

Small Woodland Management

If you have recently purchased forest land, you may be challenged by the task of managing these resources. Forests represent a significant and complex component of our natural environment. They are composed not only of trees, but of shrubs, herbs, grasses, fungi, micro-organisms, insects, other invertebrates and vertebrates that all interconnect in countless ways. Trees dominate the forest, define the landscape and create habitat for wildlife.



Forests are dynamic systems and over time forest composition changes. Fires, floods, windstorms, insect infestations, diseases and landslides wipe out pieces or whole tracts of forest. These natural disturbances alter resources needed by plants and animals, benefiting some and depriving others.

Managing the Resource

As a new forest manager, the first step is to develop a management plan defining what your objectives are for your forest. The best way to start is to walk your land. The legal boundaries and access to the property should be well established. Begin to inventory, map and familiarize yourself with the various resources on the property. Then formulate and outline a set of objectives. Often landowners decide to have a management plan written by a professional forester.

One common goal for all forest managers is to maintain healthy forests. A healthy, vital forest landscape is defined as one that maintains its functions, diversity and resiliency within the context of natural disturbances. It is capable of providing people with the array of values, uses and products desired now and in the future. The bottom line is the trees should be growing. You can help maintain a healthy forest by conducting forest management activities in such a way as to protect soil, water, wildlife and fish habitat.

Such values are woven into the Oregon Forest Practices Act. The Act governs nearly every aspect of forest management including harvesting, regeneration, vegetation control, road building and protection of environmentally sensitive areas.

Forest management activities commonly undertaken by landowners include planting, vegetation control, pre-commercial thinning, fuel reduction, firewood cutting, road construction and timber harvesting. Prioritizing specific activities involves consideration of natural circumstances, species characteristics, owner objectives, environmental considerations and regulatory rules. Please consult with the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) on tools and techniques that will make your forest management successful.

Information Sources

ODF is a regulatory agency of forest management and fire protection. It administers the Oregon Forest Practices Act which guides all non-federal forest activities in the state. A Notification of Operations from ODF is legally required for all landowners initiating a forest operation.

ODF also offers technical advice through their Forestry Assistance program, which administers most cost-share subsidies for completing various non-commercial forest and resource management activities. The local ODF office is located in The Dalles.

Article written in cooperation with:

Doug Thiesies, Oregon Department of Forestry

Henry Buckalew, Hood River County Forestry Department

Pete Peterson, Westside Fire Department

Kim Smolt, USDA Forest Service

Resources

Contact any of these agencies for more information on managing your small woodland:

Oregon Department of Forestry
Hood River County Forestry Department
USDA Forest Service
American Tree Farm System
Oregon Small Woodland Association
Oregon Forest Resources Institute