



The Value of a Woodlot Management Plan

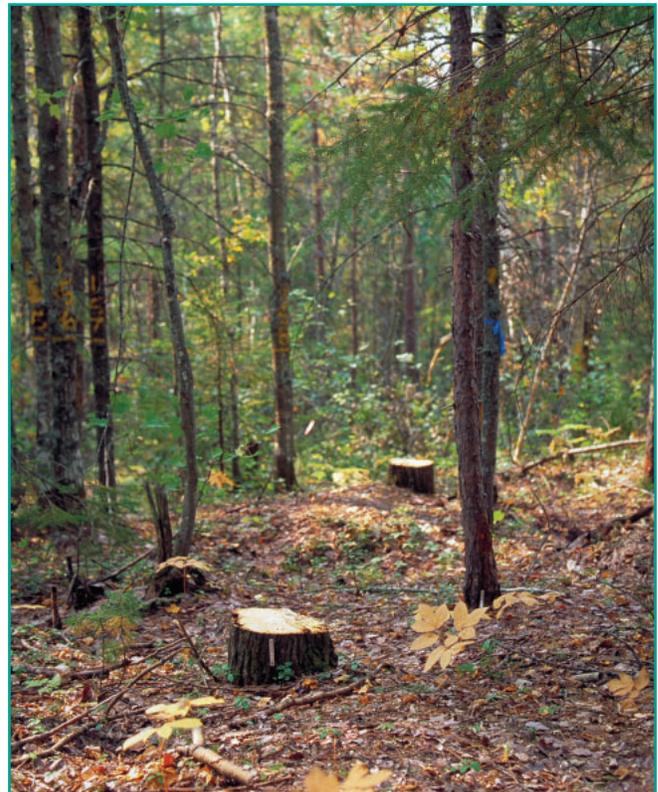
Why do people own woodlots? Some people own woodlots for recreation and entertainment purposes. They love to hike or ski through their property, and enjoy the wildlife that their woodlot shelters. Others have a desire to leave an inheritance to their children or grandchildren, or may use their woodlot as a source of firewood production or maple syrup operations. Regular or periodic income from sale of timber is common. Most common of all is a combination of several of these uses.

Regardless of what motivates you to own your woodlot, if you manage it carefully, you are more likely to reap the benefits you seek. Proper planning, involving a woodlot management plan, will help you organize your resources, clarify your goals for the woodlot, and help ensure that you achieve what you set out to do.

A woodlot management plan serves as the blueprint for your woodlot activities. It is a statement about you as an owner and manager — it articulates what your personal interests may be, works carefully with your abilities and other resources, supports your financial objectives and helps you meet your goals. It is not so much a subject or a science as it is a process that integrates all the principles, practices, and techniques necessary to care properly for your woodlot.

The planning process which you undertake in order to get your woodlot management plan is not complicated or onerous. It is straightforward and directed by you, the landowner. The first step in the process involves identifying your objectives for managing your woodlot. Perhaps you are interested in using your woodlot as a source of income or as a tax shelter. Perhaps your objectives are more environmentally

oriented, and you wish to protect and conserve wildlife habitat, or increase the species diversity on your land. You may have a stream running through your property and you want to stabilize the soil to protect fish habitat. Or perhaps you want to maintain a healthy, vibrant woodland, and enjoy the beauty it has to offer.





A good management plan means that every acre of your woodlot is not necessarily managed specifically for one product or one amenity; your entire land base is managed as a whole in such a way that it yields the desired mix. The plan carefully scopes out a process which allows you to manage for timber in some places (while maintaining the aesthetics of the land) but on other acres, management practices will be focused on wildlife habitat.

Once you have identified your planning objectives, an inventory of your woodlot is carried out to determine what kind of resources you have. The inventory will describe the variety of tree species, timber volumes, soil type, wildlife habitat, streams, trails and other things, depending on your objectives. This information is then used to determine how best to achieve your objectives, through a schedule of activities for the next 5–10 years, a woodlot management plan.

This plan can be an informal plan, simply stating your objectives and identifying how you will achieve them. It can also be a more formal plan, which includes the same information, but with more detail, and with specific goals and activities, costs and anticipated revenues outlined within. It is at the inventory stage of the process that most owners will want to take advantage from outside advice from a forestry professional. Your woodlot association, may provide this service, or at very least, will be able to direct you to private consultants or government agencies.

Once you have completed your management plan, it is important to remember that it is a living document. Your objectives may change, your woodlot may experience some ecological change, or natural disaster, or there may be a change in the economy that means you need to modify your business plans. You will implement, monitor and modify your plan on a regular basis.

A comprehensive woodlot management plan is not something you can simply write up on the back of a scrap piece of paper...although that may be a place to start! If you care about the future of your woodlot, then grab that scrap, sit down and list your objectives, and begin the journey of healthy and wise woodlot management.

This information has been provided by the Private Woodlot Strategic Initiative, a collaboration between the Canadian Model Forest Network and the Canadian Federation of Woodlot Owners. For more information, please visit www.woodlotscanada.ca or www.modelforest.net