



# Keeping Your Woods as Woods

## Notes from the Chief

Robert Boyles

State Forester and Chief, ODNR Division of Forestry

Greetings and happy summer season to you all. I would like to remind you to be proactive and plan ahead before allowing a timber harvest to take place on your property.

By working with a professional forester ahead of time – prior to the time of discussion with actual timber purchasing companies - you can receive advice tailored to your specific situation and your personal woodland goals. If you do not have a current management plan for your certified forest, a service or other professional forester may incorporate your goals into a woodland stewardship management plan that outlines steps that you can take to protect and maintain your woodland in a productive condition. At the same time, this woodland management plan makes it easier for you to spell out certain parameters in a timber harvest contract so that your expected outcomes for a timber harvest are much more likely to be achieved. And, should your management plan prepared by your forester show that it is time to proceed with a timber harvest within your woodland, I would encourage you to gain the services of a professional forester to guide you through the entire timber sale process. When done well, a harvest can be a very rewarding sustainable-forestry experience.

Thank you again for all that you do to “keep your woods as woods” and I wish you a safe, pleasant, and productive year amongst the trees.

## Value of a Management Plan

John Mueller, Service Forester



*Ohio woodlands — Forests of Opportunity*

Unless a landowner has dabbled in forestry or has otherwise had reason to seek forestry assistance, the setting of long-term forest management goals down on paper may not have occurred to him or her. One potential economic benefit is enrollment in the Ohio Forest Tax Law (OFTL) program. Since 1993, woodlands in Ohio must have a woodland stewardship management plan approved by the Chief of the Ohio Division of Forestry to be certified under the OFTL.

By implementing your management plan, you can realize substantial property tax savings.

However, the benefits of having a forest management plan are many and varied. Just like plans developed for other purposes, a forest management plan allows you, as a landowner, to establish a baseline, clearly define your objectives, and devise a strategy for accomplishing your stated goals. It is a compilation of resources to which you can refer for many years to come. Often a forest management plan is the first opportunity for a landowner to display intent to properly manage the forest, but this enhanced conservation can also result in better economic forest resource benefits.

To your forester, your management plan represents an opportunity to assist you in improving your forestland and getting the most from it. A field visit from your forester may be interesting, but all of the information he or she supplies in conversation may be difficult for you to recall next month, next year, or ten years from now. Your forest management plan is a convenient way for your forester to summarize whatever advice he or she provides. Additionally, a management plan often acts as a “bridge” from one generation to the next and a record of management continuity that helps your forester visualize the progress of your forest.

Assisting OFTL landowners with attaining and maintaining their respective forest land certifications is priority one for Ohio’s Service Foresters, so call on your forester whenever you feel the need. If you are a landowner who enrolled before 1993, and do not have a current management plan, we are available to help you keep your management efforts on track, as well.

Whether you have a kinship or a business relationship with your forest, a woodland stewardship management plan offers a dynamic means for helping you achieve your forest management goals. The increased ability of your forest to meet your needs is often payment enough, but the direct tax savings may be the perk that keeps the stewardship fires alight and makes your management plan worth its weight in veneer!

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# Ohio Forest Tax Law Landowner Highlights John Jolliff, Service Forester

On a wet day in April of 2013, I had the pleasure to return to a property in Richland County owned by Terry Neff & Rick Schroeder. The property is very unique in that it used to be an old apple orchard. This orchard was previously owned by John Oberlander; and it provided apples to the Oberlander Apple Cider Press in Bucyrus. Terry and Rick ran the property as an active orchard for the first three years, but then decided it was just too much work as an orchard. They began managing the property for wildlife habitat. Enhancement work included ponds and wetlands constructed to supply water sources for wildlife. Food plots have been planted along with trees to attract and to provide cover for wildlife. As Terry mentioned, "The property was purchased as a place to get away from the city life, and to have a place to bring the kids to and have fun."



