



Timber Management

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Why manage for timber?

Timber management, defined as growing trees for commercial harvest, can be important not only to the landowner but to the people of Florida as well. The state's 16 million acres of forest land produce pine and hardwood timber which is used to manufacture over 5000 different products that we all use in our daily lives. Sales of these products generated \$5.6 billion in revenue and a payroll of \$1.3 billion within the state during 1989. Unfortunately, as discussed in the previous chapter, Florida's forest lands are rapidly disappearing

This makes it essential that the remaining forestlands be actively managed to ensure a continuous supply of wood for the future. Company-owned timberlands and public lands alone cannot grow enough wood to satisfy future demands. Non-industrial private forest landowners, who as a group own almost half of the state's forest lands, can significantly contribute to future timber supplies through active management. For that reason, all Forest Stewardship management plans include strategies for improvement of the timber resource.

Timber harvests benefit landowners by providing them with periodic supplemental income. Returns from investments in timber management compare favorably to other available alternatives. Ad Valorem tax liability can be reduced by active management, and federal income tax rules provide credits for reforestation and general management expenses. Other resource amenities such as wildlife populations, recreational opportunities, soil stability, water quality, grazing forage and aesthetic appearance can also be enhanced by properly planned timber management practices. Active management does not have to involve intensive or expensive treatments; it simply refers to conducting practices which improve the growth and quality of the timber resource on at least a portion of a landowner's property.

Options for timber management

Landowners may decide to manage their forest lands primarily to maximize the growth of merchantable timber. Management recommendations for these landowners also provide for the other resources listed in this publication, but in a way that complements efforts to encourage volume growth. Other landowners may wish to manage their timber as a secondary objective, in a way that mainly focuses on improving the other resources.

Regardless of the landowner's objectives, certain steps are essential to encourage long-term growth. First of all, timber harvests should be supervised by a professional forester and planned before the first tree is cut. This will allow the landowner to accomplish the following goals.

- Realize higher timber sale profits. A professional forester can evaluate the quality of the timber before a sale, and is familiar enough with local market conditions to help landowners get "top dollar" for their timber.
- Avoid site damage during harvesting. A properly written timber sale contract will delineate exactly which trees or which portions of the property are to be harvested. Penalties for damaging structures, fences, and historical areas, or operating equipment in environmentally sensitive areas will also be specified. Prior planning will reduce the likelihood of erosion on steep slopes, protect water quality of adjacent streams, and maintain areas of unique vegetation.
- Reduce reforestation costs. If the contract states that loggers must keep stump heights low, it will be easier to prepare land for planting. Controlled burning and other vegetation control practices performed before the harvest can also improve site preparation and reduce costs.