

FORESTRY FACTS



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How to Hire a Contractor for Land Management Activities

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The purpose of this publication is to explore the hiring of contractors and what resources exist to help landowners hire just the right person for the land management task.

Why hire a contractor?

Landowners own a piece of land for a broad array of reasons. They may face a variety of challenges when it comes to carrying out the projects necessary to achieve an overall vision for the land. Knowing how to hire a contractor for specific tasks will benefit the land and enhance a landowner's management goals.

This publication provides some general questions one should ask any contractor before hiring them, using the PRICE acronym. Also included are some specific questions, permits and qualifications to be aware of regarding specific activities. This section is broken into five areas: property management planning, forest management, vegetation management, habitat management, and estate planning.

Six things to ask any contractor

It is important to get information from the contractors before they start. Most people wouldn't seek the services of a physician without verifying - the person is, indeed, a medical doctor. Nor would someone buy an item or service without first getting some idea of the item or service's price. **PRICE** is an acronym to help remember what information to gather before hiring a contractor. **PRICE** stands for

professional qualifications, references, insurance, cost estimates, and experience. Here is a brief description of each of these headings and/or a list of some of the questions to ask:

Professional qualifications – For some of the activities best performed by professionals, no certification system exists under which a contractor can be qualified. Indeed, anyone can call themselves a forester or a landscape architect. A good indication of the contractor's commitment to their profession is their membership in or association with one or several of the trade organizations of that field. For example, a forester would be associated with either the Society of American Foresters or the Association of Consulting Foresters. Any genuine professional should be happy to share their professional affiliations with potential clients. Do they participate in any certification system that verifies their activities adhere to an industry standard?

References – Getting and checking references is a step many landowners neglect to do, at their peril. A contractor should be happy to provide references. Ask the references about the contractor's performance, commitment to the schedule they visit

the reference's property to see the end result of the contractor's work.

Insurance -Is the contractor licensed and bonded with insurance to protect a landowner's interests and liability? If they do not have insurance, do not hire them.

Cost estimates- What is the contractor's best estimate of the total cost of the activities they will be undertaking? How fixed is the estimate (plus or minus how much)? What other activities (and their cost) might need to be added on as the work progresses? Get estimates in writing. Consider including a performance bonus to ensure the contractor will meet certain standards and/or deadlines.

Experience - How long has the contractor been providing this service? Do they have experience with similar situations? Is their primary business delivering the specific services required? Some contractors provide a wide array of services, so determine how well-versed they are in the tasks needed on the property.

Finally, check for complaints against a potential contractor, with the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) at 1-800-422-7128 or the Wisconsin Circuit Court Access (WCCA) Consolidated Court Automation Programs (CCAP) online at <http://wcca.wicourts.gov/>.

Hiring contractors for specific activities

Property Management Planning

A comprehensive property management plan is a great resource that summarizes the overall property vision from present day to over the next 25 to 50 years. A plan should detail the landowner's goals and objectives based on resources present on the property. Resource summaries may include wildlife and plant communities, a forest inventory, soil type, water features, and unique natural features. Most often a contractor will prepare the entire plan, addressing all of the activities mentioned and possibly even others, depending on the unique features of the property. However, a landowner may hire a contractor to prepare a project plan that addresses only a single aspect of the property, such as a forest management plan. It is unlikely that the contractor will have an educational background in all of these areas. More likely, they will have one degree in the areas of either forestry, wildlife, or

ecology, and they may have enough experience in the other areas to make informed recommendations.

Wildlife Habitat Planning

Is long-term planning for wildlife and wildlife habitats. There is no state certification system to distinguish trained wildlife biologists or contractors. When deciding who to hire to prepare a wildlife habitat project plan or wildlife component of the management plan, consider seeking out those who are members of The Wildlife Society. This is a professional organization whose members agree to a code of ethics and demonstrate their commitment to the field of wildlife management. While visiting the Wildlife Society website, look for the directory of Certified Wildlife Biologists or Associate Wildlife Biologists for the state.

