

Your Forest, Your Future Crafting a Management Plan-20251119 181858-Meeting Recording

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Of ethics to be part of these associations. So you can obviously visit their websites. And search there.

Also another location is the Ohio Division of Forestry has a professional forester list for their OFTL program. That's Ohio Forestry Tax Law Program. You can find that on their website.

And Julie will talk a little bit more about this later, but the Natural Resource Conservation Service has a technical service provider list of consultants that can prepare an imagined plan for you. So assessing our woodland, we have to find out what's out in your woodland to see the current conditions and how do we, how does that help us move from point A to point B in our goals. And one of the first things I would recommend, and just one of the most important is, you've got to know what you have.

So your property boundaries are very important. Confirming and marking property boundaries is needed. You know, obviously having a survey is recommended if it's a new property or you're just unsure of where your lines are, where your corners are.

Other sources are the county auditor's offices. Offices have GIS mapping tools online. Those are very helpful.

Joel? Yes. Joel, I'm so sorry. We just, I'm sorry, everybody.

We are having some glitches. We lost audio during this slide just for the last minute or so. Would you mind starting this slide over? I sure can.

Can you hear me okay? Thank you so much. Yes, we can hear you. Okay, great.

So starting off and seeing what's in your woodland, important thing to start off with is confirming what you have, all right, and your property and its boundaries. If you're unsure of where your property lines are, your corners, obviously you can get a survey, okay? Other helpful tools are county auditor office mapping tools online. You have all sorts of different information you can get there, including, you know, finding your boundaries.

You can get different apps on your phone, help you locate your property lines out in the field, and obviously sometimes talking with neighbors to help kind of determine where those lines are is good too. I would recommend marking your boundaries once they're determined. It lets you know where your lines are.

It lets your neighbors know where your lines are, and it just, it makes good neighbors and helps eliminate issues in the future. But we want to go out and visit all portions of the woodland.

We're looking at, you know, the current conditions out there.

We want to see all the different areas. You know, past land use is important as well. Looking at previous historical area aerial images is a good tool.

I use it a lot on those county auditor websites. An example, here's a client's property, and you can see on the left, you know, this is a current image, 2025, but back in 1950, essentially, you know, 90% of it was farmland or pasture. So that kind of history helps determine, you know, obviously what was there, but what you can do in the future and what sort of issues or challenges you might have moving forward, getting to your goals.

Other information that can be collected, you know, the different woodland stands are identified. So you might have on one property, you could have several different woodland stands that are separated out. You may have a very mature old pristine stand in one part of the property, and maybe in another, it's very young.

Maybe it was an old field, and it's been let go, and it's early succession of a lot of young trees, maybe shrubs, and you want to identify those different stands. Okay, they're all going to have different attributes to them, different challenges, and maybe different goals. And so we're also looking for the tree species that are out there, and we're looking for woodland health and any stresses.

You know, some example pictures here, bottom left, you know, we've got some great regeneration of some young red oak seedlings that are coming up on the wooden floor. That's great. In the center there, you know, one of the woodland health concerns might be, you know, that American beech tree leaves there, and they have that beech leaf disease that's in northeast Ohio.

And finally, on the right, wonderful tall tree there, but it's being choked out a little bit by an invasive oriental bittersweet vine. So we want to kind of assess what's there and what might be, you know, health and stresses. Other information, so topography, you know, example picture in the top left there, the topography is, you know, the change in elevation, okay, the highs and lows, the hills and valleys, where the streams lie, where the wetlands might be, all going to be different growing conditions, different tree species, and wildlife species, etc.

will inhabit different parts of that woodland, depending on the topography. So it's important to know, and also helps determine access, you know, having a property is great, but half the battle is getting to it. So, you know, laying out your trails and where you're going to have access, how you're going to cross streams or get around wetlands, you know, that's important.

You want to ask and determine what's the past harvest or management history, what's happened on that, your property previously. And if you don't, again, hey, ask neighbors, ask previous landowners, that's important. We're looking for factors that may hinder your goals, you know, achieving your goals.

And site images, I think are good too, you're taking pictures today. What's it going to look like in five years, 10 years, you can see kind of help measure your progress as you're going. So what are some components of a woodland stewardship management plan? We just have an example sheet here.

