

An Overview of Key Forestry Concepts and Principles
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1. **Private property with public consequences**

Private forest owners benefit from the opportunities they receive via their private property rights. However, the actions of forest owners often have consequences that extend beyond their property. Public values and interests can be adversely affected by poor forestry practices.

2. **Forests change**

Forest owners have strong positive sentiments for their land. Unfortunately, a reality of forests is that they always change. Trees get larger, trees die, different trees become established, storms kill trees, wildlife come and go, neighbors change, taxes increase, etc. Forest management attempts to anticipate common and predictable changes and guide (we never control) the trajectory that forests take.

3. **Many factors affect tree growth**

Owner objectives that require some type of production from a tree depend upon tree growth and vigor. Although many owner objectives may be satisfied without optimal tree growth, growth is critical for the long term health and vigor of trees. Tree growth depends on many conditions, including tree species, tree age, soil conditions, local pest abundance, previous management actions, climate, density of nearby trees, and more. If your ownership objectives depend upon good forest growth, work with a forester to improve the factors that you can influence.

4. **If you fail to plan, you should plan to fail**

Even if you don't want anything tangible from your forest, a management plan is an useful tool. A plan describes your property, often with a map, and details what you want to accomplish. You are

better able to reach your goals, whether recreation, wildlife, privacy, or timber production with a plan because the plan describes your starting and ending conditions. Without a plan, you don't know to what extent your forest is already serving your goals, what changes are needed, or what steps to take to achieve a desired change.

5. Foresters are not loggers

Foresters are trained to understand the biology and ecology of the forest. Foresters can recommend strategies to manipulate the forest to serve the interests and objectives of the owners. Loggers are trained to manipulate the forest by cutting and skidding trees and hauling and marketing logs. They should be using techniques that reduce damage to the trees and soils of the forest. Foresters and loggers often need to work together to accomplish the objectives that a forest owner identifies.

6. Initial assistance is free

Forest owners typically need assistance when they decide they want to play a more active role in guiding what happens with their trees and land. Initial assistance is free. Master Forest Owner volunteers through Cornell University Cooperative Extension are not foresters, but forest owners who will make a free visit to your property and help you learn about your management options. NYS Department of Environmental Conservation "public service foresters" are professional foresters available with a phone call to your local DEC regional office. DEC foresters will make a free visit and prepare a management plan that can guide your actions.

7. You can't do everything on every acre

Most ownership objectives are compatible, but others are not. For example, good forest harvesting practices often improve conditions for many wildlife species. Recreational access is potentially enhanced by well designed skid trails. Some other goals, however, may not be compatible. Think about what you want your forest to provide and communicate with your forester and logger to assure you get what your desired outcome.

8. The trail will take you there

An important starting point for forest owners is to develop some type of trail system. Trails help you regularly and easily get into your forest. Contact your local Soil and Water Conservation District for assistance with understanding soils and topography and designing a trail system to meet your equipment and access needs.

9. Trees are a good investment

The financial value of trees has risen steadily for many years, although the market sometimes fluctuates. As an investment, make sure your good trees are growing well. Good growth will take some work, but the business of forest ownership carries favorable tax advantages if you make informed decisions and keep good records.

10. Wildlife need texture

The diversity of wildlife that many forest owners desire is improved with "texture" in the forest. Anything that changes the look of the forest will usually provide new habitat, food, space, or cover for a additional wildlife species. Easy changes include: leaving down logs or snags, expanding seeps, creating small openings, and clearing understory trees.

11. Water runs downhill

We are all uphill and/or downhill from someone. The actions we take in the forest that disturb the soil can have significant impacts on water quality. Reduced water quality will almost certainly get the attention of your neighbors and may result in local ordinances that complicate your forest management. Work with trained professionals to minimize problems.