- ☞ The Wildlife Society: <http://wildlife.org/>
- ☞ Wildlife Society Certified Biologist Program: <http://wildlife.org/certification/directory>

Unique Plants & Landscape Features

A management plan should account for the rare plant and animal species or communities, cultural sites, or other unique features that should be maintained and managed. Contractors or individuals can take training to become familiar with how to access these unique items and how to manage for them. One resource regarding plant and animal communities is the Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI). Also if the property is located near tribal lands, consider contacting a tribal historian for information on cultural landmarks.

- ☞ Natural Heritage Inventory: <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/nhi/>.

Forestry Planning

Focuses on long-term planning for woodlands and forest products. When hiring a contractor to prepare a forestry project plan or management plan with a forestry component, it is important to ask them if the plan they are preparing will meet cost-share and tax incentive programs, if enrolling. A list of certified plan writers, who are trained and approved to write management plans based on the standards for forest management, is maintained by the Department of Natural Resources.

- ☞ Department of Natural Resources Annual Directory of Foresters: <http://dnr.wi.gov/files/pdf/pubs/fr/FR0021.pdf>

Invasive Plant Management

A management plan should list invasive species found on the property, provide control recommendations, including a timeline for control by species, a map of the species' location, and make suggestions based off of the best management practices (BMP's) for invasive control. A contractor should understand the BMP's and control options appropriate for each species and be able to provide a recommendation based on property objectives. The Department of Natural Resources maintains a list of native plant nurseries and restoration consultants that may be able to assist with invasive control.

- 📄 Department of Natural Resources Native Plant Nurseries and Restoration Consultants: <http://dnr.wi.gov/files/PDF/pubs/ER/ER0699.pdf> and [ER0698.pdf](http://dnr.wi.gov/files/PDF/pubs/ER/ER0698.pdf)
- 📄 Invasive identification and management suggestions at Midwest Invasive Plant Network (MIPN): <http://mipn.org/>

Trail Planning

When creating hiking or other recreational trails, route ideas and options should be incorporated into the management plan. A contractor should outline the most appropriate places on the property to install a trail that will minimize soil erosion, provide access to desired locations, and also meet BMP's to maintain water quality. The plan should also outline how to install the trails as well as a maintenance routine for the future. The Professional Trail Builders Association is a good resource for contractors who specialize in trail establishment.

- ? Will the trail location accommodate all intended uses (i.e. cross-country skiing, hiking, horseback riding, etc.)?
 - ? Will the trail meet best management practices?
 - ? If disturbed ground needs to be vegetated along the new trail, will native seed or cool season grasses be used?
- 📄 Professional Trail Builder Association: <http://trailbuilders.org/>

There are various cost-share programs available to assist in hiring a contractor and preparing a management plan. Refer to the websites below for more information.

- 📄 [Natural Resource Conservation Service \(NRCS\) cost share programs](#)
- 📄 Department of Natural Resources- Wisconsin Forest Landowner Grant Program (WFLGP): <http://dnr.wi.gov/Aid/ForestLandowner.html>

Forest Management

A property management plan may include management options for the forest (trees) itself. If not, it is advisable to have a forest specific management plan before engaging in any timber harvest. Another option is to contract with a forester who can assist with marking trees before a harvest. A forester marks trees so that the resulting harvest will improve the health of the forest or address the landowner's goals, such as improved wildlife habitat.

Foresters

Foresters can develop a forest management plan based on the landowner's personalized goals for a forest, can administer a timber sale, and develop a planting plan for tree plantings. Foresters can also find the resources needed to plant the trees, treat and control unwanted vegetation, and thin a stand of crowded or undesirable trees. Finally, foresters can apply for any needed permits and submit any cutting notices.

