

# Consulting Foresters ~ Who are they and what do they do?

By Paul Drysdale

A consulting forester is a degreed and trained professional forester that independently provides a wide range of forestry services (for a fee) to private landowners, land managers, industry, and governmental agencies. In addition, many of them provide forestry services for financial, legal, and accounting professionals associated with property management.

Consulting foresters are qualified professionals that work for the best interest of the client. Some of the basic principles and credentials are a Bachelor of Science (B.S.) degree (or higher) in forestry from an accredited university program, are typically active members in one or more professional organizations that are dedicated to the practice of forestry, are often professionally certified, licensed, and/or registered (requirements vary by the state), and are not engaged in the buying (procurement) of timber products. It is important to note that while some sawmills, paper mills, and loggers employ experienced and reputable professional foresters to procure timber, those foresters are not “consulting foresters” as they represent their employer and not the landowner.

Consulting foresters are often overlooked in Michigan. They are not funded through tax dollars and their work is often the result of client/colleague referrals rather than major marketing campaigns. There are approximately 120 consulting foresters in Michigan. Consulting forestry firms typically range in size from 1 to 8 foresters and may also employ part-time or seasonal foresters/forestry interns.

Some of the common services provided by consulting foresters include: forest management plan preparation, timber sale assistance, general forestry consultation, forest inventories and appraisals, timber marking/timber stand improvement marking (TSI), GPS/GIS mapping, timber trespass assistance/expert witness testimony, timber tax assistance, property inspection services, staff training programs, urban forestry assistance, tree planting, forestland real estate, habitat management, and road and trail layout. While the actual services that each consulting forester provides varies by the company, forest management plan

preparation and timber sale assistance are the most commonly provided services.

A 2012 survey of consulting foresters in Michigan showed that, in 2011, consulting foresters serviced a total of 2,750 landowners, completed a total of 540 forest management plans that covered 202,930 acres, and provided timber sale assistance to 1,250 landowners that totaled 60,480 acres. In addition to private landowner assistance, consulting foresters also provide timber sale, forest inventory, and forest research assistance to the MDNR and US Forest Service.

The fee structure of consulting forester services varies depending on the type and scope of the project. Projects may be billed by the project, the acreage, hourly, or on a commission in the case of timber sale assistance. It is important that the landowner understands what services will be provided by the consulting forester and the fee structure. The details of the services provided and fee structure should be included in a written contract. Sometimes, there are grants available for landowners to help offset consulting forester fees. There are often debates within the profession regarding pricing structures. However, in the end

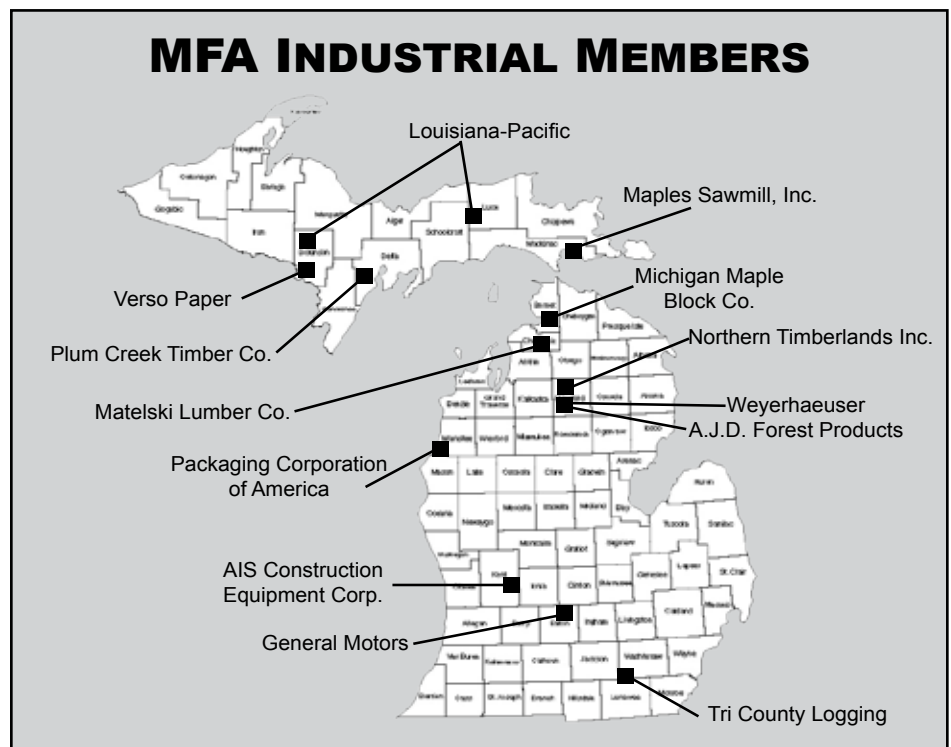
it comes down to choosing a consulting forester that will best fit your forestry needs.