*Pond for wildlife and reflection*



*Scenic view of Neff & Schroeder property*

The other unique aspect of this property is a hollow that is called Wild Cat Hollow. This is the last known Ohio location of a wild cougar, that was shot here in 1934. The hollow is a very beautiful secluded section of the property! Slipping down into this hollow is like walking into a cathedral with grand majestic old oak and maple trees sharing a very high and tight canopy, casting shade upon a very open understory...giving one the sense of a very pristine setting.

Terry and Rick share the work on the property by splitting up their activities. Terry takes care of all the forestry activities and Rick takes care of the mowing, ponds, and maintenance on the balance of the property. It was Terry with whom I started to work back in 2010 per his and Rick's Ohio Forest Tax Law (OFTL) application for classification of forest land to enter the property's woodlands into the OFTL program. One-hundred-seventy acres of qualifying woodlands here have been registered under this program since February 2011.

A requirement of the OFTL program for Terry

and Rick is the use of an Ohio Master Logging Company whenever timber is harvested. Terry has used a Master Logger to harvest the timber along with a professional consulting forester. I was there to take a look at a harvest that was conducted back in 2012 with the assistance of a professional consulting forester. The harvest was conducted to salvage ash, lower value timber and wind damaged timber...an improvement harvest as directed by the owner's approved OFTL forest management plan. Actually, this was the third well-organized harvest Terry has had conducted on the property since they purchased the property back in 1987. The consultant forester also marked and sold timber back in 2005 after an ice-storm damaged a large amount of timber. Both of these harvests were eventually bought and cut by a local Master Logger.



*Stable paths and undamaged trees after harvest*

The very first harvest conducted on the property, while owned by Terry and Rick, was handled by a long-time professional forester from the area.

The common thread to achieve expected harvest results has been that a professional forester handled marking the timber and soliciting the bids for the marked timber. The forester was also present before the sale was started and during the sale to make sure everything went as

*Continued on Page 3*

## Hiring a Forester – Does it Pay?

When one starts thinking about hiring a professional forester, ideas may start showing up like "does it really pay to hire a forester - won't this end up costing me?" Or... "Maybe I'll just save on the forester's fee and sell my timber myself." Or, sometimes a timber company poses this thought, "Work directly with us and we can save you that middle-man cost." If any of these thoughts show up, I encourage you to replace them with "What financial losses to me and degradation to my woodland do I risk by not gaining critical harvest guidance from a qualified professional forester?" Also very important to ask is "Does this harvest follow my OFTL-approved forest management plan, and also maintain a productive woodland, per my OFTL agreement?"

## Mark Wilthew, Service Forestry Coordinator

Let's look at a real example for a landowner in Portage County, Ohio, who hired a professional forester to help him conduct a single tree and small group selection method harvest at his 25-acre woodland.

The landowner hired the forester to handle the entire process – mark appropriate harvest trees, estimate timber volume and value, solicit bids from several reputable logging companies, develop and execute the timber sale contract (including payment prior to any cutting). And to top this off, the forester monitored the harvest to ensure use of logging best management practices to protect soil and water resources, and protect from damage to trees not included in the harvest.

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## Hemlocks Under Threat

If you happen to be one of the lucky people in Ohio to own hemlocks (*Tsuga canadensis*), their very presence alone may be one of the reasons you fell in love with the property. Hemlocks grow in unique habitats scattered throughout Ohio and are one of the few evergreens native to the state that can be found on OFTL forest lands. The greatest concentration of hemlocks can be found in the Hocking Hills region of southeastern Ohio. There are also pockets of hemlock in the northern Ohio Cuyahoga Valley region and the east central Ohio Mohican region, as well as isolated areas across the remainder of the state. These amazing trees can live to be more than 800 years old – a small two-inch tree can often be upwards of 60 years old! Hemlocks in Ohio are typically relics from the glacial period. They require cool, humid climates, which is why they are often associated with valleys and coves. This climate is often maintained by the hemlocks themselves as they form dense shade under the thick evergreen canopies.