Foresters can be specialists and generalists just like many other professionals. Some only buy timber, some only mark timber for harvest and administer a sale, and some only write management plans. Other foresters can accomplish all of these activities. Also, foresters come from different environments. Some work for the landowner as a private consultant, some work for a mill buying timber, and some work for a public agency managing public lands and offering some assistance to private landowners.

Foresters may also receive payment for their services in a variety of way. The foresters who work for a mill may charge nothing for their service, as they are fulfilling their assignment by continuing to feed timber to the mill they work for. Private consulting foresters may ask to be paid an hourly rate, by an acreage rate, as a percent of the value of the timber sold, or as a combination of these. Public agency foresters are not paid directly by landowners, but they can usually only provide specific services or offer only limited amounts of time to any given landowner.

Here are some questions to ask foresters before hiring them:

- ? Who do they work for (who do they represent- a mill or the landowner) and how do they want to get paid for their services?
- ? Can they accomplish all of the activities laid out in the plan?
- ? How often will they be on the site monitoring any forest management activity?
- ? When will the project (management plan creation or timber harvest) be completed?
- ? If interested in the Managed Forest Law (MFL) program, ask the forester if he or she is familiar with and able to write plans for the MFL program?

There is no state certification system for foresters, but there are a number of ways to find foresters who adhere to certain standards of long-term sustainable management. For example, Cooperating Foresters meet educational requirements and continuing education standards. Please see the website below for more information

- 📄 To find a DNR Forester or a Cooperating Forester that works in the county, visit this site:
<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/ForestLandowners/locator/>
- 📄 To learn more about professional associations for foresters and their own certification system, visit the following sites:
 - Wisconsin Consulting Foresters-
<http://www.wi-consultingforesters.com/>
 - Association of Consulting Foresters of America, Inc. - <http://www.acf-foresters.org>
 - Society of American Foresters-
<http://www.safnet.org/certifiedforester/index.cfm>
- 📄 For financial tips (including cost-share programs) and tax information:
<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/forestlandowners/financial.html>

Loggers

Finding the right logger to work with is an important part of a successful timber sale. Loggers, like foresters, can be specialists and generalists. Some operate equipment that is best suited for specific forest types and conditions, and some only have experience conducting certain kinds of harvests. Others have the equipment and experience to conduct timber harvesting operations in a wide variety of conditions and forest types.

As with foresters, there is no state certification system for loggers. However loggers, like foresters, have professional associations and their own certification system that can serve as good benchmarks for finding high quality and conscientious loggers. It is best to work with a local forester, who is a landowner's agent, and has experience working with and can recommend loggers in the local area. They can help to find a logger that will fit the needs of the landowner and the harvest. It is important to recognize that a successful timber harvest involves contributions from both a logger and a forester.

A logger's membership in a professional organization and participation in a certification system, like the Master Logger Certification Program, are great indicators of their commitment to their profession and to high standards of sustainable forest management.

Some questions to ask potential loggers include:

- ? Do they have experience working in this forest type and performing this type of harvest?
- ? Will they sign a contract for the agreement? Can the contract be something they did not create? Consider including a performance bond to ensure the logger will meet certain standards and/or deadlines.
- ? When will they start working on the property and for how long?
- ? Who will be working on the property (e.g. their staff or sub-contractors they hire)?
- ? Will the logger ensure that the equipment is washed prior to arriving on the property to reduce the spread of invasive species? (Arrange to have the equipment inspected by the forester or yourself.)

- 📄 To learn more about professional organizations for loggers, visit this site:
<http://www.timberpa.com/>
- 📄 To find loggers who participate in the Master Logger Certification Program, visit this site:
<http://www.wimlc.com/>
- 📄 Wisconsin Society of Land Surveyors
<http://www.wsls.org/>

Vegetation Management

A contractor with experience in vegetation management could help remove invasive species, take out encroaching trees and woody shrubs from

a prairie, remove hazard trees, or even prune a walnut plantation. It is recommended that landowners look for a contractor who specializes in the type of project that the landowner is undertaking to assure a job well done.

