

Multiple Use Management and the Role of Timber Harvesting in Indiana's Forestlands

A Position Statement of the Indiana Society of American Foresters
(1/15/02 draft)

Position

The Indiana Society of American Foresters recognizes the values and benefits that Indiana's citizens derive from the management of Indiana's private and public forestlands for multiple objectives. Professional management of forestland based on the objectives of the owner, or owner groups, and the biological potential of the area can help make forestlands vital and productive for their intended uses. Trees and forests are readily renewable resources that, if managed sustainably, can provide many benefits now and in decades to come. Timber harvesting can be an important tool in managing forestland for multiple uses. Both public and private forests can benefit from professional management aimed at producing multiple benefits on a sustainable basis. The option to harvest trees and manage for multiple forest benefits should be maintained on both public and private forests in Indiana.

Issue

Demands on forestlands for goods and services are increasing rapidly and are expected to increase still faster in the future. Conflicts in use have become accentuated in recent years by requests to state and/or national administrative, legislative and judicial bodies to influence and regulate management on public and private forestlands. Such conflicts are especially sharp where groups believe that the use demands of other interest groups compete with their own.

Background

Historical Status of Indiana's Forests

At the time of European settlement, 87 percent (20 million acres) of Indiana was forested. In the late 1800's and early half of the 20th century more than 90% of this native forest was cleared for cropland and livestock pasture. Forest clearing probably reached its peak during 1910–1920 with only 1.5 million acres of forestland remaining. Many marginal farms were abandoned during the Great Depression and many wooded pastures and abandoned fields began reverting back to forest.¹ In 1967 there were 4.1 million acres of forestland in the state. Today there are over 4.4 million acres.² As a result, except for a very few scattered original remnants, Indiana's forests are primarily second and third growth forests arising from natural regeneration and

¹ *Forest Policy Issues in Indiana*, Purdue University, Cooperative Extension Service (1994)

² *Forests of Indiana: An Overview 1998*, USDA Forest Service. and IDNR Division of Forestry (2000)

reforestation efforts on land previously disturbed by human activities. Forestland area in Indiana has been increasing and the annual tree growth volume is more than double the loss and removals from natural mortality and harvest, respectively.³

Diversity of Use Demands on Forestlands

Forests receive, store and make available most of the nation's useable water. They satisfy the nations requirements for wood—a major, renewable, and highly versatile raw material. Forest vegetation stabilizes soil, has a moderating effect on local climate, reduces sound and air pollutants, and helps maintain atmospheric oxygen-carbon dioxide balances. Recreation, encompassing a wide variety of individual and group activities, has become a major use of forestlands. Forests, and the streams and lakes they help sustain, provide the habitat for wildlife and fish, which are also major, renewable resources.

What Multiple-Use Is

Increasing demands on limited forestlands can be met with coordination of uses on specific areas. Foresters have developed and applied the concept of multiple-use whereby land is managed for a variety of purposes that utilize, without impairment, the capabilities of the land to meet different demands simultaneously. Properly implemented, multiple-use sustains production of the desired benefits and avoids environmental deterioration. The multiple-use strategy takes effective advantage of capabilities of diverse portions of a forest to meet both current and projected demands.

Many benefits accrue on a forest regardless of the management strategy employed. For example, a forest managed exclusively for recreation can provide water, climatic and wildlife benefits. Similarly, one managed exclusively for wood products can provide water, climatic, wildlife, and recreation benefits. It is extremely difficult to visualize any exclusive use that does not also provide other benefits. The supply of forestlands is inadequate to meet all demands simultaneously, but the multiple-use strategy normally provides the largest sum of social, economic and spiritual benefits.

Who Plans and Manages for Multiple-Use?

Use and management of forestland and forest resources are determined in large measure by the objectives, policies, and means of the landowner, whether the people of a political unit, shareholders of a corporations, or an individual. Uses should be professionally planned, and all planning should consider all potential capabilities to meet demands on a sustained basis; compatibility among uses; and costs and benefits of different use combinations over a period of time. Forestry professionals have special education and experience to determine the net benefits that forests are capable of producing—information that is basic to the planning of uses. Plans should incorporate the landowners' objectives and should be based on accurate information about the resources involved. When plans have been decided on, forestry professionals should implement them by prescribing and supervising the necessary specific practices—including timber harvesting.

³ *Forests of Indiana: An Overview 1998*, USDA Forest Service and IDNR Division of Forestry (2000)

How Multiple-Use Is Implemented

In application, the multiple-use concept involves managing a specific forest area for various benefits and may result in (1) exclusive use on some portions, (2) the emergence of primary and secondary uses on other portions, and (3) a general-use category where no one specific use justifies specific designation. In Indiana, much of the forestland managed under the multiple-use concept is a general-use category, because compatibility at existing levels of demand does not require the designation of primary or exclusive use. These forests provide watershed protection, wildlife habitat, recreation and wood product production, often simultaneously on the same area.

Timber harvesting, under the direction of professional foresters, can serve as a tool to realize many of these benefits. Harvests can provide useful materials demanded by society, income to forest owners, jobs for communities related to the primary and secondary manufacturing and sale of wood products, management of fire and disease risk, and maintenance for the health and vigor of the forest environment. Young, healthy forests serve as reservoirs of carbon dioxide uptake from the atmosphere, and trees processed into long-term products, like housing and furniture, store that carbon for long periods of time. Harvesting also provides a means to economically manage for species diversity and specialized wildlife habitat needs across the forest landscape.

Recommendation

The Indiana Society of American Foresters recognizes the value and benefits of actively managing Indiana's forestland for multiple objectives and uses—as determined by the landowners' objectives. It recommends that the option to harvest trees should be maintained on both public and private lands in order to realize many of these benefits that accrue to Indiana's citizens.

ABOUT THE SOCIETY

The mission of the Indiana Society of American Foresters is to advance the science, education, technology, and practice of forestry; to enhance the competency of its members; to establish professional excellence; and to use the knowledge, skills, and conservation ethic of the profession to ensure continued health and use of forest ecosystems and the present and future availability of forest resources to benefit society.