

Forestry

Managing and Harvesting Woodland Conserved by the Vermont Land Trust:
A Guide to Vermont Land Trust's Requirements for Forest Management Plans

Introduction: For the Landowner

The long-term health and sustainable harvesting of every wooded property begins with a thorough and well-prepared *forest management plan*. Most conservation easements held by Vermont Land Trust allow timber harvesting, but only after the Land Trust has approved a forest management plan for the conserved property.

Vermont Land Trust recognizes that the cost and quality of forest management plans vary with each landowner's objectives. Although the plan can be prepared by a well-informed landowner or other person, we recommend that landowners hire a consulting forester and communicate their goals and concerns to the forester before development of their plan begins.

This guide offers technical help to the professional who is preparing a forest management plan. To learn more about how Vermont Land Trust works with landowners to conserve forestland and other open, productive properties in Vermont, please call our regional office that is closest to you. Click here for a listing of [VLT offices](#)

Notes to the Plan Preparer

Vermont Land Trust will accept forest management plans that were developed before the property was conserved. However, we reserve the right to condition them before issuing an approval to ensure adequate protection of the resources identified in the Grant of Development Rights and Conservation Restrictions ("the Grant").

The requirements described on these pages are consistent with the standards of Vermont's Use Value Appraisal Forest Land Program. Items marked with an asterisk (*) are additional requirements imposed by VLT.

1. Objectives

- Describe the forest management objectives that the plan has been designed to achieve.
- List the products and-or values that are desired from the forest resource
- Briefly explain how these products and-or values relate to the Purposes section of the Conservation Restrictions*.

2. Maps

Maps provided with the management plan must include a title block which includes: the owner's name; a north arrow; and an indication of scale. Maps must show the town(s) in which the parcel(s) is located; the number of acres in each parcel; boundary lines; significant features (buildings, public roads, truck roads* and major skid trails*, landings, wetlands, streams, ponds, bogs, power lines, historic or cultural resources, designated significant habitats, etc.); and forest stands ("treatment units"), delineated by number and corresponding with the plan.

Maps should be appropriately scaled and detailed to reflect each parcel's size and its resource objectives.

3. Forest Stand ("Treatment Unit") Descriptions

Forest Types: Society of American Foresters cover type, or an equivalent.

Topography*: Describe the topography of each treatment unit (approximate elevation, position in the landscape, average slope, aspect). A topographic map with parcel and stand boundaries outlined can substitute for a written description of each stand.

Soils*: Identify the characteristics of the soil(s) that enable it to grow the present or desired forest type.

Past Management History: Identify the approximate date and type of the last treatment or harvest. Include planting records, etc., if known.

Stocking Level and Age Class Distribution Before Harvest: Describe the current stocking level, including basal area and mean stand diameter. Include a written description or listing that tells whether the stand is understocked, adequately stocked, or overstocked. Determine if the stand is even-aged or uneven-aged.

Stocking Level After Harvest: Estimate what the stocking structure of the stand will be after the harvest is complete.

VLT uses the USDA Silvicultural Guides for the Northeast as its standard in determining approval or nonapproval for silvicultural reasons. If no stocking guide is available, the residual stand basal area should not be less than 60 square feet per acre of acceptable growing stock.

Heavy cutting, defined as harvesting below the "C" level in the appropriate guide, is permissible when it is:

- Recommended in a generally accepted silvicultural guide or handbook based on a stand analysis;
- Required because of the natural occurrence of fire, wind, or insect damage; or
- Otherwise permitted by the Grant.

Stand Quality: Derive this by computing the acceptable growing stock basal area.

"Acceptable growing stock" is defined as any potential crop tree that is to be retained and managed to meet the objectives of the Grant.

Site Class: Determine this through soils information, site index, or growth calculations.

Insect and Disease Occurrence: Note any major disease or pest problem within the stand. If there is a problem, identify the silvicultural action, if any, that will be taken to address it.

Prescribed Silvicultural Treatments: Identify what silvicultural method will be employed to achieve the goals for the stand. (Stands that need to develop should be identified as such.) The cutting system prescribed for the stand should be based on the information derived from the stand analysis and the stocking guide for the forest type with adjustments made (if needed) for non-timber considerations.

4. Plant and Wildlife Considerations*

Identify any known significant habitats and-or natural heritage sites, as identified by the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife or a qualified biologist, on the parcel. Describe the plan's management recommendations for minimizing the effect (if any) of harvesting on these habitats.

5. Aesthetic and Recreational Considerations*

Describe the impact (if any) of harvesting on views from public roads, trails, and local

communities. Identify management recommendations for minimizing the impact of the harvesting operation on these scenic resources.

6. Historic and Cultural Resource Considerations*

Identify any known historic or cultural resources on the parcel. Describe the plan's management recommendations for minimizing the impact (if any) of harvesting operations on these resources.

Plan Updates

If the landowner plans on harvesting timber or other wood products for commercial purposes, forest management plans should be updated every 10 years.

Water Quality Provisions (AMPs)

Truck roads, landings, and skid trails must be designed and maintained during and after the harvesting operation according to the "AMPs" — the guidelines prescribed in *Acceptable Management Practices for Maintaining Water Quality on Logging Jobs in Vermont*, a Vermont Forests, Parks and Recreation publication dated August 15, 1987 — or according to a successor publication approved by Vermont Land Trust.

Notice Provision*

Landowners or their representatives must provide VLT with written notice at least 15 days before beginning any commercial harvesting operations outlined in the approved forest management plan.

These types of work are exempt from the notice provision:

- Thinning of forest stands done without a commercial sale of the harvested products (pre-commercial thinnings).
- Any timber harvest that involves less than 10 acres.
- Any timber harvest that involves less than 8,000 board feet of sawlogs, or 25 cords of pulpwood or firewood.
- The cutting of firewood for use on the protected property.
- Maple sugaring.

Forest Management Plan Amendments

Amendments are required when the landowner or a representative proposes a silvicultural treatment that is not included in the approved forest management plan.

Amendments are not required* for any change in the timing or sequence of treatments, if the change does not vary more than five years from the prescription scheduled in the approved forest management plan.

Amendments must be submitted* to the Vermont Land Trust for approval no less than 30 days before the silvicultural activity that requires the amendment begins.

If you have questions, we are happy to answer them if we can. Please call or write us:

Conservation Stewardship Office

Vermont Land Trust
The King Farm, 5 Thomas Hill
Woodstock, VT 05091
802-457-2369; fax: 802-457-5132

These links provide other information about VLT's timberland conservation program:

- [Working Forest Project Guidelines](#)
- [Productive Timberlands: Conservation Easement Guide](#)
- [VLT Forestry Glossary](#)
- [News of some recent timberland conservation projects](#)
- [Champion International, Inc. conservation project](#)
- [Atlas Timberlands Partnership conservation project](#)
- [Complete list of VLT publications on the web](#)

For further information contact:

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