

Follow Your Management Plan

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Hopefully every landowner has a picture in mind of how they want their property to look and the rewards they want to receive from their forest. Some want their property to look like a park and they want to enjoy recreating there. Others want to attract game animals to hunt, view, and enjoy. Still others just want the financial rewards that an intensely managed forest can offer.

Most people could care less about meeting the ever-increasing demands of society for wood products or protecting the habitat of an endangered snail. Such matters are the concern of government agencies, and these agencies do everything possible to stimulate landowner interest in proper forest management. But when you boil it all down, the chief interest of most landowners is simply their own little part of the world – their “back-forty.”

What some landowners do not realize is that a management plan can be much more useful than simply gaining the approval of a forestry cost-share program. It is a tool that can help turn your “back-forty” into that picture in your mind. You know – the one you have always envisioned your property could be, if you just knew what to do.

A forest management plan prepared by an experienced professional forester can be a

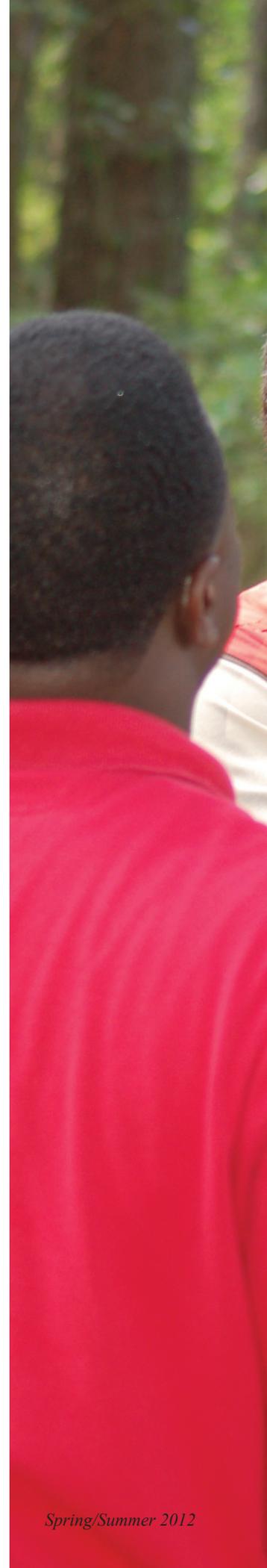
road map guiding you from where you are now, to where you want to be. It will take into consideration your objectives for your property and will lay out a detailed plan to help you move forward.

Goals and objectives often change with the passing of time. Your goals at age 55 may be drastically different than they were at age 25. So your plan will need to be reviewed from time to time. Most plans try to propose activities for five to ten years, even though the rotation length of a stand of trees can vary from as short as 18 years to as long as 80 years.

A carefully designed management plan can also provide documentation of planned forestry activities in or near wetlands. Harvesting timber in or near wetlands will certainly involve some federal laws or regulations. A written forest management plan can serve as documented proof of established or ongoing silvicultural operations in the area.

A written plan will not protect you against violations, but it can serve as a historical record that the objective of your property was and is timber production. It can also communicate to the harvesting crew and equipment operators the specific activities recommended.

“Professional foresters have the knowledge, skills, and expertise to help landowners develop forest management plans that meet individual goals while sustaining the natural resource.”





If you have never had a forest management plan, your first step is to request one. “Where?” you may ask. Several sources are available to landowners from government agencies, forest industry, and consulting foresters.

There are two government agencies in Alabama that have a system in place to assist private landowners in obtaining a forest management plan. The first agency is the Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC). The Commission has dozens of professional foresters with offices throughout the state. The AFC promotes certification and participation in the Tree Farm program, Stewardship program, and the TREASURE Forest program. All three programs require a written management plan before certification is achieved.

A TREASURE Forest plan is based on multiple-use concepts; the landowner selects at least two objectives which will be primary in the management of the land. A landowner can choose from the following management objectives: Timber Production, Wildlife, Recreation, Aesthetics, and Environmental Education.

A TREASURE Forest plan, Stewardship plan, or a Tree Farm plan will all have property information such as a legal description, stand tables, and a summary of the landowner’s desires for the property. Each plan has a set of maps such as an area map giving the general location and a property map detailing the boundaries, timber stands, roads, and other special areas.

Each stand is described and management recommendations made based on the landowner’s objectives. Often other natural resource specialists, such as a wildlife biologist, are asked to assist in making specific recommendations.

The second agency is the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The NRCS offers assistance in the development of Conservation Activity Plans (CAPs), which are specialized, in-depth plans that address specific resources and can be used to improve management. Many of the recommendations from the plans can be part of a subsequent application for financial assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

For additional information about the CAP plans, contact your local USDA Service Center or check out the NRCS website at: www.al.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip12/cap12.html. (See Activity Code “106” for the CAPs in Forest Management Practice offered in Alabama.)

Another source for landowners to consider is a consultant forester, of which there are many within our state. An experienced consultant can help you develop a plan and assist with many other forestry projects. For more information, check out the Association of Consulting Foresters (ACF) website at: www.alacf.com/Benefits.html.

Obtaining a written forest management plan for your property can be the first step in transforming your “back-forty” into that picture in your mind. It may also help you reach a higher level in forestry management than you ever imagined.♣