

MANAGING OUR FORESTS for the FUTURE

Forests are dynamic. This may be the most misunderstood aspect of the 17 million acres of Pennsylvania hardwood forests. Management is essential to forest conservation. Decay and decline leave the forest susceptible to natural catastrophes, such as fire, wind and disease.



Forest management is a way to influence natural succession and maintain Pennsylvania's hardwood forests.

Hardwood forests, without management, will mature and decline. This natural succession may lead to dramatic changes in the species composition. Hardwood trees per acre may decrease over time due to natural influences. Without management, most Pennsylvania forests would become dominated by beech, birch and striped maple, rather than being composed of oak, cherry and other highly-valued species.

Some hardwoods, like the birch, decline or succumb to common diseases as early as age 60.

Forest sustainability is determined by tree regeneration. Many factors influence regeneration. Deer browse on saplings, stunting their future growth and promoting ferns that shade seedlings. Large trees block sunlight, discouraging young growth or encouraging more shade tolerant species. The old adage, "If trees liked shade, they'd be shrubs," refers to the importance of sunlight to forest regeneration.

Encouraging forest management -- including the application of silviculture, the practice of sustainable forestry and landowner stewardship -- conserves and promotes vibrant forests.

Stewardship

Stewardship is the term used for the wise management of the forest and use of its resources to ensure future productivity.

Silviculture

Silviculture is the theory and practice of growing trees.

Sustainability

Sustainable forestry means managing forests to meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs for forest resources.

Forest Management Programs

How and when timber is harvested plays a major role in determining the character of the forest of the future – its sustainability. Several programs exist to help forestland owners learn more about harvesting, including:

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- The Sustainable Forestry Initiativesm (SFIsm) is an industry-led, comprehensive program of principles, guidelines and performance measures that integrate the perpetual growth and harvesting of trees with the protection of wildlife, plants, soil, air and water quality. The voluntary program features landowner outreach and education, promotion of landowner stewardship, logger training and promotion of BMPs (see below).
- The federal Forest Stewardship program is administered in Pennsylvania by the Department of Conservation & Natural Resources (DCNR) Bureau of Forestry to educate and encourage landowners to develop a comprehensive, long-term forest management plan for their land.

Best management practices, or BMPs, for silvicultural practices are voluntary guidelines for forest management that can be used by landowners, loggers, foresters and other natural resource professionals to practice sustainable forestry. In Pennsylvania, BMPs have been established by a broad-based task force under the auspices of the Forest Issues Working Group and compiled by Penn State University's School of Forest Resources.

Certification

Pennsylvania's entire 2.1 million acres of state forestland have been certified as "well-managed" by an independent environmental review team, making it one of the largest certified hardwood forests in the nation. A number of smaller industry and privately-owned forest tracts have similar certification.

For information on the Sustainable Forestry Initiative of PA, contact:
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