

## STEPS TO CONSIDER WHEN PLANNING A TIMBER SALE

**Mark your sale boundaries.** Identifying and marking your sale boundaries are the critical first steps in a successful timber sale. Poorly marked boundary lines can lead to timber trespass, that is, the harvesting of a neighbor's timber. There are penalties for timber trespass in Oklahoma. Well-marked boundaries will minimize the possibility of trespass. Property deeds, topographic maps, and aerial photographs will greatly aid in helping you establish your boundaries; however, you may need to hire a professional surveyor.

**Know what you have to sell.** Conduct a complete inventory, or cruise, of your forest resources to determine what your timber is worth. During the timber cruise, tree species, merchantable volumes, and potential products will be tallied. Note that wood products markets are very localized and the price you receive for your timber will depend on many factors including tree quality, size, species, site access, soil conditions, harvest method, market cycles, and distance to the mill. During the products inventory other important non-timber resources, such as wildlife habitats, sensitive biological areas, historic sites, aesthetic areas, and wetlands, should be identified.

**Have a management plan.** The management plan is your road map, telling you when to conduct specific activities such as harvesting, planting, thinning, and fertilizing. Your management plan should contain basic boundary and inventory information, and an activity schedule addressing how you will manage specific areas or stands within your forest. An important part of the management plan is how you intend to reforest harvested sites. This should be determined long before your timber harvest. Like the forest you own, management plans will change over time, and must be reviewed periodically to account for changes in your objectives, market conditions, environmental regulations, and other factors.

**Work with a quality logger.** The forester you work with can provide a list of potential loggers. To choose a quality logger, take into account requirements such as:

- Proof of adequate worker's compensation and liability insurance coverage
- Completion of logger training/continuing education programs
- Knowledge and use of forestry Best Management Practices
- Adequate equipment to do the job
- List of references from previous harvesting jobs

You may also want to visit a current or recently completed harvesting operation of the logger. During the on-site visit look at the condition of logging equipment and haul trucks, whether woods workers wear protective equipment, how trees excluded from the timber sale are protected, and the appearance of skid trails, landings, and haul roads.

**Secure a written sale agreement.** Your forest is a valuable resource, economically and ecologically. When you decide to sell timber, it is important that your short-term and long-term interests are protected. The best way to protect your interests during a timber sale is through a written timber sale agreement. As a minimum, a good timber sale contract will include:

- Description of land with boundary lines and guarantee of title
- Specification of payment terms
- Description of timber, method of designating trees to be cut, and harvesting method
- Specification of time period covered by the contract
- Prohibition of excessive damage to unmarked trees, buildings, fences, and roads
- Specification of penalties for damage or removal of unmarked trees
- Assignment of liability for losses caused by the timber buyer or his agents
- Requirement of the use of Best Management Practices and adherence to all local, state, and federal laws
- Designate where the slash will be piled

**Supervise the harvest.** Before the harvest begins, review the timber sale agreement and walk the site with the logger. This will give you an opportunity to get to know each other and to explain your objectives for harvesting timber. A logger that is personally familiar with you and aware of your objectives will likely do a better job.

Once harvesting begins, either you or your representative should periodically inspect the harvest site. Visits will ensure that logging is being conducted in compliance with the terms of the sale agreement and will identify any potential problems early, when they are most easily fixed. When the harvest is complete, conduct a final inspection to be certain that the job is in compliance with Oklahoma's Forestry Best Management Practices.

**Use professional assistance.** If you are uncertain about what you have to sell or have other questions about the timber sale process, don't guess – contact a professional forester.