

INSIDE Forests

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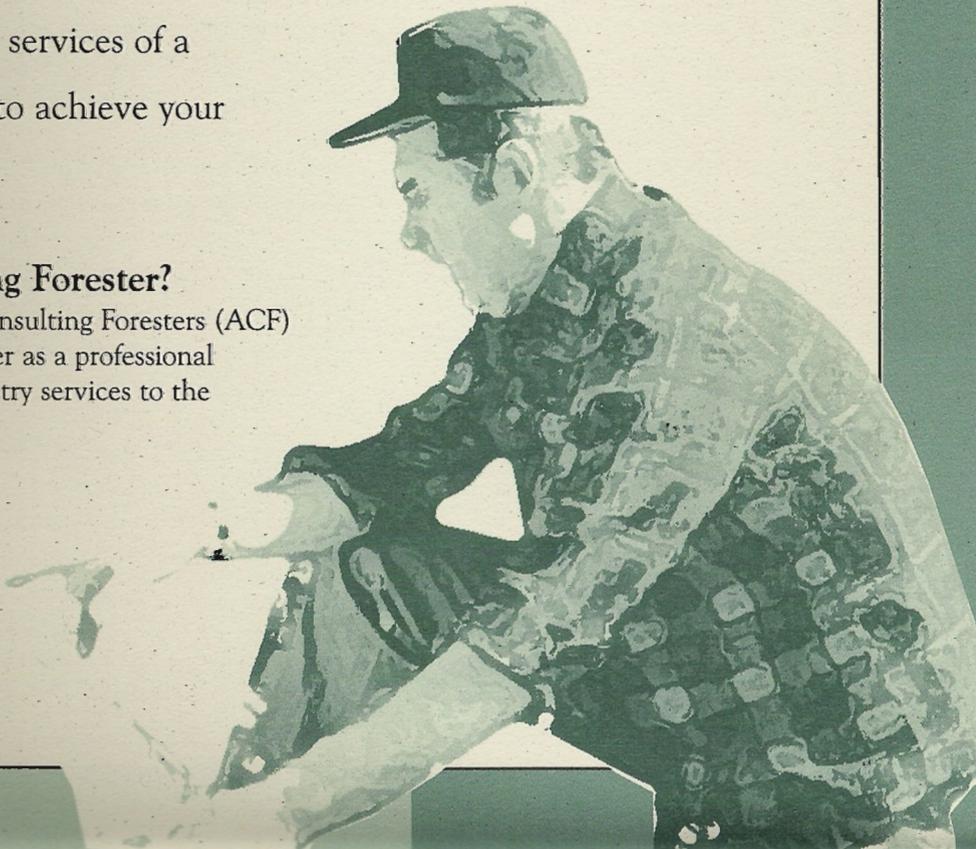
Why Hire A Consulting Forester?

by John Wells

As a forestland owner, you are the manager of an important family or business asset and the stewardship responsibility that comes with that ownership requires careful decision-making. Just as you often seek professional assistance in directing your family's financial, health and legal matters, it makes sense to seek the counsel and services of a professional forester to achieve your forestry goals.

What is a Consulting Forester?

The Association of Consulting Foresters (ACF) defines a consulting forester as a professional forester who provides forestry services to the



general public on a fee or contractual basis. Furthermore, a professional forester must hold at least a four-year degree in forestry from an accredited college or university.

What Can a Consulting Forester Do For Me?

Professional consulting foresters assist landowners with any of the following tasks:

- Forest Management and Stewardship Plans
- Timber Harvesting and Marketing
- Timber Inventory and Appraisal
- Forest Land Acquisition
- Timber Stand Improvement (*Thinning*)
- Forest Litigation and Expert Testimony
- Trespass Investigation
- Insect & Disease Abatement
- Absentee Owner Representation
- Forest Road Design and Layout
- Reforestation
- Wildlife Habitat Enhancement
- Forest Fuels Management
- Conservation Easement Consultation



Personal relationships with attention to your objectives are one benefit of hiring a consulting forester.

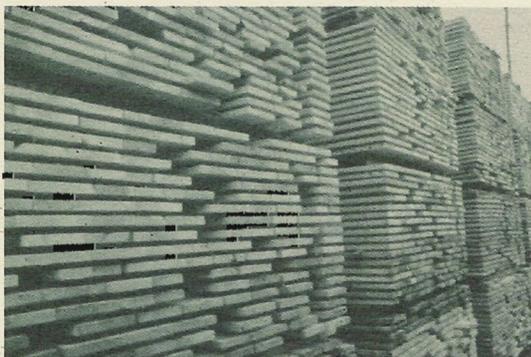
Generally, a consulting forester helps their client make the most of their valuable forest property. For example, a consulting forester can help you:

Plan what you want from your forest. Your forest can be an income-producing investment. It can be a recreational haven for your family and friends. It can be a rich wildlife habitat. Your forest can be all of these. Your consulting forester can work with you to develop an overall forest management plan and suggest specific management treatments enabling you to get the most out of your forest, whatever your objective.

