



# **A Landowner's Guide to Selecting a Forester**

Produced by the Colorado Forestry Association  
to assist private woodland owners

## **This Guide is for You**

**If** you own, or are contemplating owning forested land, **or if** you are seeking the assistance of a professional forester to:

- ⤴ Prepare forest management plans for the purpose of participating in state or federal assistance programs
- ⤴ Advise you in caring for your forest in order to create, maintain and enhance a healthy, aesthetically pleasing forest while addressing your objectives for your land

## **What Is a Healthy Forest**

A healthy forest is one that has diversity of species, age classes and spatial arrangement which help make it resilient, or able to perpetuate itself in spite of disturbances.

In order to perpetuate a healthy forest one must embrace the concept that forests are dynamic ecosystems that grow, mature, reproduce, and die like all other life forms. They are not static features of the land like the rocks.

## **You Have Choices**

How much do you want to participate in the planning process?

Creating any kind of plan usually involves:

- ⤴ Clear understanding of the goals with specific objectives for each goal
- ⤴ Describing the current state with an appropriate and technically sound inventory
- ⤴ Setting forth a desired future condition that is in harmony with stated goals
- ⤴ Proposing alternative management actions for moving toward the desired condition
- ⤴ Evaluating those alternatives against criteria that measure the degree to which the the desired future condition is achieved, environmental effects, costs, benefits and other indicators of tradeoffs between competing goals, and
- ⤴ Selecting one of the alternatives that moves the forest toward your desired condition at a rate that is feasible given physical and financial constraints

Directing your forester to just present you with a plan with minimal input from you, no discussion to help flesh out various potential desired conditions, and no alternatives considered or compared is the cheapest, fastest way to get a plan written. However, this often results in plans that are not implemented because:

- ⤴ The tradeoffs between competing goals are not understood and appear unacceptable when treatments are placed on the landscape
- ⤴ The landowner has no 'ownership' in the plan because he/she does not really understand the rationale behind the treatments, and begins to make modifications on the whims of the moment without considering how that affects the trajectory toward the longer term desired conditions
- ⤴ Operations are not conducted to appropriate specifications, or are undertaken at the wrong time of year, or with improper equipment in an effort to cut cost, which often reduces the effectiveness of the treatment or results in resource damage

## **Process**

It is appropriate to discuss the process and schedule.

*This is where your degree of involvement is established.*

How and when will the desired conditions be developed?

Do you want to see the results of the inventory as soon as the data is processed?

Or not until it is incorporated into a draft plan?

What will be your involvement in developing alternative management options?

What will be your involvement in evaluating alternative management options?

Will you be given a draft to review and discuss?

How much time will be allowed for your review?

## **Finding a Forester**

Each Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) District Forester maintains a list of forestry contractors and consultants. Find your local District Forester on this web site

<http://csfs.colostate.edu/pages/your-local-forester.html>

The Society of American Foresters certifies foresters who voluntarily apply for and meet **Society of American Foresters' Certified Forester® Program** requirements and Standards of Professional Practice. You can search for a certified forester on this web site

[www.eforester.org/certifiedforester/findcertifiedforester.cfm](http://www.eforester.org/certifiedforester/findcertifiedforester.cfm)

The Association of Consulting Foresters web site will allow you to search for an ACF forester

[www.acf-foresters.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home](http://www.acf-foresters.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home)

If you wish to apply for technical and financial assistance through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), you should search for a Technical Service Provider (TSP) on the NRCS web site

<http://techreg.usda.gov/index.aspx> (look in the upper right hand corner). Your local NRCS District

Conservationist can also assist you.

As a minimum you should verify that the foresters you are considering has a bachelor's degree from an accredited forestry school. Experience is also an important consideration, however, it is most valuable when the experience was gained working with the a forested ecosystem similar to your property.

It is also worthwhile to ask what research the candidate has read lately, or what training he has taken recently as an indication of whether there is an effort to stay current on relevant skills and knowledge.

You should be able to learn a lot about the candidate by visiting his web site, if he has one.

## **References**

If the candidate's web site does not list references, ask for them and talk to them.

## **Insurance**

Prospective forestry contractors should be willing to show proof of liability insurance.

This discussion pertains only to the employment of a consultant to prepare plans or reports. The discussion of insurance for forestry treatments involving cutting trees or prescribed burning is beyond the scope of this paper.

## **Payment Schedule**

Will payment be all up front, all at the end, or tied to stages of plan development?

Is payment contingent on acceptance by CSFS or NRCS if it is to be used for financial assistance programs?

Does the payment schedule deal with the discovery of archeological sites, historical sites or buildings, or rare or endangered species? When known in advance the contracted price should include consideration of these time consuming factors. But, if they are discovered during the planning process, that original price may need to be adjusted.

## **Contract**

It is generally wise to have a basic written contract in which many of these issues above are documented. The contract should also address the issue of how either party can amend or terminate the contract.

## **Know Your Property**

It will save you time and money if you have located and marked property boundary lines and corners before you shop for a forester or forestry contractor.

When possible provide your contractors with a copy of survey plats and descriptions.

No one should blindly accept fences as property lines. Especially old fences. The ranchers that built them were generally more concerned with controlling livestock, not legal boundaries. The existence of a fence will not protect you when charged with trespass.