

Woodland owners may find themselves working with several different types of foresters during the time they own and manage their woodlands. Some types are procurement foresters, service foresters, and consulting foresters.

A *procurement forester* works for a forest product manufacturing company such as a sawmill or a paper company. On behalf of their employers, they purchase standing timber and logs to meet the company's raw material needs. Some forest product companies have foresters who also help landowners with developing management plans.

Kentucky state government through the Kentucky Division of Forestry employs *service foresters* to meet with woodland owners and help guide them toward a sustainable forest management plan for their woodlands, a service that ultimately benefits all the people of the Commonwealth.



Kentucky's Consulting Foresters

By Christopher J. Will



Photo by Chris Will



Photo by James Savage

And then there is the *consulting forester*. The consultant is employed by woodland owners to help them carry out a specific forestry activity. The consulting forester represents only the interests of the landowner for whom he or she is working. It is the consulting forester who can provide up-to-date, unbiased timber value information and timber sales expertise to the forest landowner.

A consulting forester is a privately employed businessperson with a minimum of a bachelor's degree in forestry from an accredited college or university. Not all consulting foresters offer the same services, but most provide at least basic services of timber sale administration, timber inventories and valuations, timber trespass appraisals, and forest management planning.

The consultant's knowledge of timber markets and timber values can help the woodland owner make critical management decisions about his or her forest. When it's time to harvest timber, consultants use their experience and the relationships they have developed with timber buyers to get the best available price for the landowner. Once a buyer has been obtained, the consultant can protect the landowner's interests and property with a timber sale contract and harvest oversight.

Timber valuations are often made at the time woodlands are bought or sold. It can also be used for management, tax, and estate planning. By inventorying the timber resource by tree species and size class, the consultant can estimate its financial worth. In the unfortunate situation where a landowner has lost timber to a trespassing neighbor, a consultant can estimate the volume and value of the timber removed. Expert witness testimony is also available.

Woodland management planning provides landowners with a description of their woodlands today and recommendations that should be implemented in order to meet objectives for the future.

The consultant provides these services either for an hourly rate or as percentage of the timber sale proceeds. Contact each consultant to determine the services they provide and the rates that they charge.

Some consulting foresters become members of the Association of Consulting Foresters of America, and they use the ACF designation after their name. ACF membership demonstrates

that a forester has a minimum of a bachelor's degree in forestry, at least five years of experience in practical forestry administration, no interest in a timber purchasing or procurement entity, client references, and is a participant in continuing education. Members must also adhere to a strict code of ethics that protects their clients. A list of consulting foresters can be obtained online at the national Web site (www.acf-forester.com) or at the Kentucky chapter Web site (www.kacf.org).

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Photo by Mark Lee