Vegetation Management Using Herbicides

When hiring a contractor to chemically remove undesirable vegetation, it is mandatory that the contractor be licensed. Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) requires that contractors who apply herbicide have a Commercial Pesticide Applicator License. When hiring someone through a private business, they may also need a Commercial Pesticide Applicator Business License depending on how much active ingredient that business handles each year. Licensing requirements ensure that all chemicals are being properly handled and are being applied in a safe and acceptable manner. Check the DATCP website to ensure contractors have a Commercial Pesticide Applicator License and/or a Commercial Pesticide Applicator Business License. In addition to the Commercial Pesticide Applicator, DATCP also requires a special Aquatic Certificate License for applying chemicals around water features. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources also requires an additional permit for any herbicide application over water or over land saturated with water.

- 📖 DATCP maintains a list of certified applicators: <http://www.kellysolutions.com/WI/Applicators/index.asp>

Besides the legal licensing of a contractor, make sure that the contractor has knowledge of and familiarity with the vegetation type that they will be handling. It is important that they can recognize undesirable as well as desirable vegetation to minimize the impact on non-target species. Other helpful questions to ask when choosing the right contractor may include:

- ? What type of chemical will they be using? What are the possible harmful effects on the surrounding vegetation, soil chemistry, the water environment, and on humans and wildlife?
- ? Are there mechanical methods that could be used to effectively control unwanted vegetation, such as hand-pulling or mowing?
- ? How long will the project take? What percentage of the undesirable vegetation will

be controlled? When can results be expected?

- ? What is their policy on collateral damage to non-target species or ineffectively controlling the target species?
- ? How should the treated area be maintained and monitored?

It is highly recommended that landowners require a follow-up or performance guarantee by the contractor. Such measures protect the interest of both parties and ensures that work not only gets completed in a timely manner, but that invasive species, which may require multiple years of treatment, were not skipped the following season. Landowners should also maintain a timeline that includes a follow-up treatment or monitoring schedule effective after the first year of treatment.

Cost-share opportunities supporting the removal of undesirable vegetation are offered through the Natural Resources Conservation Service and through the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

- 📖 Natural Resources Conservation Service programs: <http://www.wi.nrcs.usda.gov>
- 📖 Check the DATCP website to ensure contractors are licensed

Tree Establishment

The benefits of establishing trees vary from sheltering cropland or selling forest products to creating wildlife habitat, increasing recreational opportunities, and enhancing the landscape. Whatever the motivations are for establishing trees on the land, it is important to hire a contractor that possesses the knowledge and experience to accomplish this. It is recommended that the contractor has extensive experience, or a background in forestry, horticulture, or a related field. Also ask the right questions about the tree establishment process and understand the commitment that each player has in the process. For example:

- ? Is the land capable of supporting trees? Is the soil conducive to tree establishment? What environmental limitations are present that can potentially cause establishment failure?
- ? If the land is capable of supporting trees, what site preparation is needed? Who will prepare the site for planting? What type of equipment is needed?

- ? What tree species are appropriate for the land and where is the stock coming from? Like prairie establishment, it is important that all tree stock comes cleaned, of good quality and from a local nursery.
- ? How and when will they be planting the seedlings? What equipment is needed?
- ? After the seedlings have been planted, what actions will the contractor take to prevent wildlife damage? What are the best methods for controlling competing vegetation?
- ? What kind of care and maintenance do seedlings require and for how long?
- ? What should be done once the trees are established? When is it appropriate to implement forest management? What suggestions does the contractor have for who to contact about a management plan?
- ? What if the tree establishment fails? What is the contractor's policy on establishment failure? Is there any follow-up visit?

