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FOREST STEWARDSHIP SERIES 24 Professional Assistance

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HIRING PROFESSIONALS

We all have to hire professional assistance at one time or another for particular tasks. How do you go about finding the best professionals? The following simple steps will help you select the best professional for your particular project:

- identify potential professionals
- check qualifications and credentials
 - check references
 - check insurance—general liability and workers compensation (if necessary)

Begin your search for a professional by creating a list of professionals you think can help. The type of professional depends upon your situation. A forester (registered professional forester, RPF), logger (licensed timber operator, LTO), surveyor, wildlife biologist, botanist, hydrologist, archaeologist, or engineer are some of the many natural resource management professionals you may need.

Professional organizations such as the California Licensed Foresters Association, Society of American Foresters, and the Wildlife Society can supply a list of members that offer consulting services. Word of mouth, the telephone book, or an Internet search might also provide you with a list of available professionals. Personal recommendations are often the best method of finding a professional that will meet your needs.

Objective

Understand which resource management professionals may be able to assist you with forest stewardship and where to find them.

Competencies

- Understand that if you plan to harvest timber, you will need to hire a registered professional forester (RPF) to prepare the permit for you and that the person who harvests the trees must be a licensed timber operator (LTO).
- Learn how to select and interview the best professional for your situation.
- Become familiar with the by professional organizations that can help you find qualified professionals.

Related Forest Stewardship Series Publications

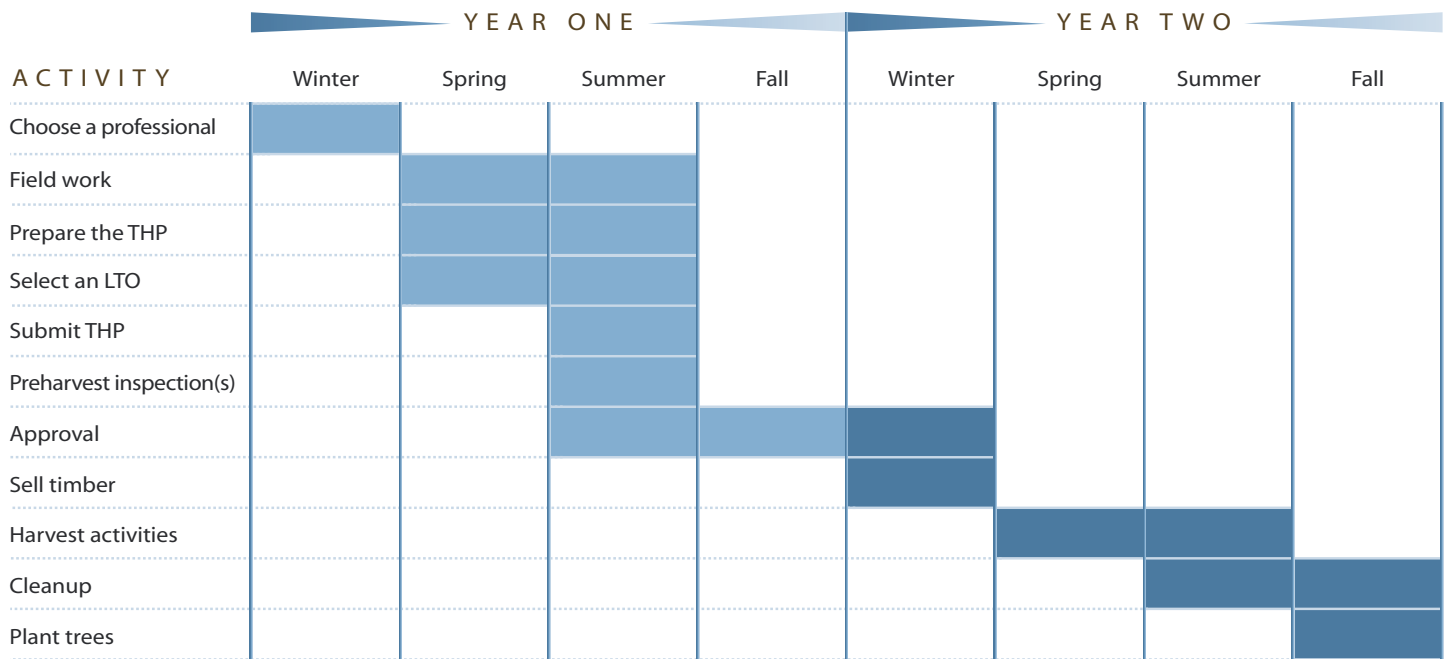
- *Laws and Regulations Affecting Forests, Part I: Timber Harvesting*, ANR Publication 8249
- *Laws and Regulations Affecting Forests, Part II: Activities Other Than Timber Harvesting*, ANR Publication 8250
- *Stewardship Objectives and Planning*, ANR Publication 8248
- *Technical and Financial Assistance*, ANR Publication 8253

