

Treeconomics: The Value of Harvesting Timber

It may not seem obvious, but wood is still an important part of modern life. Think of all the big things we depend upon, like our buildings, furniture, and utility poles. Even the smaller things, like pencils, books, and cardboard boxes. Wood is used for all these things, and it is a great renewable resource that a large part of Michigan's economy depends upon. The timber industry of Michigan accounts for 21.2 billion dollars of economic impact and provides over 99 thousand jobs to Michiganders. When it comes to providing the supply of wood to keep this industry moving, private lands take center stage. Nearly half of Michigan's forests are owned by individuals and families, more than twice the amount managed by the State. This land is valued dearly by the families that own them and holds value that our timber industry can build on.

An important question comes up when thinking about managing our forests: "What is this all worth?" The answer changes based on who you ask, some landowners are concerned about the cost of maintaining their forest and the money they can make off it, while some measure it's worth in the wildlife or experiences it can produce. Regardless of the answer, it is important to manage your woods towards your goals, because idling rarely produces a desirable outcome. Those who plan and are actively involved with their woodland can get more value, whether monetary or sentimental, than those who let the forest go unchecked. Unfortunately, only 8% of Michigan forest owners have a written plan for managing their woods, which leave an incredibly valuable resource untapped.

Getting a management plan for your forest is an investment for the future. Professional foresters around the state are ready and willing to help make a custom plan, based around any individual's goals, for forested property. These foresters also help manage timber contracts, to make sure you get the most value for your trees, and that the loggers provide the best service possible. There are also tax incentive programs for people managing their forest land, such as the Qualified Forest Program, which can help with the tax burden of undeveloped forest property. Between the value of timber production, the rewards of reach your goals in your forest, and tax savings for responsible management, the benefits of timber management are easy to see.

Harvesting trees can seem daunting, and it can be hard to tell if a timber harvest is right for your woods. There are a few questions you can ask yourself to get started. First, what kind of trees do you have? Second, how long has it been since wood was cut out? Finally, do you know any foresters that can help you with your goals? If you aren't sure about any of these questions, don't be worried! The Barry Conservation District has District Forester on staff who can provide advice, information, and referrals to local professionals who can help you with your forest. You can request a free on-site assessment with District Forester Ben Savoie by calling 269-908-4134, emailing at ben.savoie@macd.org, or by stopping in at 1611 South Hanover St. in Hastings, MI, in Suite #105.



This month by the numbers:

4 Site visits - 310 acres
12 Referrals, 611 acres
1 outreach event
1 newspaper article

Open referrals:

70-19-03

Ottawa County Parks has recently purchased just over 100 acres of land in Robinson township. Their goal is to restore oak savanna, and are looking to remove old scotch pine and a small red pine plantation, as well as thinning some oak forest present on the property.

03-19-11

60 acre parcel in Shelbyville area, Approximately 20 acres of woods, rest is farm fields. Forest is primarily lowland hardwoods on either side of Miller Creek, which runs through the property. Looking for removal of previously planted Colorado Blue Spruce on south end of property, and possibly harvesting hardwoods on the northern side of the property by the creek.

If you are interested in either of these jobs, please call Ben at (269) 908-4134

