

Timing Your Timber Harvest for a Better Woods

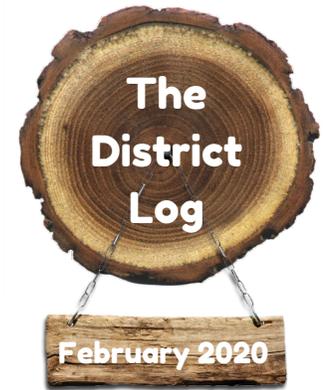
The woods of Barry County are a treasure, and at just over 129 thousand acres, there is so much for us to use and enjoy. The forests of Barry county support a vast and diverse industry of timber and wood products, an estimated \$28 million-dollar industry in our county alone. Over 80% of the forestland in Barry County is owned by individuals in the community, so the timber markets can be very close to home. Anyone who owns part of this precious resource in Michigan can benefit from participating in the forest industry, but many don't know what they have or where to start. If you don't have the connections in the industry, and don't have a plan already in place for managing your woods, how can one tell when is the right time to have a harvest?

It's important to consider all of what goes into planning a sustainable timber harvest. Trees grow slowly, so it is quite possible that the any given landowner will have only one harvest for the entire time they own the property. The impact that cutting down trees has can change a forest's future, so it's a decision to be made with careful planning. The first step in planning this out, is establishing what the goals of a harvest will be. What you want your woods to do makes all the difference, and you wouldn't want to cut down trees for no reason at all! Whether you want more deer in your woods, better timber for future sales, or just want to enjoy the beauty of the woods, making these goals clear at the start will help you make better decisions on your land. The "why" of the harvest is just as important as the "how" and "when".

The when and how of timber harvesting might seem simple, but can lead to many different results. For example, if you sell your timber unaware of that the timber market has taken a downturn, you could lose out on a lot of value instead of waiting until the market is right. Knowing what the best time of year to harvest can also protect your trees from damage and disease, such as Oak Wilt. Planning out your harvests regarding these issues can help you get a better deal for your sale, as well as keep your woods healthy and strong for future generations.

To make a plan that best reflects what you want from your woods, it often is worthwhile to get some help. Local, state, and federal agencies have programs that can help with cost sharing on forestry practices, and provide best stewardship practices to help protect your land. Independent consulting foresters are an invaluable asset for management planning, especially for getting a contract from a logger that accurately states what you want out of a harvest, and protects both the logger and you from unwanted action. These consultants help with getting the best value for your investment, bidding out the work to the best candidates, and timing the harvest to get you into the best market possible. Their contacts and expertise are a huge boon for anyone looking to actively manage their woods.

If you have some woodland, there is a better time to look in the forest and see if a timber harvest is right for you. Barry Conservation District, through the Forestry Assistance Program, has a forester on staff who can help you establish your goals, help you understand your woods, and connect you with local resource professionals. You can call District Forester Ben Savoie to schedule an on-site assessment at no cost to you. You can reach him at 269-908-4134, or email at ben.savoie@macd.org.



This month by the numbers:

Site Visits - 7
Site Visit Acreage - 152
Referrals - 9
Media Occurrences - 3
FWH A SYSTs - 1

Trainings:
Tree Farm NLCC -
Baltimore, MD

Open Referrals:

70-20-12:
Multiple small woodlots totaling 10 acres on beef farm in Nunica. Pursuing a management plan for MAEAP FWH A SYST, and has an interest in making habitat for birds.

