



Introduction

1

Forest Operations Manual
The Conservation Forestry Program

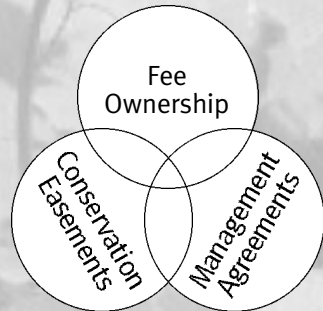
Introduction

CHAPTER

1



Land Protection Strategies



The Need for Conservation Forestry

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

Since 1951, The Nature Conservancy has pursued a **mission of preserving the plants, animals, and natural communities that represent the biological diversity of life on earth through a range of land protection strategies**—fee ownership, conservation easements, management agreements, leases, and other tools—that ensure conservation-oriented stewardship of ecologically sensitive places.

Over our 50 year history, we have protected more than 12 million acres in the United States and over 80 million acres internationally. This success is based in part on a commitment to action driven by sound science and a record of strong and effective partnerships.

Success in the future will depend increasingly on our ability to develop innovative strategies that allow us to leverage our resources to achieve lasting, tangible results on a scale at which conservation organizations have not operated before. Working at the scale of landscapes, it is increasingly apparent that forests and forest management hold one key to the success of our mission.

CONSERVATION FORESTRY

Conservation Forestry is management that emphasizes stewardship of the forest resources—protection of soil and water quality, long-rotation, high-value products, ecological diversity and complexity of the forest system. It is a management philosophy where the “environment” is a benefit, not a cost.


The Nature Conservancy believes that economically productive forestland can be compatible with our mission. In fact, productive forestland is probably essential to our mission because forestland that has no value as forests will be converted to some other use. Healthy forests provide critical habitat for species and communities, they protect watersheds, and they sustain human populations, jobs and families.

The key difference between conventional forestry and **Conservation Forestry** is time.

Forests grow over many generations, and good management for quality, high-value products requires an extremely long perspective. Yet decisions on how and when to harvest forests are often driven by short-term economic requirements.

Over 60% of the forests in the United States—roughly 350 million acres—are owned by individuals and families. These Non-Industrial, Private Forest owners (NIPFs) form a critical component of the wood supply in our country. At 10 million members, they are a highly diverse group with interests across the spectrum. However, the overwhelming majority of these individual forest owners share the following three traits:

- The primary reason they own the forestland is for some reason other than timber management or investment;
- They own the land for an average of seven years; and,
- They will have at least one timber harvest during their ownership.



THE NATURE CONSERVANCY,
believes that economically
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Economic Needs
of the Landowners

– Short-Term Needs –

The Forest Bank

– Long-Term Needs –

Ecological Needs
of the Forest

NIPF owners often initiate a timber harvest because of urgent family needs. Timber is the insurance policy when a family has a medical emergency, or must pay for a child's education, or finance a retirement.

These short-term needs limit the ability of families to steward their forests for the long-term. For this reason, The Nature Conservancy has created a number of options to provide landowners with liquidity in exchange for the opportunity to practice **Conservation Forestry** for the long-term.

This manual describes the on-the-ground operations which strengthen the likelihood that our forests will be healthier, more diverse, more valuable places in future than they are today. It is designed as a "How-To" book for Conservation Forestry.

Underlying all of this is the commitment of The Nature Conservancy to the future. The development of valuable, ecologically healthy forests and prosperous forest-based economies in our future begins with the choices we make in our forest management today.

GOALS FOR THE OPERATIONS MANUAL

This Operations Manual has three basic purposes:

FIRST, it will provide the internal guideline for our operations—a set of standards that, if met, have a good likelihood of achieving our high requirements for ecologically based forest management;

SECOND, we plan to make the manual readily available to other members of the forestry community, both within regions where the program operates and beyond. The clear statement of an understandable and comprehensive “How to” manual for sustainable forestry in Appalachian hardwoods may help raise the bar for what is considered acceptable timber management;

THIRD, it will provide a blueprint for independent certification of our timber operations under the Forest Stewardship Council, a third party certifier of sustainable forestry.

