot.

### CONSIDERATIONS

- Foresters offering services to private landowners for compensation are licensed by the State of New Hampshire. Plan writing is among the many services they offer.
- Developing a long-term plan can help landowners realize their hopes and dreams for their land. But caring for the land can be complicated. A first step in developing a plan is to determine goals and objectives, at least what they are today. Other considerations include the size of the property, the condition of the resource, and the budget for planning. The plan should be scaled to suit owner needs and financial resources.
- A plan can be relatively inexpensive or a major investment, depending on the landowner objectives, which the plan should reflect.
- Plans vary depending on landowner interest and the intended uses. Knowing the intended uses helps determine the type and intensity of the plan developed and results in a plan that can satisfy multiple purposes.
  - **Current Use Plan** satisfies the requirement of the “forest land with documented stewardship” category of current use tax assessment (RSA 79-A). Current use plans include an updated map and:
    - A statement of forest stewardship objectives.
    - Current forest stand descriptions.
    - Current management prescriptions that address timber, fish and wildlife habitat, soil, water quality, recreation, aesthetics, cultural features, forest protection, wetlands, threatened and endangered species, and unique natural communities.
    - A boundary-maintenance schedule.
    - An access road development and maintenance plan, if applicable.
    - The signature of a person qualified to write the plan, usually a New Hampshire licensed forester.See the *The Current Use Criteria Booklet* for additional requirements.
  - **Tree Farm Management Plan** satisfies the requirements of the Tree Farm Program. Free inspections are provided to Tree Farmers, but plan preparation isn’t included in this free service.
  - **Conservation easements** may require a plan before harvesting or other management activity can occur. The easement deed gives specifics.
  - **Forest Stewardship Plan or Forest Management Plan** developed with federal financial assistance. Federal funding helps cover the cost of hiring a forester to write a plan and may be used to satisfy the requirements of the above plans. Federal program requirements result in a comprehensive plan, and the cost reflects this. It may be more cost-effective to develop a simpler plan.

### 1.3: Forest Management Planning

## RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

- ✓ Contact your UNH Cooperative Extension county forester for a woodlot visit. He/she can do a preliminary woodland assessment with you and relate the resources on your land to your interests, as well as put you in touch with information, professionals, and programs. As part of this visit, explore available financial assistance.
- ✓ Work with a forester. Refer to the *Directory of Licensed Foresters Providing Service to Forest Landowners in New Hampshire*.
- ✓ Determine your objectives and share them with your forester for inclusion in the plan. Refer to 1.2 Setting Objectives and a landowner goals and objectives assessment form.
- ✓ Involve family members in discussions about your land so they understand your goals and objectives, especially if you plan to leave your land to them.
- ✓ Determine the type of plan that will meet your needs and contract for a plan that meets those needs. Invest appropriately, based on your objectives, the size of the property, the value of the resource, and your budget.
- ✓ Implement your plan in a flexible and dynamic way, responsive to changing markets, natural occurrences such as ice storms or insect infestations, or changes in your interests and needs.
- ✓ Review the plan before timber harvesting, before undertaking other management activities, and every 10 years.

## CROSS REFERENCES

1.1 First Steps in Forest Management; 1.2 Setting Objectives; 1.4 Estate Planning and Land Protection; Chapters related to individual landowner objectives.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Bennett, K. P. 2010. *Directory of Licensed Foresters Providing Service to Forest Landowners in New Hampshire*. UNH Cooperative Extension, Durham, N.H. <http://extension.unh.edu/fwt/dir/index.cfm> Accessed on August 2, 2010.

UNH Cooperative Extension. *Landowner Goals and Objectives Assessment Forms*. [http://extension.unh.edu/resources/resource/972/Landowner\\_Goal\\_Assessment](http://extension.unh.edu/resources/resource/972/Landowner_Goal_Assessment) Accessed on January 28, 2010.

N.H. Dept. of Revenue Administration. *Current Use Criteria Booklet*. [http://extension.unh.edu/resources/resource/977/Current\\_Use\\_Criteria\\_Booklet](http://extension.unh.edu/resources/resource/977/Current_Use_Criteria_Booklet) Accessed on May 27, 2010.

N.H. Tree Farm Program. N.H. *Tree Farm Program Management Plan Template*. [http://extension.unh.edu/resources/files/Resource001005\\_Rep1150.pdf](http://extension.unh.edu/resources/files/Resource001005_Rep1150.pdf) Accessed on January 28, 2010.