

Stewardship Notes

Indiana Division of Forestry



ECONOMICS OF LONG TERM FOREST MANAGEMENT

Historically, forests in Indiana have been mismanaged, abused, or neglected because of a perception that there was no real value to the woods when compared to adjacent tillable ground. This perception is not accurate, and our Hoosier forests are actually quite valuable. In fact, forests under long-term management can be just as productive as traditional agricultural ground, even when compared on a per acre, per year basis. Managed forests typically have a species mix that favors higher valued species such as oak, walnut, maple, ash, cherry, and poplar. Under proper management, the quality of the timber improves, and the timber actually grows faster. Well-planned management activities include selective, improvement harvests and timber stand improvement (TSI).

To illustrate the value of long-term management in woodlands, consider this 70 acre forest in east-central Indiana. Management began in 1967 with a veneer sale. This harvest was followed by a lumber grade sale. Another veneer sale occurred in 1971, and was followed by a selective improvement harvest. Timber stand improvement was done after this harvest was completed to remove cull trees, thin overcrowded areas, control vines, and release potential crop trees from undesirable competition. The timber was allowed to grow, and another general improvement harvest was done in 1987. This, too, was followed with timber stand improvement. Another veneer sale was done in 1993 and was also followed by a lumber grade harvest. Most recently, the forest was selectively harvested in 1997. The original species mix in this forest included Black Walnut, Red and White Oaks, Sugar Maple, White Ash, Tuliptree, and Basswood, among others. Because the forest was managed for its long-term health and productivity, these same species are still the dominant species in the forest. The forest remains fully stocked with high quality timber, and the trees are growing at a rapid rate. See Table 1 for a list of incomes and expenses for this woodland.

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For assistance in developing a management plan for your woods, setting up a timber sale, or performing timber stand improvement, contact a consulting forester, your local district forester, or the Division of Forestry at:

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