

TIMBER DONE RIGHT: AN EXAMPLE OF THE PROPER WAY FOR LANDOWNERS TO MARKET, SELL, AND HARVEST TIMBER

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Located in Portage County, Ohio, near the small town of Hiram, one would find many private landowners owning varying amounts of forested acreage. Such landowners are not rare in Ohio as the majority of Ohio's forestland is held privately with 93% (7.2 million acres) of Ohio's woodland privately owned by industry and or non-industrial private landowners. However, not all private landowners actively manage their forests or develop natural resource goals. Those who do take an active approach towards management will oftentimes utilize assistance offered by The Ohio Division of Forestry and its Ohio Forest Tax Law program.



Figure 1 - Canopy opening created from the improvement harvest.



Figure 2 - Tafel Tree Farm sign displayed on their barn.

One such landowner happens to be the Tafel family located along the historic Abbot Road with ownership ties dating back to land grants offered after the War of 1812. Currently, Evelyne Tafel, with assistance from her daughter Jane and son-in-law Mike, manages two separate woodlots along Abbot Road totaling 10 acres and 28 acres respectively. Management began of these tracts of land shortly after Evelyne and her late husband, Robert Tafel, were married in 1949. Early on Robert developed a passion for forest management citing a desire to manage for wildlife habitat, forest health, and forest conservation. Robert's fervent interest in his natural resources was instilled in Jane growing up and his legacy of forest management continues today. This sincere interest in forestry has resulted in decades of continued enrollment in the Ohio Forest Tax Law program and the American Tree Farm program. The Tafel's Tree Farm sign is proudly displayed on the front of their barn.

The forests are comprised of well-formed red oak, white oak, sugar maple, red maple, hickory, cherry, and tuliptree with an ideal stand structure of three distinct age classes. Tree sizes range from sapling to sawlogs ensuring a sustainable supply of high-quality timber resources void of problematic grapevines or invasive species. This condition does not happen by accident as it requires careful and thorough management. To maintain such forests a commercial harvest was deemed necessary by Service Forestry staff and conducted in 2013 and the Tafel family made all of the right moves by hiring a consulting forester, collecting multiple bids from qualified lumber companies, and mandating best

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Figure 3 - Grapevine flagged for control protocols.



Figure 4 - A well marked property line.

Forestry. A consultant will select which trees to harvest based on landowner goals and forest conditions, develop a timber sale agreement designed to protect the landowner and their property, advertise the timber sale and collect bids from interested buyers, administer the sale to verify compliance with terms of the contract, verify that proper close-out procedures were completed before the logging crew leaves the site, and will oftentimes develop a timber basis for landowner tax purposes. The Tafels checked references before determining which forester they would ultimately hire. Their forester charged a rate of 10% of the accepted bid for these services.

Once hired, the consultant forester met with the Tafels to discuss their management objectives to determine what type of harvest would be best. Their forester also became familiar with their management plan they must follow as per the rules of the Ohio Forest Tax Law program. An improvement harvest was determined to be most appropriate based on management goals and forest conditions. This type of harvest focuses on removing trees that have something wrong with them such as low forks, damaged tops or stems, crooks, diseases, over-maturity



Figure 7 - Paint mark on a harvested tree's stump.

management practices. The Tafels also credit an article titled "Know the Basis of Your Timber" by Linda Wang published in the Fall 2002 issue of Tree Farm Magazine for helping guide them through the process of selling timber.

Private consulting foresters work throughout Ohio offering a multitude of services such as timber stand improvement projects, boundary marking, invasive species control, timber inventory and evaluations, management plans, and timber sale administration. To find a consultant, a list of certified consulting foresters is maintained and made available from the Ohio Division of



Figure 5 - Over-mature white oak left for wildlife and seed source value.



Figure 6 - Forest of tulip trees after thinning.

and starting to decline in health, or are a species of low wildlife or financial value. The result is a residual forest stocked with healthier, better-formed trees of a desirable species mix.

For the Tafel woodlots, the mark resulted in 282 trees being individually selected totaling 122,339 board feet (International 1/4" rule) with an additional 187 cull trees to be felled to thin an immature tuliptree stand. Of the 282 trees, 53 were American beech and 11 were bigtooth aspen which are historically low-value trees. These two

species accounted for 23% of the trees to be harvested which exemplifies proper silviculture as steps were being taken to reduce the overabundance of financially low-value species. This type of marking emphasis will promote a more desirable species mix once the harvest is complete. Trees were identified with orange paint sprayed around the circumference of the trunk as well as a single dot on the stump. The dot on the stump assures that trees being harvested had been marked.



Figure 8 - Water bars placed along steep skid trails.

fee to the accepted bid amount.

The harvest began in July of 2013 and took two weeks to complete. Trees were cut using directional felling to protect the residual stand and were removed using a tracked forwarder. Three landings were created to store logs and load log trucks. The consultant forester verified that harvesting was taking place under the right environmental conditions and the right procedures were being followed while harvesting was ongoing. Best management practices were followed as specified by the seller's contract, developed with assistance from their forester, with the buyer. Some examples of the practices followed included harvesting only when soil conditions were dry, using temporary bridges for stream crossings, building water bars along skid trails on steep terrain, and seeding skid trails with clover and fescue after harvesting was complete. The Tafel family was very pleased with the quality of harvesting and husbandlike manner of the crew during the entire harvesting process.

Upon finishing marking the timber and compiling the data, the forester sent a notice of timber sale to prospective buyers throughout the area. Interested buyers were encouraged to review the marked timber and submit a sealed bid to be opened on a predetermined date. The bidding process insures that the sellers are getting as much money as possible for only the marked trees selected by their forester. The Tafels received five bids for their harvest with offers ranging from \$27,115 to \$40,288; an increase of 48.5% from the lowest bid. The Tafels elected to select the second highest bid as it was only a few hundred dollars less than the highest bid and the logging contractor had an excellent reputation. The forester's fee totaled roughly \$4,000 after applying the 10%



Figure 9 - Clover planted along skid trail.



Figure 10 - Red oak seedling germinating in an opening created from the harvest.

Once the harvest was completed the consultant forester certified that the correct close-out procedures were followed by the logging crew. Skid trails and landings were clear of debris, seeded, and had water bars in place. The residual stocking level was 90 BA/acre which is ideal for this timber type to encourage good tree form and health and allow another harvest in 15 to 20 years. Evelyne Tafel, along with her family, can confidently state that they sold timber the right way, are sustainably managing their timber resource, and have continued a history of forest management excellence that was initiated, fostered, and passed-down by Robert Tafel.