

The Benefits Of Harvesting Timber On State Forest Lands

By DCNR

People may wonder why trees are harvested on state forest lands, and the reasons are many:

- Promotes balanced age class of forested areas, which protects forest health and diversity
- Provides critical habitat for wildlife (like the ruffed grouse, our state bird) that depend on young forest
- Provides a model of best practices for other timber harvesters to follow
- Provides a sustainable flow of raw materials for the wood products economy

Timber Harvesting on State Forest Lands

During the four-year period from 2017 through 2020, DCNR's Bureau of Forestry harvested timber on an average of over 12,600 acres per year. While that may seem like a big number, it represents only about half of one percent of total state forest land.

How Stands are Selected for Harvest

State forest timber is selected for harvest in accordance with the State Forest Resource Management Plan, and when it meets the criteria set forth in the bureau's Harvest Allocation Model. This model considers an array of factors, like:

- Age class
- Composition of forest community
- Harvest method
- Accessibility and other site characteristics
- Some timber harvests are done in response to factors independent of the model criteria. An example is the salvage harvest, which is implemented after an insect outbreak kills trees, or a storm blows down a forest stand.

After timber is harvested, the forest floor receives newly abundant sunshine. Energy from the sun stimulates the germination of seed and fuels the growth of shade-intolerant plants, many of which are favored by wildlife that are dependent on early successional forests.

The flush of growth on the forest floor is a boon to many game species like rabbits, deer, turkeys, and ruffed grouse. Non-game species -- like certain songbirds and predators -- also benefit from periodical timber harvests.

Harvesting trees on state forest lands provides many benefits to the forest ecosystem and people.

Forests are a renewable resource, and young forests are valuable for a variety of reasons.

The sustainable harvest methods DCNR uses ensures the future of the natural resources while providing maximum benefit.

If you own forestland, you may have considered selling your timber at some point. Selling timber can provide income, and if done properly, can actually be good for your forested land.

If you are thinking about selling your timber, be sure to follow these tips:

Develop a long-term management plan for your forest land that identifies your long-term goals and objectives.

Consider hiring a qualified consulting forester, who can help you create your management and harvesting plan, oversee all aspects of the timber sale, and make sure you and your land are treated fairly.

Follow Best Management Practices in timber harvesting and ensure they are written into the contract and implemented during active harvest.

Contact your DCNR Bureau of Forestry service forester for more information or visit DCNR's Managing Your Woods web page for additional information and resources.



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