

## American Tree Farm System

### "All The Right Things"

Sunday morning a logging contractor knocked on the landowner's door and asked "Can I harvest your timber?" The landowner said "Well I have thought about contacting a professional forester to help me manage my woodlot besides I am not really interested now since it is mud season."

"Well, we are working in this town for another land owner and he is incredibly happy with our work. Besides we won't create any mud and we will selectively harvest your timber. Let's take a walk through your lot and discuss the trees to remove."

The land owner agreed to go for a walk through the woodlot so that he and the logging contractor could discuss the timber harvest. The logger assured the land owner that he would not cut any of the pole size (10" diameter breast height) veneer quality Red Oaks. The contractor explained that they would do a light thinning to remove only the poorest quality trees and the timber stand remaining would be an aesthetically pleasing sight for all to behold. Due to the contractors own admitted expertise in proper selective thinning techniques there would be plenty of trees to harvest in another 15 years.

"Shouldn't I hire a forester to manage my woodlot and look out for my long term objectives?" asked the land owner. "No," said the contractor, "those guys cost money."

"How much will I receive for the timber products you remove?" asked the landowner. "Oh, I expect to pay you \$15,000 for the timber we harvest from your property."

The landowner liked what he heard and decided he would allow the contractor to harvest his timber when the land was dry. He asked the logging contractor for a contract and a copy of insurance papers before work began. The logging contractor promised to implement a contract and send insurance papers.

Four days later, on a Thursday, the landowner heard heavy machinery harvesting timber behind his house. He walked out back and ran into a mechanical sawhead machine cutting down trees. He flagged down the sawhead operator and asked what was going on. "Well," the operator said, "the boss told us to start this project because we didn't have any other place to work."

"I don't have a contract or anything!" said the land owner. "We just do what we're told" said the operator. The land owner called the logging contractor repeatedly on Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday as the Sawhead continued to sever trees from the stump. Meanwhile, a grapple skidder hauled trees to a huge landing area where a delimbing machine removed the limbs and placed the tree length stems into a long pile.

The land owner was beside himself. He didn't know exactly what to do. The contractor would not return his calls. On Monday afternoon the land owner stopped the timber harvesting but by that time his 50 acre woodlot had been totally destroyed. Miraculously, the logging contractor called as soon as he heard the operation had been stopped. He told the landowner that the harvesting crew had cut and piled 350 cords of wood on the landowner's landing. He offered the landowner \$3,500 for all the wood products harvested.

The land owner again did not know what to do, however, he did call the State Forester who walked the woodlot with the landowner and examined the huge pile of severed trees. The State Forester advised the landowner to contact a consulting forester to determine the value of timber harvested.

The consultant realized the urgency of the matter and quickly responded to the landowner's plea for help. An examination of the woodlot found that there were no trees left greater than 6" in diameter. The ground was covered with deep ruts and the resulting timber stand barely passed the Forest Practices Act minimum clear cut standards.

A subsequent examination of the log yard showed that 350 cords of timber were harvested, but the value was in excess of \$10,000 -- three times the value that the logging contractor had offered.

The land owner is an educated person and very knowledgeable. He realized that his woodlot had been devastated and that there would be no more harvesting during his lifetime.

The consultant asked "Why did you let this contractor talk you into harvesting your woodlot without the help of a professional forester?"

His reply -- "Well, he said all the right things."

A true story written by Jack Wadsworth  
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*The Sign of Good Forestry*