



Top 10 Items to Know for Virginia Forest Landowners

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As a new landowner or landowner looking for new alternatives, you should consider taking time to gather the necessary tools and information prior to taking action on your forestland. Owning land is fulfilling in and of itself, but can become overwhelming when you think about all your management options. To help you, first, think about what should be done. This can be a matter of opinion if you ask any natural resource professional “what should I do?” Doing some homework first, then presenting ideas to your Extension Forester or State Forester in your county will save you both time and money – both of which most people find they can use more of. Here are some top 10 items forest landowners should consider BEFORE seeking help:

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4. Also, keep and **maintain good records**, including your **tax basis** at the beginning of ownership so it will be less expensive when and if you harvest timber (your basis is what you paid for the land, timber and buildings and expenses such as survey and attorney fees). See www.timbertax.org and search for the annual “Timber Tax Update” publication – a very helpful and practical tool to look over and hand to your tax advisor.



Oaks or pine? You decide - white oak (L) and shortleaf pine (R)
photo by Jason Fisher

5. **Know your trees!** It all begins with **tree identification**, whether looking for markets for your timber or insect and disease identification, you should know at least our top 10 tree species in Virginia – White oaks, red oaks, hickory, tulip poplar, maple, Virginia pine, loblolly pine, gum, beech, and birch.

- Names of Common Trees, Virginia Department of Forestry Tree and also Shrubs ID Book at <http://www.dof.virginia.gov/shop/index.htm> or VT Dendro Website/Smart Phone App (<http://dendro.cnre.vt.edu/dendrology/main.htm>)

6. Common **Invasive Species** (plants, diseases, wildlife and insects) – Probably one of our largest areas of concern since invasives displace our native plants and animals and can quickly take over if not managed early on in the identification process.

- http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural_heritage/vaisc/
- <http://www.invasive.org/eastern/srs/>
- Bugwood Network (www.bugwood.org)
- Smart Phone Apps (<http://apps.bugwood.org/>)

7. What **wildlife** lives on my forestland and what concerns should I have? Often times wildlife are much more enjoyable than they are an issue. It really depends on your goals for the land, but keep in mind you are now living in what was their home - so get along!

- Visit <http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/> for species listings
- Nuisance animals? See a listing and the new hotline at: <http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/problems/>



Northern flying squirrel – photo by Jason Fisher



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8. Consider increasing your involvement and educational opportunities and join your state landowner association – the Virginia Forestry Association - <http://www.vaforestry.org/> . Also see your two national associations – National Woodland Owner’s Association and the Forest Landowner Association. All these organizations work to promote forestry as a sustainable resource, and lobby for sensible forest policy and landowner rights with land ownership.
9. Consider obtaining a **written forest management plan** for your property. These plans are provided by your State Forester in your county at a fee, or private consulting foresters. Other plans can be made on your property specifically for wildlife management (<http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/about/offices/>), or conservation planning. Also, it will be helpful to research what type of land use taxation your county supports (see Commissioner of Revenue Office) and, whether a forest management plan is required.
10. Now that you have done some work on your own, it’s time to contact a professional forester. Where is your **local Extension Office** and **who is your or your State Forester serving your county** and/or your Extension Forester serving your region? Visit www.dof.virginia.gov for your county forester and www.ext.vt.edu searching “local offices” for your county Extension Agent or District Extension Forester (see “local assistance” tab at bottom <http://www.ext.vt.edu/topics/environment-resources/index.html>)



“Now get out and enjoy the land! Peace of mind is priceless”author unknown



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