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Woodland Owner Associations
For a directory of woodland owner associations
in Pennsylvania, visit:
<http://paforeststewards.cas.psu.edu/associations.html>
or call the Forest Stewardship Program,
1-800-235-WISE.

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Tending Your Piece of the Forest



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Resources for Woodland Owners

Why Tend My Forest?

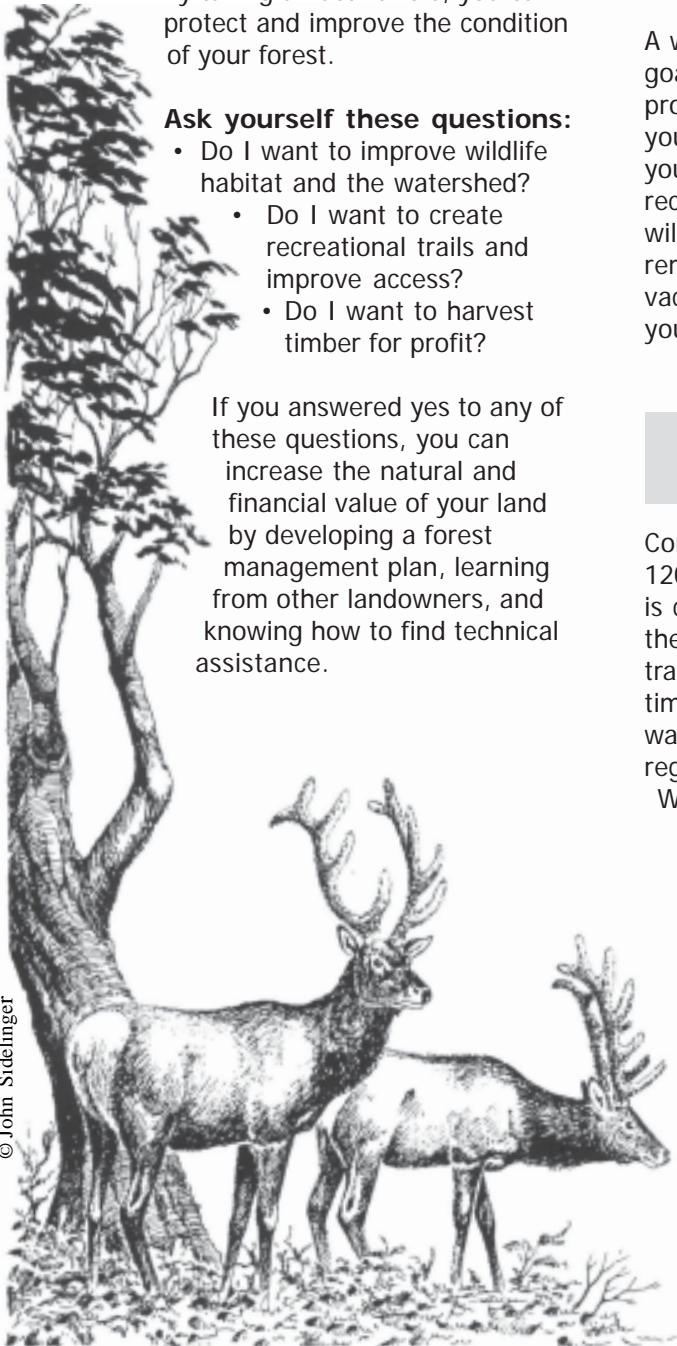
By taking an active role, you can protect and improve the condition of your forest.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do I want to improve wildlife habitat and the watershed?
 - Do I want to create recreational trails and improve access?
 - Do I want to harvest timber for profit?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you can increase the natural and financial value of your land by developing a forest management plan, learning from other landowners, and knowing how to find technical assistance.

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How Do I Develop a Forest Management Plan?

A written forest management plan outlines your goals and guides your activities. Natural resource professionals (foresters or other specialists) can help you develop a plan that will suit your interests and your property's potential. You may want to design a recreational trail, develop habitats to attract certain wildlife, or thin trees to improve the growth of the remaining trees. Just like a plan for retirement or a vacation, your forest management plan will guide you, step by step, as you care for your land.

What Should I Know Before Harvesting Trees?

Consider this: A mature timber tree often takes 80 to 120 years to grow, so knowing what and when to cut is critical. To avoid costly mistakes, consider getting the assistance of a natural resource professional trained in forest management. Done properly, a timber harvest can improve wildlife habitat, protect water quality, allow for future harvests, and establish regeneration while also increasing your income.

Without sound guidance, a single harvest can degrade your land and decrease its value for generations. A common practice in Pennsylvania called "high-grading" or diameter-limit cutting involves cutting only the largest and most valuable trees. The trees left behind after this type of harvest often have little potential for developing into quality trees. Cutting just the big ones takes the best trees and leaves the rest. This is like a farmer killing his best bulls and breeding the poorest. Rather than stripping your forest of its best assets, a good timber harvest leaves your forest in a condition to continue to provide financial and natural benefits down the road.

Regenerating Your Forest

After a timber harvest in Pennsylvania, the new forest usually grows naturally from seedlings and root sprouts and stump sprouts. Planting trees is not necessary; however, sometimes the forest is unable to replace itself because of competition from ferns or nonnative plants or overbrowsing by deer. A natural resource professional can help you determine threats to your forest and recommend appropriate actions. This is especially important *before* cutting your forest.



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Where Can I Meet Other Woodland Owners?

Forest landowner associations are independent nonprofit organizations interested in sound forest management. These groups can give you an opportunity to meet other woodland owners and participate in meetings, educational programs, and property tours. Fellow members can also introduce you to natural resource professionals they have worked with successfully. There are currently over twenty forest landowner associations in Pennsylvania.