So some components, we're gonna have a description of the landowner's goals, right? We talked about that first, very important, a summary of the woodland conditions, you know, what did we see out there in the field? A woodland stand map, there's an example there on the bottom right. That woodland there has three different stands separated out for various reasons. Tree diameter size class, again, we touched on that a little bit.

This is very young woods, this is very old woods. And we want to determine the woodland acreage of the total property parcel. Getting a soils map or a soil report is important.

The different soils that are going to be on your property are also going to help determine what tree species are going to thrive there, what wildlife might thrive there. And it allows you to plan for the future of what you can do with the property. Um, sometimes I get landowners that want to plant certain kind of species or tree, for example, or have certain kind of wildlife.

And from the soils or the conditions of the property, it may not happen, the soils aren't going to permit it. You know, whether it's well-drained soils or poorly-drained soils, you're gonna have different tree species that thrive in each of those. Also, timber harvesting history.

If harvest happened on your property in the past, you know, when was that? Was it helpful? Did it help or hurt your goals? And also in the plan, you're going to have recommended management for the future. You know, those steps one, two, three of getting from A to B, always reaching for your goals. And finally, you should have an activity schedule that prioritizes the recommended management.

And this will kind of give you step-by-step guidance of what's priority, what you need to work on first or last, and maybe times a year to do it. So here we have an example. It's a 10-year activity schedule for an example property.

On the left, we have different stands A and B. Their respective acreages in those stands and the prescriptions recommended. So on both of these, we have invasive plant control recommended for the first four years, followed up by some grapevine control on stand B, a thinning on a small portion of stand B, and then a timber harvest is recommended in both the stands. And it could be in seven to 10 years.

And this one's pretty basic. Again, depending on the property, how many stands there are, how many goals there are, this activity schedule could be much longer. So now you have this management plan.

Okay, now what? What do we do with it? All right, so we're going to implement it, right? That activity schedule, you start working through it. And you know, everyone's time is different.

Again, everyone's inputs are different.

Any kind of restrictions. And we all have things going on in our lives. And we do own properties because we do like them.

So we're going to dedicate some time. And don't bite off more than you can chew. For example, invasive plant control is a really common recommended management.

But it's not always the most, you know, glorious thing to work on. It's break down the management into achievable sections that you can work on. Or if you're hiring another professional to help work on it with you, make sure it's something that you can achieve.

You don't get bogged down with it. Examples here, top left, we got some grapevine control going on with some treated stumps. Bottom left is some invasive plant control.

Looks like a lot of multiflora rose that's been sprayed and is now died back. In the center picture, we have woodland post timber harvest. Top right is just some equipment for invasive plant control.

And bottom right is a crop tree release. We're marking one tree to remove and we're leaving another. So we want to follow that plan.

Woodland health can worsen if the right prescriptions aren't followed. Here's some examples. Prescription.

So maybe we had low to medium invasive plant numbers and they were not controlled prior to a timber harvest. And so after a timber harvest, we have some more sunlight that comes into the woodland, reaches the woodland floor. And the unintended result was a post harvest, the invasive plant numbers now increase.

They're now very heavy in number. That's going to impact a lot of things. I'm sure your goals later on.

Next, we have an unrecommended high grade timber harvest was implemented. A high grade timber harvest is one that is just focusing on the best trees, the most valuable trees. And an unintended result of that is, well, now you're just left with poor quality trees and maybe undesired species for the future.

And depending on your goals, say if you were managing for wildlife and all of your red oak trees were removed, well, there goes a great food source for a number of wildlife from insects all the way up to large mammals. Number three, grapevines were not controlled in the stand prior to a crop tree release. So a crop tree release is usually done on younger woods.

And if you left the grapevines in, they're going to continue to grow after that management. And the unintended result is those grapevine numbers are going to increase. And they're now damaging and smothering the desired trees you may have wanted.

And final example would be a recreational trails installed without regard to the topography limitations on that property. And the result would be the trail now continually washes out after rain events, causing soil runoff. So follow that plan, implement those steps.

They're there for a reason. And now just quickly, a couple of programs that require a management plan to be prepared by a consulting forester. So one is the Ohio Forestry Tax Law.