Research from a number of states shows that landowners that hire a consulting forester to assist with timber sales receive higher timber sale returns, are left with higher quality and more valuable residual stands, and have less environmental damage than landowners that do not hire consulting foresters. The consultant’s fee is frequently more than offset by these higher values. The consulting forester will have experience with preparing contracts, ensuring payment for timber products, acceptable harvesting practices/results, and choosing reputable loggers.

There are several forestry, natural resource, and sportsman organizations that consulting foresters may be affiliated with. Two of the most common and respected professional organizations, with missions of the advancing of the forestry profession, are the Society of American Foresters (SAF) and the Association of Consulting Foresters (ACF). Consulting foresters providing urban forestry services may be members of the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) and/or the Arboriculture Society of Michigan.

SAF has a rigorous Certified Forester (CF) program and ACF has rigorous membership standards. The ISA has its own Certified Arborist certification. Michigan also has a Registered Forester (RF) des-

*(See "Consulting Foresters", p. 18)*



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ignation which has undergone scrutiny in recent years and is expected to be modified in the upcoming year. The education and experience requirements vary for each of the certifications/registrations, and continuing education credits may or may not be required. However, each of the certifications/registrations include high ethical standards.

Additional information on SAF can be found at: [www.safnet.org](http://www.safnet.org). Additional information on ACF and a list of ACF members can be found at: [www.acf-foresters.org](http://www.acf-foresters.org).

Paul Drysdale is owner of Drysdale Forestry & Consulting in Cadillac and current president (2014-2016) of the Michigan Chapter of the Association of Consulting Foresters (MACF). ♣

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#### EVERGREENS

NORWAY SPRUCE	Age	Per 100	Per1000
8-12" Seedlings	2-0	40.00	170.00
12-18" Transplants	2-1	83.00	550.00
16-24" Transplants	2-2	110.00	700.00
24-36" Transplants	2-2	160.00	950.00

WHITE SPRUCE	Age	Per 100	Per1000
8-12" Seedlings	2-0	40.00	170.00
12-18" Transplants	2-1	83.00	550.00
16-24" Transplants	2-2	110.00	700.00

WHITE PINE	Age	Per 100	Per1000
4-8" Seedlings	2-0	45.00	170.00
8-12" Transplants	2-1	83.00	550.00
12-18" Transplants	2-2	110.00	725.00

#### DECIDUOUS

BLACK WALNUT	Age	Per 100	Per1000
6-12" Seedlings	1-0	55.00	350.00
12-18" Seedlings	1-0, 2-0	70.00	450.00
18-36" Seedlings	2-0	85.00	600.00

PIN OAK	Age	Per 100	Per1000
6-12" Seedlings	1-0	55.00	350.00
12-18" Seedlings	2-0	70.00	450.00

RED OAK	Age	Per 100	Per1000
12-18" Seedlings	1-0	70.00	450.00
18-36" Seedlings	2-0	85.00	600.00

WHITE OAK	Age	Per 100	Per1000
6-12" Seedlings	1-0	62.00	400.00
12-18" Seedlings	1-0, 2-0	75.00	500.00

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