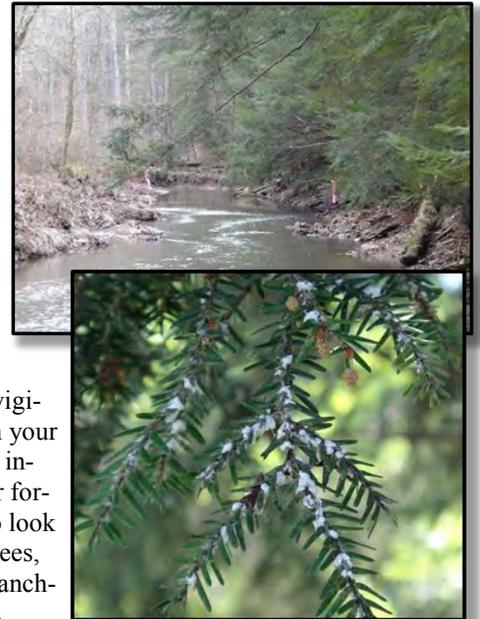
Hemlock has had a variety of uses throughout history. While it is not often thought of as a valuable timber tree, hemlock was used for framing, roofing, boxes and crates, and other timber uses in the late 1800s through the early 1900s. Its prized use historically, however, was for the bark. Leather processing requires the use of tannins, which are found in high concentrations in hemlock bark. Tannin extraction was at one time a very important industry – synthetic materials are now used in its place. Currently, hemlock is used commercially as pulp and occasionally for timber. Most of the current value of hemlock is non-economical. This evergreen is an important habitat for many wildlife species, including deer, turkey and ruffed grouse, in addition to many species of songbirds, including ruby and golden-crowned kinglets, winter wren, and several species of warblers. Hemlocks also play a key role in stream dynamics. Streams in hemlock stands tend to be cooler, and support a unique assemblage of fish and macro in-

Stephanie Downs, Forest Health Administrator

tebrates.

Hemlocks in Ohio are currently at risk. The hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA), a small aphid-like insect from Asia, was discovered in the state in 2011. While it has only been found in a few Ohio locations to date, it poses a threat to all hemlocks in the state.

This small insect is transported by birds, making long-distance travel possible. If you own hemlocks on your OFTL property, HWA is a threat to your woodland resource. Constant vigilance for this pest in your hemlocks should be incorporated into your forest management. To look for HWA on your trees, inspect the lower branches of your hemlocks from November through May for small, white, “woolly” masses attached to the base of the needles. If you think you have HWA, contact the Ohio Division of Forestry Forest Health Program at (740) 589-9914.



Shade River State Forest — site of an HWA finding

## Ohio Forest Tax Law Landowner Highlights *Cont'd from Page 2*

smoothly as possible. During my field visit, Terry mentioned, “I would never sell timber without the assistance of a consulting forester. They know the proper procedures of conducting a sale and know the value of the timber, in order to provide protection to the landowner. They also make sure the sale is closed out with having proper BMPs installed on the trails and roads.”

I also asked Terry if he thought their goals and objectives could be met with the benefit of the OFTL program, including the use

of an Ohio Master Logger when conducting a timber harvest operation. He stated, “Yes, I will use a consulting forester and Master Logger when timbering in the future without a doubt, and the OFTL program provides the added benefit of the property tax reduction!” Terry went on to say “Overall, we have been very satisfied with the consulting foresters and the Master Logging Company!”

## Hiring a Forester – Does it Pay? *Cont'd from Page 2*



One view of Portage County landowner's successful harvest

And here are the results: eight separate bids were received, ranging from the lowest bid of \$14,000.00 to the highest bid of \$26,326.00. This is a range of \$12,326 for the SAME marked trees. The forester's fee was \$2,623.00, based on a commission-based percentage. This landowner gained \$9,693.00 over the lowest bid offer, while gleaning all of that professional forester's guidance throughout the whole timber sale process.

With the help of his professional forester, this landowner achieved expected harvest results, including fair market value for his timber and a careful harvest. The post-harvest woodland is not degraded but productive, and maintains other non-timber forest resource benefits. Hiring a Forester – Does it Pay? For this landowner it sure did!