Many cost-share programs exist to help fund conservation and restoration practices, such as tree establishment. Contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) to inquire about programs such as the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (NRCS), the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (NRCS) and the Wisconsin Forest Landowner Grant Program (WDNR), all of which may help offset the costs of tree establishment.

- 📄 Natural Resources Conservation Service programs: <http://www.wi.nrcs.usda.gov> .
- 📄 The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Wisconsin Forest Landowner Grant Program funding information: <http://dnr.wi.gov/Aid/ForestLandowner.html>
- 📄 For more information on tree planting and establishment (WDNR): <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/TreePlanting/tips.html>

Prescribed Fire

When looking to conduct a prescribed burn, there are a few things to know to help match the right contractor for the job. First, no legal requirements or certifications are needed beyond a burning permit to conduct or participate in a prescribed burn. To find out information about prescribed burning permits in Wisconsin, consult the Department of Natural Resources. Look for a contractor that has experience, training and insurance. Find a

contractor who can provide a burn boss (the individual in charge of the burn operations and crew) who has National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) trainings, such as Firefighter Training (S130), Introduction to Wildland Fire Behavior (S190), Ignition Operations (S234) and Intermediate Wildland Fire Behavior (S290). These trainings focus on ignition techniques and fire behavior to ensure the safety of the crew while meeting the management objectives. Make sure the crew members also have training and experience.

The Wisconsin Prescribed Fire Council is a non-profit organization comprised of state and federal agency staff, private contractors, conservation organization staff, and private landowners, who advocate safe use of prescribed fire and support education and training opportunities. Visit the council's website to view a list of contractors who are members of the council and available are for hire. The website also provides information on current fire training for contractors and private landowners.

Landowners may be able to participate in the burn, but this will depend on the type of liability insurance the contractor carries. They may be happy to provide instruction on how to help, or they may not allow anyone except those who are employed by the contractor to be involved.

It is important to make sure that the prescribed burn meets the management objectives. When looking to hire a contractor, begin this process months in advance, as their schedules fill quickly.

Remember to ask the contractor the following questions:

- ? Can they burn in accordance with timelines for any cost-sharing programs that have contract requirements related to prescribed burning (i.e. CRP, WHIP, EQIP)?
- ? Is the burn contract flexible enough so that the contractor can wait until weather conditions create the fire behavior most suitable to achieve the management objectives for the burn area? For example, consider a yearlong contract so the burn can take place in the spring (April-May) or fall (October-November), whenever conditions are best.

- ? Is the landowner responsible for installing the breaks around the burn unit, or is that a service the company offers? What is the cost of break installation?
- ? How much mop-up, or suppression of burning woody debris, is done before the crew leaves the burn site for the day?
- ? Does the landowner need to be present when the contractor conducts the burn? If there is an interest in watching the burn, make sure to discuss this with the contractor, as this activity is weather dependent and plans may change on a daily basis. The more requirements that the contractor outlines related to day and time of burning, the more difficult it may be for the contractor to complete the burn under the ecological conditions suitable to achieve the objectives.

- 📄 National Wildfire Coordinating Group: <http://www.nwccg.gov/>
- 📄 Wisconsin Prescribed Fire Council: <http://www.prescribedfire.org/contractors.html>
- 📄 Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Fire Program: <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/ForestFire/>

Landscape Tree Management

An arborist can assist in maintaining and caring for ornamental trees and landscapes and monitoring the health of individual trees. Services can include pruning, trimming or chemical treatment of individual trees with insect or disease problems. A contractor with experience and a background in arboriculture, forestry, horticulture, landscape architecture or related fields is ideal. However, hiring a Certified Arborist not only guarantees that the contractor is very knowledgeable in this area, but also identifies the contractor as someone who continues to attend educational and professional development courses and has at least three-years of experience working in the tree care industry. Arborist Certification is available through the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) and is recognized as a reputable organization that is dedicated to furthering the professional practice of arboriculture.

