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Call Before You Cut!

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*Submitted by
Dee Loflin, SMT Manager/Editor*

Jefferson City, Missouri - The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) recommends that landowners considering a timber sale “Call Before You Cut” to get professional advice that can help them maximize benefits to their wallets, families and land.

“This is especially true if they have never had a timber sale before, or are concerned about the long-term health, wildlife habitat, and looks of their forested land,” said MDC Forestry Field Program Supervisor Brian Schweiss. “Through our Call Before You Cut service, landowners can get professional help from MDC foresters and private consulting foresters. It only takes a phone call to (877) 564-7483, or by going online to callb4ucut.com.”

Schweiss added that 83 percent of Missouri forests are privately owned and all forests provide important benefits to both those who own them and society in general.

“Forested lands play a vital role in providing clean air, recreational opportunities, wildlife habitat, forest products and clean water,” Schweiss said. “We work with and for many Missouri landowners to sustain healthy forests. From decades of research, we’ve learned that active forest management enhances the value of privately held woodlands.”

Schweiss offers landowners five reasons to Call Before You Cut:

1. Maximize timber income and save on taxes.

The difference between a low bid and high bid on a timber sale is typically substantial. Unaware landowners may take the first offer. A professional forester can assist with marking trees and estimating their value so the landowner knows what is being sold and the potential value. Equally important, professional foresters know what trees should not be cut for future forest benefits.

Tax savings may be another benefit. A professional forester can set a value for timber, known as the “basis,” for the year the landowner purchased the property. When selling trees, this basis can be deducted from the volume sold. In addition, sale revenue under the right conditions can be treated as capital gains income rather than ordinary income. Depending on how reported, landowners may be able to save a bit on taxes.

2. Harvest to increase quality, health and value of land.

Leaving the right trees is just as important as harvesting the right trees. Proper harvesting should leave trees with future potential. Depending on landowner objectives, these trees have wildlife value, future harvest value, and aesthetic value. Harvesting all good trees and leaving bad ones is referred to as “hi-grading.” When this occurs, a sale may be a “once in a lifetime” event. If the right trees are left, timber sales could occur on the same acres every 10–15 years.

Some larger landowners break their properties into different cutting units, have sales semi-annually, and rotate around the property on a set cycle. This provides regular income, encourages faster growth of desired trees, and maintains a healthy forest. Leaving the right trees will also maximize hunting and recreation opportunities.

3. Protect land for future generations.

Leaving property to their children is an important objective for many landowners. This legacy could be damaged through one poorly planned timber sale. Hi-grading and other harvests that take all sellable trees do not leave much potential for the next generation.

Practices such as forest thinning can help improve growing conditions for preferred species. This forest-stand improvement removes or harvests the worst trees, and provides needed growing space for remaining trees so they remain healthy and grow for a future

sale, or wildlife needs.

4. Find the best logger for the job.

What sets apart a good logger from a bad logger? How do you ensure that the person harvesting trees on your property will not leave ruts and damaged trees? This concern is shared by many landowners. In Missouri, many loggers have completed the Missouri Forest Products Association's Professionally Trained Harvester program. This teaches felling and skidding techniques that minimize damage to the forest. Some harvesters go one step further and become "Master Loggers." These individuals have both completed extensive training, and have demonstrated excellent performance.

It is also vital that landowners have a detailed contract that specifies what will be done and not be done with a timber sale. A professional forester can help landowners develop contracts that protect the land and remaining trees from damage, and that specify payment methods for harvested trees.

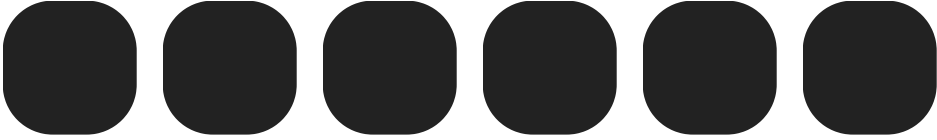
5. Learn if harvesting is right for the situation.

Professional foresters can help landowners determine if the time is right for a timber harvest. Small trees may be harvestable, but may not have reached their full potential value. A nice white oak that is only 16 inches in diameter has value, but may only bring a lower lumber value. This same tree will increase in size and volume over time, and may sell at a higher veneer value at a later date. That is a double benefit for the landowner since they could receive a higher board-foot value, and the tree will have more board feet of volume.

MDC coordinates the "Call Before You Cut" program for Missouri in partnership with the Missouri Chapter of the Society of American Foresters, the U.S. Forest Service Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry, and the Missouri Tree Farm Program. The program encourages woodland owners to consult with a professional forester, in conjunction with a professional timber harvester or a master logger, before they make decisions about their forestland.

For more information and to receive a free Call Before You Cut packet, call (877) 564-7483, or go online to callb4ucut.com.

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