

**CHAPTER**

**17**

**WORKING WITH A  
PROFESSIONAL FORESTER**





# Working with a Professional Forester

Congratulations! You have made it through all of the chapters in this handbook. We hope the information has helped you to better understand some common forestry-related terminology and the different aspects of a forest inventory. As mentioned in the first chapter, it is not expected that you will now go out and conduct all of your own forest inventories. Instead, we wanted you to learn some of the basics of forest measurements, how and why they are taken, and how to interpret the results of those measurements.

Many landowners do not have current inventories of their property. They may be reluctant to hire a professional forester to do this work because, unlike forestry activities such as site preparation, tree planting, or road construction, there is no immediate gratification for the money spent. The payoff is realized later when making management decisions.

A professional consulting forester can help you with many aspects of forest land management. Professional consulting foresters have a degree in forestry from an accredited university and in many states have to pass a standardized test and maintain education credits to be licensed. Professional foresters assist landowners for a fee and provide services such as the following:

- forest inventories and timber tract assessment
- management plan development
- timber sales
- forest certification
- contractor location assistance

Most importantly, they represent the landowner. They do not work for a mill or a logger. They work for you when carrying out activities on your forestland. There are, however, things you can do to strengthen your working partnership with a forester:

- Know your property. Have good maps and current deeds of your forestland. Know where property boundary lines and corners are located. Have them reestablished, marked, and painted as necessary.



Professional foresters represent your best interests and goals in carrying out activities on your forestland.

- Have a current inventory. Understand what type of inventory will be conducted by your forester and why. Ask to see forest inventory tally cards, stand maps, and stand and stock tables. Have the forester explain the inventory to you. Use this handbook as a guide to help you understand what is presented.
- Know your timber markets. Learn about mills in your area and what types of products they accept.
- Work with your family to set goals for your property and write them down. Written goals make you better prepared for discussions with consulting foresters.
- Have a written management plan. Goals and plans may change over time, but they help you strategize short- and long-term activities on your property. In addition, written plans help to explain efforts and guide those who may inherit or purchase the property. This can add value and make for an easier transition if goals are similar.

Remember that you have a say in what happens on your forestland. Be present and ask questions before, during, and after all activities to make sure you understand what is happening. If you feel uncomfortable with or unsure about any activities or recommendations, speak up. Ask a trusted professional for advice or get another opinion. Other sources of professional advice include Alabama Extension, state forestry and wildlife agencies, and the Natural Resource Conservation Service.