Remember that improper tree care can take many years to correct itself and can cost time and resources; therefore, it is highly recommended that landowners hire a Certified Arborist with demonstrated expertise in the project area.

Some general questions to consider when hiring an arborist include the following:

- ? What method will they be using to correct the problem? If pruning is too severe, it may never be corrected. Beware of anyone that recommends topping a tree. A reliable arborist will resist topping a tree even if it is requested by the client.
- ? What equipment will they be using? Never allow a tree climber to use spikes or spurs to climb a tree unless the tree is scheduled for removal. Irreparable damage may be done to the tree if wounded by abrasive equipment.

- 📄 To verify or find a Certified Arborist in the area, check the ISA website: <http://www.isa-arbor.com>

Habitat Management

Shoreland Management

If the property is on a lake or river (riparian), management issues regarding the shoreland may necessitate a contractor. Riparian management activities can include shoreline restoration, control of aquatic invasive species, monitoring water levels and analyzing water quality. If a Lake Association or a Lake District has been established for the lake, a lake management plan outlining the community's long-term goals for the lake may exist. It is a good idea for shoreland property owners to communicate any management activities they are undertaking to an existing lake group. In this way, the shoreland property owner might also be able to take advantage of cost sharing opportunities that the lake group is already pursuing.

When looking for a contractor, find someone who specializes in the planned activities. It may be necessary to divide any shoreland management plan into several projects and hire several contractors to ensure that each project is completed successfully. Contractors who are certified, have experience working with lake or river planning grants, and who demonstrate expertise in their project area are likely good candidates for the job. The following resources will help to begin any search for a contractor who is best suited to complete the shoreland management activities:

- 📄 The Wisconsin Association of Lakes can provide information on lake management and provide additional lake resources: www.wisconsinlakes.org

- ☞ The Wisconsin Lake List provides a partial list of contractors and their area of expertise: <http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr/uwexlakes/lakelist/default.asp>.
- ☞ The North American Lake Management Society offers certification and requires continuing education for their lake consultants, ensuring all consultants have exceptional training and experience. Find a current list of all Certified Lake Professionals and Lake Managers in the local area: www.nalms.org.

Prairie Establishment

Prairie establishment is a common land practice in southern and central Wisconsin that serves many purposes, including aesthetics, wildlife habitat, restoration of exhausted fields, and the reconstruction of pre-settlement vegetation. Establishing prairie requires knowledge and commitment of both the landowner and the hired contractor. Selecting the proper site for a prairie reconstruction is critical for its establishment. A contractor who is able to recognize an appropriate planting site and who is familiar with necessary site preparation is vital. It is also important to inquire about the composition and origin of the seed mix that will be used. Make sure that all seed is cleaned and from a local native plant nursery. Do not use seed or plants taken from the wild, as this depletes the resource. Furthermore, many of these wild species do not thrive after transplanting. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has created a directory of native plant nurseries and consultants.

Some other questions to ask a prospective contractor include the following:

- ? What type of site preparation is needed? Will they be responsible for preparing and maintaining the site?
- ? How and when will they plant the seeds? When is the best time of the year to plant? Will they use a mechanical seeder or broadcast seed by hand? If broadcasting seed by hand is a viable option, it can result in a more natural planting pattern.
- ? What type of maintenance and care is needed while the prairie is getting established? What are the best methods for controlling weeds and competing vegetation?
- ? How long will it take for the prairie to become established? What activities are

needed to manage the prairie once it is established (mowing, burning etc.)?

- ? What if the prairie establishment fails? What is their policy on establishment failure? Is there a follow-up visit?

Prairie establishment can be part of the larger vision for the land, which may qualify for some cost-share opportunities. Contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) to inquire about programs like the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (NRCS), the Conservation Reserve Program (NRCS) and the Landowner Incentive Program (WDNR), all of which that may help offset the costs of a prairie restoration.