This is administered by the Ohio Division of Forestry. It's a tax incentive program offering 50% off property taxes on wooded acreage on that property. The landowner implements management for timber growth in an eventual commercial harvest must have 10 acres of woodland and sustainable timber harvests with BMPs are required.

Another one is current agricultural use value. This one, this program is under the Department of Taxation for the state. And it's administered directly by the county auditor's office in each county.

This is a tax incentive program again, for land value is taxed on an agricultural use compared to say a commercial use or a development use. Timber is the agricultural product. That's how woodlands fit into that program.

Landowner implements management for timber growth and eventual commercial harvest must have a minimum of 10 acres of woodland, or at least a combination of 10 acres of agricultural acreage in this program. Other areas, other acreage that's producing an agricultural product, say pasture for livestock, or row crops, soybeans and corn, you know, any other ag use like that can be added into the program as well. American Tree Farm System.

This one is administered by the American Forest Foundation. It's a woodland landowner recognition program. There's no tax incentives with this.

Again, you must have 10 acres of woodland. You must follow sustainable management practices and standards. And participants get access to professional assistance, publications, trainings, and a landowner community.

Here's just a few references I had, some pictures. And that is the end. I appreciate the time.

And thank you for letting me present. Thank you very much, Joel. I'm sorry about the rough start.

We're going to have questions for Joel. You can put them in the chat at any time, but we will have questions at the end after Julie's done. Okay.

I just wanted to welcome everybody. I'm Maureen Orndorff. I'm the Conservation Projects Coordinator at Lake Soil and Water Conservation District.

And I wanted to thank our partners and presenters. So, tonight we also have Caitlin Stillisano. You've heard from her.

She's our Watershed Coordinator with Lake Soil and Water Conservation District. And she's helping with technical issues. She got me set up.

And Natalie Gertz-Young, who is our Conservation Educator with Lake Soil and Water, and she is monitoring the questions. So, I wanted to say that this program was funded by the Lake Erie Forestry Assistance Grant Program, which is part of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Forestry. Our project is entitled Tree to Stream, Forestry for Grand River Health.

The Grand River is known as the cleanest river that drains into Lake Erie and Ohio. And this grant is helping us to target woodland owners in the lower Grand River watersheds of Mill Creek, Payne Creek, and Talcott Creek. Much of the land use in those watersheds is forested and under private ownership.

So, our strategy to maintain this clean water is to protect the health of the woodland resources through educating forest landowners. Even if you aren't in the Grand River watershed, the same thing is true. The practices that you put on your land and in your forests help keep our water clean.

So, we have four workshops scheduled under this grant. We held one in September in Holden about sustainable forest management. This is the second.

The third will be in December. It will also be a virtual program on protecting your woodland assets. And then early in the new year, we'll schedule a timber harvest tour.

So, look for announcements. So, again, use the chat box. And this is being recorded that we had a rocky start on that, too.

But we will be sending you a link so you can come back to it. And we will also be sending you a link to additional resources and a survey, which we appreciate your taking time to fill out. Okay.

And Julie Parker, I didn't introduce her. She is the district conservationist in the Oroville Service Center and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Program. She will be talking about NRCS programs.

And Julie, take it away. Thank you. All right.

Hi, everyone. Let me share my screen. All right.

So, I work for the United States Department of Agriculture. And we have funding available to do conservation practices on forest lands. So, this PowerPoint is kind of going to go into what our agency is, how we are involved, and what practices we can fund.

So, we were, our agency has been around for 90 years. We formed in 1935 because of the Dust Bowl. And as time went on, we became, instead of the soil conservation service, we became the natural resource conservation service.

And our mission kind of expanded into other resource concerns. Our funding comes from the Farm Bill. We get funding for all of our programs from that piece of legislation.

It's supposed to be passed every five years, but the last one was passed in 2018. I believe they just, in the last funding bill that they passed last week, to continue on with the 2018 Farm Bill for another, until September 30th, for another year, basically. The conservation programs that are included in the Farm Bill are the Environmental Quality Incentive Program and the Conservation Stewardship Program.

We also work with some easements, wetland easements, and agricultural land easements. We can also just provide technical assistance. So, if you aren't interested in pursuing funding from one of our programs, we can come out and discuss with you what the best management practices are, how to get practices done on your land, and come up with a plan for that as well.