Get the best value for your timber. Consulting foresters help their clients get the best price for timber through competitive bid solicitation and market analysis. Studies reveal that when timber is sold with the help of forest consultants, landowners usually get more money than when they arrange the sales themselves.

Take care of timber harvest and logging details. When it is time to harvest, you'll have the peace of mind knowing that your forester will plan

and supervise the work to make sure that the silviculture (the science of forest care and development) applied to your land meets your goals. If necessary, the consulting forester can also plan and manage the construction of forest roads and skid trails to access your timber in a way that will enhance land values. Most importantly, it is your forest consultant's job to be your advocate, ensuring that your forest management objectives are met — not those of the logger or lumber company log buyer. To be sure of this make certain your consultant is not employed by a timber purchasing or procurement entity.



Forest products are just one of the benefits of proper management.

Maintain a sustainable and healthy forest. A professional forester can guide you through the natural regeneration or reforestation decisions that will help produce a sustainable source of forest products from your forestland. He or she can also advise how to enhance forest growth and forage production for wildlife and livestock. Also, your forester can analyze, diagnose and prescribe silvicultural treatments for your forest insect and disease problems.



Consulting foresters can design the tree removal process that is best for your property.

Improve your forest legacy. Improving the growth, health and quality of your forest is a continuing service provided by consulting foresters. They can develop a harvesting and timber stand improvement program — working with your other professional advisors to take income and estate tax laws into consideration — so you and your heirs can maintain the forest as a long-term source of periodic family income, as well as a healthy, enjoyable recreational area.

How Does a Consulting Forester Charge For Services?

The fees of a consulting forester are set by agreement between the client and the forester. Fees may be charged on an hourly basis plus expenses. Ask your prospective forester for his/her published fee and expense schedule. If the contract involves a sale of timber, fees are generally contingent on a percentage of the value of the trees harvested. In any event, make certain that the financial arrangement between you and the forester is clearly stated in a signed Service Agreement.

How Do I Find a Reliable Consulting Forester?

The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation publishes a Montana Directory of Consultant Foresters. In addition, the ACF, a professional organization that sets the ethical and technical standards for consulting foresters, lists all ACF foresters on its website

([www.acf-](http://www.acf-foresters.com)

[foresters.com](http://www.acf-foresters.com)).

The Society of American Foresters (SAF) also lists its Certified Foresters at (www.safnet.org).

It is a good idea to interview a number of consulting foresters before choosing one to represent your



Tree planting can help ensure a healthy forest for the future.

interests. Montana does not require licensing of foresters, so it is important to check their qualifications. Important considerations in making your decision include:



Proper forest management will leave a lasting legacy.

- **Education** Does the candidate have a four-year degree in forestry?
- **Experience** How long has the candidate been actively working as a professional forester?
- **Credentials** Is the candidate ACF or SAF-certified? Certification by professional forestry organizations like the ACF or the SAF assures you the consulting forester holds professional credentials, possesses the required education and experience, and has agreed to uphold stringent ethical standards.
- **Insurance** Does your consulting forester provide you with the proper insurance? The standard insurance requirements include a Certificate of Insurance, detailing both liability and errors/omissions coverage, indicating the landowner as co-insured on the policy.
- **References** Does the forester have a list of references? Call them and find out the candidate's background and service record.

Making decisions that affect the productivity and appearance of your forest is a serious business. The impacts of your decisions will have long-lasting effects on your property's value. It is just good business to obtain the best information about your forest before making those decisions. Take the time to call a professional consulting forester and inquire about a preliminary forest visit — it can be the first step to seeing your forest in a new way.

Forestry and Trust Land Management Division Field Offices

Central Land Office—Helena (406) 444-3633	Polson Field Office (406) 883-3960
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Conrad Unit Office (406) 278-7869	Swan River Unit Office (406) 754-2301
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Northeastern Land Office—Lewistown . . (406) 538-7789	Anaconda Unit Office (406) 563-6078
Northwestern Land Office—Kalispell . . . (406) 751-2240	Clearwater Unit Office (406) 244-5857
Kalispell-Plains Unit, Kalispell Office . . (406) 751-2268	Hamilton Unit Office (406) 363-1585
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www.dnrc.state.mt.us/forestry



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