



## UI Extension Forestry Information Series

# Silviculture Decisions IX: Can Timber Harvest Help Reach Non-Timber Goals?

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Without exception, surveys of family forest owners' attitudes and goals show that other benefits of owning forest land are often more important to them than profit from timber sales. Some of these family forest owners need or desire financial profit from selling wood products, but fear losing other values. Others may reject active management on the premise that "I don't want to manage my land, I want it to stay just the way it is". This notion has some positive factors, including:

- The owner can relax, let nature take its course.
- Natural cycles can be observed without direct interference.
- No additional direct investment is required.
- Control is not given up to loggers or advisors (control is given to nature).

There are also some negative factors of "do nothing" ownership, including:

- Predictable natural changes may be contrary to expectations.
- Uninvolved owners may have less incentive to observe and understand natural cycles.
- There is less opportunity for family involvement.
- It is considered irresponsible stewardship by some.
- It may cause legal problems with taxes, inheritance or liability.
- Most forests are already altered from their natural state by past logging fire exclusion, or landscape-level influences, including roads, air movement, insects and diseases, climate change, and other off-property factors.

Family forest owners' non-timber goals often include preserving natural beauty, enhancing wildlife habitat,

seeing wildlife, personal satisfaction of owning and stewarding land, sentimental attachment including family legacy, and personal recreation. Financial goals can include income from timber sales and livestock grazing, and in some cases, fee hunting.

Timber harvesting can help reach some of these goals by managing plant and animal habitat and species diversity, providing access for a variety of management and enjoyment activities, reducing insect and disease problems, producing short and long-term income which can fund land mortgages and non-timber management, and enhancing natural nutrient cycling for a healthier forest.

Family forest owners should remember that green plants and the soil they grow in are the basis for all ecosystems, and that trees are the dominant plants in the forest. What happens to the trees affects everything else. And what happens to everything else affects the trees. Change happens whether or not you actively manage. Well planned and executed timber harvests, whether thinning or partial cutting, or restoring a more healthy, appropriate forest for a site by final harvest and regenerating with new trees, can have beneficial effects. To achieve most non-timber goals, change must be managed. The natural resource professionals who assist family forest owners don't have a perfect knowledge, but they can reliably predict, plan, and affect change in ways that can meet a landowners' goals with a high degree of success.

Family forest owners should decide why they own their land, write it down, and then prioritize their goals.

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Reading, attending workshops, and consulting with natural resource professionals can help forest owners understand the opportunities and limitations of their land, whether their ownership goals are attainable, and how to achieve them. There are many resources available through the UI Extension Forestry offices

(listed below), government agencies, landowner organizations, books, articles and other publications.

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