- ☞ Natural Resources Conservation Service programs: <http://www.wi.nrcs.usda.gov>.
- ☞ The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Landowner Incentive Program funding information: <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/endangeredresources/ip.html>. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources directory of native plant nurseries and consultants can be viewed at: <http://dnr.wi.gov/files/PDF/pubs/ER/ER0699.pdf> and [ER0698.pdf](http://dnr.wi.gov/files/PDF/pubs/ER/ER0698.pdf)

Wildlife Plots

Many people are interested in increasing wildlife on their property for hunting purposes or for the pure enjoyment of watching wildlife roam through their woods. A common method to increase wildlife populations is to install food plots. Food plots are areas planted with a variety of crops, including corn, soybeans, clover and alfalfa. When looking for a contractor to install food plots, it is important to make sure that the contractor has experience with or a background in wildlife ecology, agriculture or a related field. It is essential that the contractor provide an understanding of crop rotation and how to balance the changing seasons while also providing the best nutrition for wildlife at different times of the year. There are several non-profit organizations that can assist with establishment of wildlife plots.

- ☞ National Wild Turkey Federation: http://www.nwtf.org/conservation/land_management.html
- ☞ Ruffed Grouse Society: http://www.ruffedgrousesociety.org/intereste-d-in-habitat-management-#.U8AzU_IdV8E

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- 📄 Wisconsin Trout Unlimited:
<http://www.wisconsintu.org/>
 - 📄 Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Management:
<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/wildlifehabitat/>

Estate Planning

There are numerous options for the long-term planning of one's land, specifically regarding the future of the property outside of the actual management activities. A plan for who will care for the land in the future is as important as the management plan for the natural resources. A primary concern of many owners is the cost of owning the property. Leaving this investment in the hands of relatives, without an estate plan, may have implications for whether family members can afford to keep the legacy in the family. The services of an attorney, estate planner, accountant, land trust, or an executor may be necessary.

Estate planning helps the landowner's family members maintain a property from both the management and financial perspectives. Bring an estate-planning attorney, natural resources consultant, and possibly an accountant into this planning process. When looking for an estate-planning attorney, consider one with some knowledge of forestry. To find an estate-planner, consult The American College of Trust and Estate Counsel, which also provides online resources for estate planning. The publication Family Estate Planning is available from the UW-Extension Learning Store.

Conservation easements are another option that maintain the natural resources but transfer some rights (eg. to develop the land) to a land trust or public agency. Ownership and the right to use the land stay with the woodland owner. There are a number of land trusts in Wisconsin, though most operate within a particular region of the state. Gathering Waters, a Wisconsin non-profit, is a source of information on conservation easements and land trusts.

There are a variety of methods through which multiple owners can hold property or pass property on to heirs. Joint ownership or a gradual transfer of property to relatives will assist in a smooth transition. In Wisconsin, three main options include gifting, corporations and partnerships. Find an attorney, particularly one who has experience with recreational land, to determine the best option.

Legal Explorer is a resource website run by the State Bar of Wisconsin and can help landowners find an attorney.

- 📄 The American College of Trust and Estate Counsel: <http://www.actec.org/>
- 📄 Gathering Waters:
<http://gatheringwaters.ehclients.com/about-land-trusts/>
- 📄 State Bar of Wisconsin (Legal Explorer):
<http://www.wisbar.org/> or
<http://www.legalexplorer.com/>

Final thoughts

Quality land management comes with a price. Remember PRICE when selecting an experienced and qualified contractor to help carry out a vision for the land.

While hiring a contractor can be the first step towards success, from time to time a landowner may want to tackle a project themselves or explore the wealth of knowledge and publications on specific management areas. Below are a few additional resources to guide management decisions.

For more resources on management planning check out these and more publications at <http://woodlandinfo.org/>:

[10 Ways to Protect Your Woodland Property](#)
[Caring for Your Woods: A 10-step Plan for Landowners](#)
[Country Acres: A Guide to Buying and Managing Rural Property](#)