

CHOOSING A CONSULTING FORESTER

Consulting forester are professionally trained foresters whose services are available on a fee basis. They are an important source of technical forestry service for forest landowners. Private consulting foresters general can provide a wider range of services than public agency foresters and are not limited in the amount of time they can spend with the forest landowner. Fees for forestry consultants vary by individual consultant and by the per diem charges, or percentages of return on income-generating activities such as timber sales.

Choosing a satisfactory forestry consultant to work with you requires some effort on your part. Consider the following factors when selecting a consulting forester:

- **Professional Competency & Experience**

Be sure the individual or firm is a professional with the competency and experience you will need for the forest management activities you require. A list of consultants operating in Ohio is available from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry. The list includes the consultants, their addresses, along with their professional qualifications (degrees/training), the part of the state in which they work, and their specific areas of specialization (e.g. appraisals, cruising, tree planting, wildlife management, etc.)

- **Reputation**

You should satisfy yourself that the individual/firm you intend to hire has a reputation for reliable, competent, honest work. As forest landowners who have used the consultants professional services, other foresters, or in some cases local bankers, lawyers, or accountants. Don't hesitate to ask the consultant for references.

- **Staff**

Who will do the work? Some consultants employ foresters, technicians, or laborers to carry out some of the work. The quality of these employees and their work is important to you. Find out who they are and if they are well-supervised.

- **Location**

A consultant usually needs to be located near small jobs to satisfactorily complete them in a timely manner. Large jobs may be economical at greater distances.

- **Philosophy**

All consultants do not think alike with respect to business or forest management philosophies or the role of the consultants in the consultant-forest landowner relationship. During initial discussions with a consultant, forest landowners should discuss their land ownership objectives and their general forest management philosophy. Discuss the long and short term goals. Are certain practices unacceptable to you or the consultant? Later, all or part of this discussion may occur again after the consultant has spent time on the property and can better evaluate and present management alternatives and expected results.

- **Rapport**

Rapport is an elusive element of the landowner-consultant relationship that is very important. It is a feeling of comfort, trust and respect; a confidence that the landowner's desires are being heard and understood and will be satisfactorily carried out.

- **Agreements**

Landowners and consultants should both have a clear understanding of the work to be performed, the fees to be paid, and how they are to be assessed. For example, if work is to be charged on an hourly basis, how much per hour, approximately how many hours will be required, the maximum hours to be worked, etc. A written contract outlining work to be done, charging method, cost estimate, and time schedule is highly desirable. Continued communication between landowner and consultant will facilitate solving any problems that arise.

Your forest land represents an important resource, both monetarily and in terms of its other values and uses. If you choose to work with a consulting forester you are placing in their hands a great deal of trust concerning the future of that resource. Take the time to select the consultant carefully, communicate your objectives and desires fully and accurately, and establish a written contractual agreement outlining the important elements of your professional agreement.

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