

10-1-2006

Timber Harvest Management Workshop

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Recommended Citation

Landefeld, M., & Schumacher, S. (2006). Timber Harvest Management Workshop. *The Journal of Extension*, 44(5), Article 27. <https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/joe/vol44/iss5/27>

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October 2006 // Volume 44 // Number 5 // Tools of the Trade // 5TOT4



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Timber Harvest Management Workshop

Abstract

This article describes a forestry program designed to increase woodland owners' knowledge and promote sustainable management practices. Each year uninformed individuals allow timber to be harvested from their property, receive fewer dollars than the timber was worth, and have no management plan for their woodland. Workshops were conducted in the classroom and in the field to address these issues. Surveys were conducted to determine knowledge gained and economic impact of the educational efforts. Results showed that significant knowledge was gained and participants who subsequently marketed timber received more income from their sale due to information learned at the workshops.

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Background

Ohio boasts an estimated 65 billion trees and or shrubs of 300 different species. Private nonindustrial woodland owners possess approximately 84% of Ohio's forestland. Growth exceeds removal by a ratio of 2.4:1 for all tree species in all size classes. Ohio's forests are growing almost 1 billion board feet of wood each year, making great potential for timber harvest sales by private landowners.

More than 50% of southeastern Ohio's Monroe County and Belmont County are forested, meaning there are more than 300,000 acres available for timber management and wildlife habitat in the two counties. However, many of the natural resources on these grounds are not under any sustainable management plan.

Each year uninformed individuals allow timber to be harvested from woodlands. Significant income may be realized, but often the amount received is only a small fraction of what the timber was truly worth. Much too often with this type of harvest, too, several trees that remain on site are not good candidates to maximize future growth, exhibit poor quality characteristics, and should have been removed. Many times minimal wildlife habitat is left, and erosion problems begin because these important management issues were never discussed with the timber buyer or logger.

Fortunately, the opposite is also true. Each year individuals receive significant incomes from their woodland by properly marketing timber. By following sound management guidelines in selecting trees to be harvested and those to remain standing, improvements of the future forest growth and timber quality are made, and wildlife habitat is frequently enhanced.

Program Design

A program titled "Timber Harvest Management Workshop" has been developed by Ohio Extension educators and offered on a regular basis. The program is designed to update woodland owners about options and possibilities for forested land prior to a harvest. The workshop provides information to educate the woodland owner in marketing and management practices, teaches decision-making through goal-setting activities, covers tax implications from a harvest, and provides information concerning wildlife habitat and Best Management Practices (BMP's) to minimize the environmental impact of erosion to provide a sustainable management plan.

The program is coordinated with personnel from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Forestry, the Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), and a consulting forester. Each speaker is allotted 30 to 40 minutes for his or her presentation.

The ODNR representative discusses the role of timber management and how personal goals may be achieved through different harvesting methods. Recreation, income, wildlife habitat, aesthetics, inheritance wishes, and other factors must be determined when implementing a plan. The consulting forester explains timber contracts, gives examples of what should be included in a contract, tells why a contract should be used, and how the processes of inventorying trees, marketing the timber, and logging should be approached. SWCD personnel explain BMP's to be included in a timber harvest and liability issues of which the landowner should be aware, while Extension educators discuss tax implications based on income, expenses, and basis.

Pre-test and post-test evaluations of the workshops have been conducted with varying results. Pre-test group average scores ranging from 38% correct to nearly 50% correct answers have been recorded. Post-test group average scores have ranged from 64% correct to more than 90% correct answers.

A second evaluation was prepared and sent to 124 participants. Of those, 82 useable responses were returned. Eighteen respondents stated they had sold timber since attending one or more of the forestry educational efforts. Of the 18, 13 stated that because of the information provided, they received more money for their timber sale. The average increase in sales was deemed to be \$20,245. Of the respondents who had sold timber: 94% stated they were better informed of BMP's; 69% included BMP restrictions in the timber sale contract; 94% said they or a representative was more involved in the sale; and 81% were more satisfied with the results of the sale.

Summary

Timber Harvest Management Workshop programs are increasing forest landowners' knowledge of timber management options, timber marketing opportunities, Best Management Practices needed to reduce environmental concerns during a timber harvest, and tax management issues. Results of the survey indicate participants are receiving more income from their timber sales, are seeking professional forester assistance, are writing more contracts for their timber sales, are including BMP's in their contracts, and are more satisfied with the over-all results of their timber sale after attending a forestry educational program.

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