

Why Manage Your Woodland?

...with more vibrant trees, enhanced wildlife populations and new recreation opportunities the question might be “why not?”

By DNR Staff

Do you own wooded property in Nova Scotia? If so, you're in good company. About 69 per cent of the land here is privately owned; usually tracts ranging from a few to hundreds of hectares. Yet, only a relatively small percentage of privately owned wooded land is managed in a way that attempts to assess and maximize its potential.

If you're already managing your forested land, you know how rewarding it can be – improved forest vigor, increased wildlife numbers, enhanced recreational opportunities and a more valuable investment.

If you're not currently managing your land, perhaps you've thought about it but had questions or concerns. Here are some of the reasons landowners give for not managing their land and, more importantly, why these concerns needn't hold you back from owning a vigorous and sustainable woodlot!

“I'm worried woodlot management will restrict what I can do with my land.”

Woodlot management starts with a woodlot management plan. Simply put, this plan is an assessment of the attributes of your land, your vision or goals for the land, and the various options that can help you reach your goals. Naturally, to get the most from a plan, it should be followed over a number of years, and reviewed periodically to ensure you're on the right track to meeting your goals. The plan itself is not binding, although arrangements made with silviculture contractors may be and should be negotiated carefully in advance. Should you sell or transfer your land, the new owner will be happy you've taken the first steps to improving the property.

“I don't know anything about forestry.”

Unless you've always wanted to dabble in forestry, you don't need to know that much about the techniques. Nova Scotia has many professional foresters and contractors who will work with you to fulfill the vision you have for your land. Should you want to do some of the work yourself, DNR has instructional materials such as our home study series (available in print and online) that explore the various facets of woodlot management.

“I don't have the money to manage my woodlot.”

In the long run, it may not cost as much as you think. Initially you will likely need to invest to build up the potential of the forest resource. But in time, you will get a return on investment when you harvest trees or sell the land. Remember too, that forestry contractors and companies are required to invest in sustainable forestry activities in proportion to the amount of wood they harvest. By talking to one of these companies you may be able to arrive at a mutually beneficial arrangement.

“I don't want massive harvesting on my land.”

Many silviculture treatments create minimal disturbance or spread activity over a number of years so trees remain, or are cut, in a manner that is most beneficial to the wildlife found there or the landowner's goals for the land. Select a reputable silviculture contractor who shares your vision for your woodlot and chances are you'll be more than happy with the results.

“I've considered it but I don't know how it would affect surrounding landowners.”

Talk to your neighbours. They may be interested in enhancing their woodlots too. Together you may be able to secure better deals with contractors and see improvement over an even larger area of land.

“If I harvest or improve my woodlot, I’ll wind up paying more taxes.”

The tax implications may not be as severe as you think. Your accountant can help minimize the tax man’s bite, as can reading DNR’s home study modules 10A and 10B, “Managing Woodlot Finances.” A well executed management plan balances tax implications with long term benefit.

“I’m saving my woodlot as a retirement project.” No doubt about it, working on the woodlot can be a good form of outdoor exercise. But why not invest a little effort now? By retirement you can have a trail network or improved wildlife habitat that will make your woodlot that much more enjoyable. A well tended woodlot is also more resistant to fire, pests and disease.

“In 10 or 20 years I plan to harvest my woodlot for retirement income or my kid’s tuition.” While a woodlot can be a good investment, remember that a forest isn’t static. It’s constantly changing. What appears to be a healthy forest today, **if not well managed**, will grow old, decay and be of reduced monetary value. You need to examine your woodlot now so you can gauge your timing and take steps to improve your investment. On the other hand, you may discover that some of your land has potential old growth forest which you would rather not touch. By assessing what you have now you can be better prepared for the future.

Don’t let nagging doubts and unanswered questions stand between you and the opportunity to realize the goals you have for your woodland! Contact your nearest Department of Natural Resources office. We’ll be pleased to answer your questions, provide you with informative publications, or put you in touch with others who can help you.

What to Know More?

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/natr/regional/private/privland.html>

or

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/natr/extension>

Woodlot Owner of the Year Selected



Richard Irving, Baxters Harbour proudly accepts the 2003 Woodlot Owner of the Year Award from Natural Resources Minister Richard Hurlburt at a public field day held on the Irving woodlot in October.

Richard Irving of Baxters Harbour, Hants County was named Nova Scotia’s Woodlot Owner of the Year (WOYA) for 2003. Irving was selected as the provincial winner for his special attention to increasing the diversity of plants and animals on his woodlot, which has been in the Irving family since 1917. As part of the award program, a field day, and award presentation, were held on Irving’s woodlot on October 4, 2003. Many members of the public, along with several school classes took the opportunity to tour the woodlot and see the results of Irving’s hard work and exemplary forest stewardship.

Irving was named provincial winner after first being selected as the winner for the Western Region. David Meehan of Rawdon Gold Mines, Hants County was chosen as the Central Region winner, while Phillip Clark of Brophy, Antigonish was picked as the Eastern Region winner. The Woodlot Owner of the Year Award recognizes and rewards landowners who demonstrate outstanding stewardship of their woodlots. It was developed to encourage woodlot owners to practice sustainable woodlot management and to increase public awareness of the importance of private woodlots in Nova Scotia. Residents of the province who own between 20 and 400 hectares (50 and 1000 acres) of woodland in the province are eligible. Nominations close on Jan 31 of each year. The 2004 winner will be announced in late spring.