REGISTERED PROFESSIONAL FORESTERS

If you are considering a project on your property and you are not sure whether you need an RPF, contact CAL FIRE. To harvest timber on your property, an RPF must prepare a timber harvest plan and an LTO must do the on-the-ground operations, including logging road construction. You may also want to consult with an RPF to help with decisions regarding tree planting, rehabilitation work after a fire, or other activities. Choose an RPF as you would any professional—with great care. You want one who will look out for your financial and environmental interests and who can explain the complex rules and regulations to you. **Figure 1** provides a sample timeline for harvest planning and operations.



Figure 1. Sample timeline for timber harvest planning and operations.



Call several foresters before you decide on one. Request references for recent jobs and follow up on them. Find out if the RPF's clients were satisfied with the work and if they would hire that person again. You might also want to check with the State Board of Forestry to see if the RPF has had any disciplinary actions.

Remember that since you may be interacting with your forester extensively, his or her personality can be just as important to you as technical expertise. Choose someone whose style and approach to forest management is compatible with yours. Finally, you might ask the forester to visit you on your property for an initial consultation. Such visits can be free.

The following are several ways you can find an RPF:

- World of mouth—ask your neighbors, friends, family, or members of landowner organizations such as the Forest Landowners of California for a referral.
- Call your local CAL FIRE office. Ask for resource management, and ask them to send you a listing of local consulting foresters.
- Contact the office of a forestry professional society such as the Northern California Society of American Foresters (1-800-738-8733, e-mail ncsaf@mcn.org) or the California Licensed Foresters Association (e-mail clfa@volcano.net).
- Look under “Foresters—Consulting” in the yellow pages of your local phone book.
- The official list of all the California registered professional foresters can be found on State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection’s Web site, http://www.bof.fire.ca.gov/licensing/licensing_current_docs.aspx.

Remember to avoid having an LTO provide forestry services. Some loggers work with or have an RPF on staff and will prepare a timber harvest plan (THP) as part of a logging contract. However, an RPF is legally and ethically bound to serve the financial interests of the person who is paying for his or her services, so you want to be the one writing the check.

LICENSED TIMBER OPERATORS

Licensed timber operators (LTOs) do the actual logging on a harvest plan. Hiring the right LTO is important in making sure that the harvesting plan is implemented as written. Oversight of the logging by the RPF who prepared the harvest plan is often advisable.

LTOs are licensed by the state and are required to take a course in timber harvest laws, document at least 3,000 hours of timber harvesting experience, and present a certificate of timber harvesting insurance that includes one million dollars in commercial general liability and logger's third-party damage liability.

If you do not have a particular logger with whom you want to work, your RPF can prepare a proposal that specifies the quantity and quality of the timber that is to be sold, roadwork that needs to be done, any limitations, and other pertinent information, and sends this "bid package" out to LTOs for competitive bids on the logging.

Choose an LTO not just on their ability to harvest your trees, but also on their ability to process the logging slash and maintain your roads. Your forest can be left in quite a wide range of conditions following a timber harvest. Cleanup and removal of nonmerchantable material and logging slash, including tree tops, limbs, and branches, is a major consideration. To dispose of this material, your LTO can clean it up for a fee, or you might be able to get it chipped and sold as fuel, or you could pile and burn it yourself after obtaining burn and air quality permits. Additionally, the LTO can often do road maintenance work not associated with the timber harvest, because they have the equipment on site and this would be less expensive than bringing in a separate contractor.

When choosing an LTO, ask for references and locations of recent jobs, and ask to visit a recent job site. You might also ask if the LTO has had any legal situations arise and, if so, to explain them. Ask your RPF about any experience he or she has had with the LTO you are considering hiring. Always check qualifications and references.