# Woodland Management Demonstration Areas in Ohio

Casey Burdick, Service Forester & Courtney Streithorst, Interim Manager: Zaleski State Forest

The Ohio Division of Forestry strives to promote sustainable management of Ohio's woodlands. Foresters use a variety of silvicultural practices to manipulate the woods to achieve long-term goals. Silviculture is defined as the art and science of controlling the establishment, growth, composition, and quality of forest vegetation to meet diverse landowner needs and values.

The Division's Service Forestry program offers specially trained foresters to walk your property with you and offer silviculturally-based advice to help reach your long-term goals. Depending on the age and condition of your woodland, goals can sometimes be reached by cutting a few grapevines, while other times your woodland might be ready for a harvest. For some folks, when a forester recommends a harvest, there is a great deal of anxiety and it is difficult trying to imagine what your woodland will look like for the next generation. The good news is the Division of Forestry has woodland management demonstration areas set up on four of Ohio's state forests so you can actually see and evaluate a thinning, selection harvest, or clear cut.



Visitors discussing the benefits of a group selection opening — Maumee State Forest

**The Stewardship Trail at Maumee State Forest** is a self-guided walking tour. You can choose to walk the one-mile loop or the entire two-mile loop. At the trail head is a brochure that describes the types of management that

have been done and unique ecological areas. This area is especially important to visit if you would like to learn more about the impacts of Emerald Ash Borer and pine management.

**The Discovery Forest at Mohican-Memorial State Forest** is a flat to gently rolling trail system approximately 1.5 miles long. Several different forest management practices can be observed, such as crop tree release, improvement cuts, understory removals, and a clear cut.

**The Forest Management Tour at Zaleski State Forest** is a four-mile driving tour along Webb Hollow Road that is designed to explain some of the forest management practices that foresters use to sustain the economic production and environmental benefits of eastern hardwood forests. Visitors can observe different management practices, such as regeneration harvest, prescribed burn, shelterwood harvest, and clear cut.

**Vinton Furnace State Forest** is home to more than 50 years of ongoing forest research, providing over 15,000 acres of managed forestland to explore. Demonstration sites display various types of harvests implemented over the past 60 years. Landowners are encouraged to participate in the monthly "A Day in the Woods - 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday Series." The classes are held on the second Friday of each month from May to November, and cover a variety of topics including tree identification, controlling invasive plants, basics of oak regeneration, enhancing food production for wildlife, and creating and using woodland maps. You can find more information at: <http://seohiowoods.wordpress.com/>

Ohio's woodlands offer a variety of environmental, economic, recreational, and educational benefits. We hope that you are able to explore those benefits demonstrated for you in living color!

## For the OFTL Landowner... "Things to Know about Conservation Easements"

Mark Wilthew, OFTL Coordinator

I have heard OFTL participants, in particular folks who entered the program prior to 1993, express the thought that their certified forest land agreement prohibits them from cutting and removing trees from their woodlands. The fact is, this is not a hands-off, forest set-aside program. The intent is and has always been conservation – to protect by keeping in forest cover, guarding from wildfire, and keeping out livestock, but also to maintain by sound forest management actions. Wise use is an integral part of the OFTL. At the heart of it all, your woodland is a part of a "working forest" program.

Sometimes landowners, intent upon the part about protecting their forest from land use changes such as housing or commercial property development, have placed "conservation easements" on their forest land. Conservation easements, briefly, set forth certain restrictions to use(s) of land placed under the easement. One common prohibited use under such an easement is development that would reduce existing forest cover.

Sometimes, however, proposed or enacted "conservation" easements may include language that prohibits or makes impractical active forest management activities, including management for commercial forest products. This runs contrary to what must be

permissible activities within the certified forest land, according to the intent of the OFTL program. In fact, some landowners have lost OFTL tax benefits because they placed their forested properties under restrictive easements that precluded the owners from active forest management.

If you are considering a conservation easement for your property, it is essential that you maintain the right to actively manage your certified forest land – including for merchantable forest products – and the ability to manage according to your management plan approved by the Chief of the Ohio Division of Forestry.

OFTL – an "Ohio Conservation Forest" program established for the protection and wise use of your natural resources. Thank you for being a conservation partner with the ODNR Division of Forestry.

Ohio Department of Natural Resources

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