

Defining Goals and Objectives in a Forest Management Plan

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Goals and Objectives

A statement of goals and objectives from a forest management plan is the first item for a management plan. Goals are the overall strategy. Objectives are the tactics used to implement that strategy. Writing your goals and objectives on paper or on a computer as formally as possible is important. What do you want from your trees and land? Consider increased income, financial investment, wildlife, recreation, retirement income, children's education, estate planning, second home on the property, farming options, and other ideas.

It is a good idea to include input from other people, first family members who are affected by the decisions you make, then reputable, experienced professionals in the areas where you need guidance. Having a well defined, written set of goals and objectives is the most important aspect of any business.

Decisions about forestland should include concepts of multi-land use and can include alternative enterprises. Alternative enterprises include hunting leases, pine straw, cattle, pine cones, pond management/fee fishing, honey bees, mineral leases, firewood and other options.

Having a clear understanding of your goals and objectives and communicating them is critical if your plan is to be useful to you and your family. Goals are general statements that express your broad wishes for the property. Basically, they are your vision for your property but should be focused enough for you to know you are reaching them. An example goal might be to improve forest health.

Objectives are more specific statements of what you would like to achieve from your goal through management. Following the forest health goal, as an example, your objectives might be to protect against insects and disease, eliminate invasive plant species, or minimize damage from wildfire. Remember that not all your objectives can be met on every acre. Objectives that are not obtainable on one piece of property may have to be met on separate portions of your property.

To effectively accomplish your objectives, you need to prepare details about management activities that will be conducted. The timing of activities should be as specific as possible and should reflect your management priorities. Activities for the next five to ten years should be discussed in detail while long-term plans can be developed more generally. Planning is a continuing process so frequently you will have to revisit your goals and objectives, especially if the property experiences significant changes.

An excellent template for preparing plans for your forestland has been produced by the Natural Resources Conservation Service and is available at

http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb1075619.pdf. The blank management form can be found at https://www.treefarmssystem.org/stuff/contentmgr/files/1/811656e8116af1c86571cbbf51851fac/files/managing_your_woodlands_10.1.2015.pdf.

Common Goals and Objectives

Results from the latest National Woodland Owners Survey conducted by the USDA Forest Service, indicate the top six goals for Georgia's private non-industrial owners are to pass land to heirs, enjoy beauty or nature, protect and improve wildlife habitat, have privacy, protect for biological diversity, and protect for water quality. Traditional goals like conducting forestland enterprises are always favored by owners. Looking at the checklist at the end of this publication you can see an exhaustive but certainly not complete set of possible goals and related objectives.

Transferring the land to the next generation or keeping the forestland intact for the future is almost universally rated highest by the survey respondents. Establishing a conservation easement and estate planning could be specific objectives targeting this goal. The easement itself can be used to improve water quality, maintain wildlife habitat, protect scenic areas, and many other purposes.

Your goal may be to enhance forestland aesthetics and recreation. Spending time in nature can improve your quality of life by connecting your family to the land. Other activities like animal watching, fishing, hunting, and hiking may be the most important aspects for forestland ownership for you.

Promoting healthy forestland or enhancing ecosystem services have been more important to landowners in recent years. Georgia's forests provide essential ecosystem services like water filtration, carbon storage, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities and scenic beauty. Ecosystem services are those things that nature provides that are of direct benefit to humans.

Conducting forestland enterprises like regenerating your forest may be most important to you. If you have a management plan that includes a timber harvest, a plan for regenerating your forest should be included. Convert non-forested areas to forest. While you are reforesting recently harvested areas, consider afforestation or planting trees on land that previously was not forested.

You may have a mix of all the goals and objectives above and more. This is perfectly normal and adds to the excitement and challenge of woodland ownership. Do not be discouraged by the possible complexity of managing your forest, there are many services available to help guide you through the process.

Implementation

For some landowners equipped with a management plan, taking the next step and actually implementing the plan over time might become an issue. A well-written management plan should have a timeline of activities that can guide you through the process. It is a good practice to regularly review and update your property conditions, resources, and goals. Allowing yourself the freedom to modify your plans as conditions change or as new information or resources become available is known as adaptive

management. Adaptive management allows you to implement the best management practices available. Regular monitoring of your property to identify changes is an integral part of adaptive management (Gagnon 2015).

Relevant Literature

1. Anon. 1998. Forest Management Planning. West Virginia Forestry Association. 3p. <http://www.wvfa.org/pdf/sfi/forestmanagementplanning.pdf>.
2. Gagnon, Jennifer. 2015. Sustainable Forestry: A Guide for Virginia Forest Landowners. Publication 420-139, Virginia Cooperative Extension. 20p. https://pubs.ext.vt.edu/420/420-139/420-139_pdf.pdf
3. Warren, Jim. 2002. The Value of Forest Management Plans. Fact Sheet No 25, Timber and Timber harvesting in West Virginia, West Virginia Forestry Association. 2 p. <http://www.wvfa.org/pdf/factsheets/FACT%20SHEET%20No.%2025.pdf>

Checklist of Goals and Objectives That Can Be Included in a Forest Management Plan
We should use this or the next one, but both seem to be overkill to me now. What do you think?

