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.

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