CHECKING REFERENCES

It is essential to check references. Prepare questions ahead of time and be ready to take notes. If you are nervous about calling a stranger, you might want to prepare a list of questions to help you get started. A suggested script and list of questions to ask follows. Add specific questions for the type of professional that you are checking on and any other questions specific to your property:

Hello, my name is _____. I am considering hiring _____ (the professional) who provided you as a reference. Do you have a few minutes to answer some questions? (If not, ask for a more convenient time to call).

- Were you satisfied with the services this professional performed? Why or why not?
- Did this professional respond to your questions in a timely and professional manner?
- Would you hire this professional again? Why or why not?
- What would you have done differently?
- Are there any questions you should have asked but didn't?
- Were there any surprises I should avoid?
- If I have any more questions, would it be okay to call again?
- If so, when is the best time to reach you?

INTERVIEW

Once you find a recommended professional, it is important to determine if they are right for you. Ask the candidate to visit your property. Some of the types of questions you might want to ask candidate RPFs and LTOs include the following:

- How long have you worked in this forest type?
- Have the results of your work met your expectations and the expectations of your clients?
- Have you ever made what you think might be a mistake?
- Given our family's goals and objectives, how would you recommend that we proceed? What are our management options?
- Can you show me a place where you have been working to demonstrate the results of your work?

OTHER PROFESSIONALS

In California, many professions have specific licensing requirements. Professions such as forestry, surveying, and pest control require licenses in order to practice in that field. Check with the appropriate agency to see if the professional's license is in good standing. Licensing agencies usually provide information on disciplinary actions taken against individuals. [Table 1](#) provides a summary of some of the professionals you may need, licensing requirements, and the responsible licensing agency.

Boards, agencies, and professional organizations can offer certificates to document completion of training or specialization. For example, CAL FIRE offers a training course in archaeology for RPFs. Foresters who complete this course are then qualified to conduct preliminary archaeological surveys on private property. You may want to confirm that your candidate professional has a certificate of specialization before they conduct the archeological survey required for a timber harvest permit.

Many professions have an organization that represents their members and often offers continuing education or some type of certification (see [table 1](#)). These organizations will usually confirm whether an individual is a member and has met their requirements. The California Registered Environmental Assessor Program serves the public by identifying and registering qualified environmental professionals who perform many different environmental activities. It is important to note that not all activities are covered. For more information visit the California Department of Toxic Substances Control Web site, <http://www.dtsc.ca.gov/REA/index.cfm>.

Table 1. Professionals involved in forest stewardship

Professional	Required license or certificate	Regulatory board	Professional organizations
forester	Registered Professional Forester	California Board of Forestry	California Licensed Foresters Association, Association of Consulting Foresters
	certification available by Society of American Foresters	Certified Forester certification board	Society of American Foresters
wildlife biologist	none required; certification available from Wildlife Society	—	Wildlife Society
fisheries biologist	certification required for fish sampling or relocation	—	American Fisheries Society
archaeologist	none required; certification available from Society of California Archaeology	—	Society of California Archaeology
logger	Licensed Timber Operator	California Board of Forestry	Association of California Loggers
surveyor	Licensed Surveyor	California Board of Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors	California Land Surveyors Association
pest control adviser – weed control	Pest Control Adviser (by category)	California Dept. of Pesticide Regulation	Western Society of Weed Science
pesticide application – supervision	Qualified Applicators Certificate	California Dept. of Pesticide Regulation	—
pesticide application – commercial	Qualified Applicators License	California Dept. of Pesticide Regulation	—
botanist	none required	—	California Native Plant Society Botanical Society of America
hydrologist or civil engineer	Registered Civil Engineer	California Board of Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors	American Institute of Hydrology
	certification available by the American Institute of Hydrology	—	—
hydrogeologist	Certified Hydrogeologist	California Board of Geologists and Geophysicists	—
geologist	Registered Geologist Certified Engineering Geologist	California Board of Geologists and Geophysicists	American Institute of Professional Geologists Association of Engineering Geologists
	certification available by the American Institute of Practicing Geologists	—	National Association of State Boards of Geology
soil engineer	Licensed Civil Engineer	California Board of Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors	

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