So, let's say you do want to apply for EQIP to fund some of the items in your forest management plan. How the process works is you would contact our office. We will help you and work with you to work with the Farm Service Agency.

They're actually in the same building as us to get farm records established, because usually forest landowners don't have farm records with us. If you already have farm records, we'll help you make sure they're updated and correct. You do that, and then we work on an application.

The application, sometimes people think it's really complex. It's actually three pages, and it's only 10 questions. So, the hardest part of the application is figuring out what you're going to be named, because we have to have consistent names and consistent ways of signing.

And we also, at that time, if you were going to apply to implement forestry practices on your land, we would collect a forest management plan if you already have one. We use that forest management plan to help. The service forester usually comes out, so that's the next thing.

The service forester comes out to your property, which he works for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, and he helps us do some of the planning for these forestry applications. And he'll walk the property with you. He looks at your forest management plan and then comes up with basically almost an itinerary, what you're going to do each year of this potential project.

And then he sends that to us, and we use it to rank the application. Once all the applications are ranked, the funding, they go down the list in our state office and fund whoever is ranked highest. When people are selected, we have to send them a letter or contact them over the phone and say, hey, you're selected.

Do you want to proceed? So we get in contact with you. We let you know that that's happening. If you say, yes, I want to proceed, nothing's changed.

I don't want to cancel my application. We then work on a final document, final folder that we go over with you. It goes by year, what's going to happen in each year, and the amount of funding

you're going to get for each item that you do in your contract.

And then we set up a meeting to go over all that, and there are several documents that you have to sign. Once that whole process is done, you now have an equipped contract that we expect you to implement to the best of your ability. In order to apply for our programs on a piece of property, you have to have control of the land.

You have to have an interest in a farming operation that comes up a lot more if someone's leasing or maybe owns equipment but doesn't do much labor. That's something that comes up in other farming operations more than forestry applications. You have to be compliant with our adjusted gross income qualifications.

So, if you make over \$900,000 adjusted gross income over a three-year average period, that will make you ineligible for our programs. We collect signature authority for entities. We have to make sure you're a member and that you have the authority to sign.

You have to be in compliance with HL and wetland rules that we have. That does not come up with forestry, hardly ever, unless you had other ag land where you had drained or cleared a wetland. And then land enrolled needs to meet an ag land use.

With forestry, that's a fairly easy thing to do. We consider forest land and ag land use. Sometimes people want to apply for different portions of the EQIP program and they maybe only have yard.

That can be an issue because they don't actually have an ag operation. So, we accept applications to our programs year-round, but we only rank and fund applications once per year for the most part. All the programs are competitive.

So, what practices you're doing, how many different, we call them resource concerns. So, different environmental aspects that you're making better will get you more points. We always have more applications than we can fund.

And if perhaps you aren't funded, we roll your application over to the next year to be re-ranked and to try again. If circumstances change or at some point you're not comfortable with going through with this application anymore, you can cancel at any time. Up until we have a contract with you, then it's a little more difficult.

We want you to implement that contract and that's our goal at that point. So, let's say you have just received your EQIP contract. Some of the things to be aware of, you must complete an item in the first year.

We usually try to set this up for forestry landowners so they have like an acre of some brush management to do, which is that invasive species control. Something that you can tackle and it's not an issue because if we do get to that 12 months and you haven't gotten an item done, we have to put you in non-compliance right away, which we don't want to do. So, we try to

make it so that it's an easy hurdle to jump.

So, you will be competing against applicants in surrounding counties or across the state, depending on what funding pools you are put in. For forestry, there's usually an area-wide one or northern Ohio forest that most of them would be in. There's also usually a wildlife one.

So, if you have a wildlife focus, there's some funding in a separate pool for those as well. And then the amount of payment is based on the amount of an item installed at our cost incentive rate. So, usually for forestry items, that's like on a per acre basis.

So, you're going to do heavy invasive treatment on 20 acres times, you know, however much that is per acre and that would be the payment for that item. And we reimburse after the work is completed. So, you have to get it all done and then an inspection is done to make sure that it meets our standards and then we work on approving the payment.

So, that's kind of how EQIP works. Now, we're going to go into the Conservation Stewardship Program. The Conservation Stewardship Program is a little bit

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