Describe and Inventory Woodlands

- ☐ GIS mapping
- ☐ Soils type mapping
- ☐ Topography maps
- ☐ Recreation and tourism
 - ☐ Trails
 - ☐ Points of interest
 - ☐ Special sites
- ☐ Natural features
 - ☐ Wetlands
 - ☐ Streams
 - ☐ Waterfalls
 - ☐ Water bodies
 - ☐ Unique areas
- ☐ Historic/cultural features
 - ☐ Wells
 - ☐ Homesteads
 - ☐ Cemeteries
- ☐ Forest types and stands
- ☐ Protection and maintenance
- ☐ Stand descriptions and inventory data

Assure The Woodland's Future

- ☐ Conservation easements
- ☐ Intergenerational transfer
- ☐ Estate planning
- ☐ Sharing with family
- ☐ Taxes (county, state, federal and property)

Enhance Woodland Aesthetics and Recreation

- ☐ Wildlife habitat improvement
- ☐ Trail layout/maintenance
- ☐ Plant/wildlife survey
- ☐ Wildlife habitat assessment
- ☐ Wildlife habitat cost share programs
- ☐ Aesthetic enhancements
- ☐ Wildlife watching
- ☐ Hunting
- ☐ Hiking
- ☐ Birding
- ☐ Fishing
- ☐ Trails and trail design
- ☐ Establish family connection to the land
- ☐ Linking the forest and wildlife
- ☐ Management practices impacts on wildlife
- ☐ Even-aged forests
- ☐ Uneven-aged forests
- ☐ Den trees and mast trees
- ☐ Road construction and maintenance
- ☐ Establishing ground cover or wildlife food plots

Promote Healthy Woodlands

- ☐ Timber stand improvement
- ☐ Water quality protection/BMPs
- ☐ Pest and weed assessment/prevention
- ☐ Pest and weed monitoring
- ☐ Managing pest/weed outbreaks
- ☐ Tree planting
- ☐ Forest health survey and appraisal
- ☐ Prescribed burns
- ☐ Create home for wildlife
- ☐ Create healthier woods
- ☐ Pests and weeds
- ☐ Pest and weed monitoring
- ☐ Managing pest/weed outbreaks
- ☐ Ecosystem services
- ☐ Air quality
- ☐ Healthy soils

Provide Woodland Protection

- ☐ Marking boundaries
- ☐ Security and protection monitoring
- ☐ Water quality protection/BMPs
- ☐ Natural disaster damage assessment
- ☐ Timber theft appraisal
- ☐ Special site protection plans
- ☐ Rare, threatened/endangered species protection plans
- ☐ Pest and weed assessment/prevention
- ☐ Wildfires
- ☐ Natural disasters
- ☐ Invasive species
- ☐ Pests and weeds
- ☐ Trespassers
- ☐ Bio Security
- ☐ Eco-terrorism

Conduct Woodland Enterprises

- ☐ Forest certification
- ☐ Cost share programs
- ☐ Financial assistance
- ☐ Timber sale administration
- ☐ Manage a timber harvest
- ☐ Forest inventory and assessment
- ☐ Appraisal and valuation
- ☐ Tax law programs
 - ☐ Property taxes
 - ☐ Income and capital gains tax planning
 - ☐ Federal taxes
 - ☐ Recordkeeping
 - ☐ Setting up accounts
- ☐ Hunting leases
- ☐ Pine straw production
- ☐ Natural disaster salvage and recovery
- ☐ Eco-tourism

- _____ Young Stand (age 1- to 13-yrs)
 - _____ Afforestation
 - _____ Regeneration
 - _____ Site preparation
 - _____ Natural regeneration
 - _____ Tree planting
 - _____ Weed control
 - _____ Fertilization
- _____ Middle Aged Stand (13- to 25-yrs)
 - _____ Weeding
 - _____ Release
 - _____ Thinning
 - _____ Improvement cutting
 - _____ Timber stand improvement
 - _____ Pruning
 - _____ Prescribed burning
 - _____ Fertilization
- _____ Mature Stand and Harvesting (25+ yrs)
 - _____ Clearcutting
 - _____ Seed tree
 - _____ Shelterwood
 - _____ Selection
 - _____ Patch clearcut
- _____ Agroforestry
 - _____ Silvopasture
 - _____ Alley cropping
 - _____ Forest farming
 - _____ Riparian forest buffers
 - _____ Windbreaks/Shelterbelts
 - _____ Carbon
 - _____ Wildlife management
 - _____ Waste management
 - _____ Biomass/Energy
- _____ Non-Timber Forest Products
 - _____ Fruits and nuts
 - _____ Vegetables
 - _____ Fish and game
 - _____ Medicinal plants
 - _____ Resins
 - _____ Essences
 - _____ Barks and fibers
 - _____ Palms and grasses