

# Stewardship Notes

## Indiana Division of Forestry

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# Timber Marking

Unmanaged timber stands, like poorly managed farmland, will not produce the quality or quantity of products of which they are capable. Most woodlands produce only a fraction of their potential, largely because of undesirable harvesting practices. Removing trees is the major tool by which a forest is managed, but it must be controlled to be effective. Controlled cutting is best accomplished by marking the trees to be cut.

There are generally two types of commercial cuttings recommended for a hardwood timber stand. One is intermediate cutting, or thinning, which is applied to immature stands to increase the total yield of the forest. The second is regeneration cutting, which is a cut designed to start a new stand.

Marking for an intermediate cut in an immature stand involves selecting individual trees that are:

- inferior species, value-wise;
- short bodied or otherwise poorly formed;
- **overmature; or**
- injured as a result of insects, disease, etc.

These trees are marked for cutting when their removal will create additional growing space for nearby trees of higher quality. Occasionally, dense stands of high-quality trees occur. A thinning, by marking and removing individual trees, will stimulate the growth rate of adjacent trees. The main goal of marking for intermediate cuts is to improve the growing conditions for the trees that will make up the final crop, and to concentrate total growth of the stand on the highest quality trees.

Marking for a regeneration cut is most often done in stands where the trees are mature, overmature, or where there are inferior species of poor quality. Since most high-value hardwood species require full sunlight to become established, the old stand is marked so small patches will be cleared. This method, also known as "group selection," creates conditions favorable for the natural regeneration of desirable species. Here, as in intermediate cuts, marking is used to control cutting to achieve a desired goal.

Generally speaking, it is desirable to combine the two methods, especially in previously unmanaged stands, because of the wide variety of conditions that require different treatments. Small areas may contain a stand that should be cut by group selection, while adjacent areas of the same forest may contain immature stands of desirable trees where only individual trees are marked. Logging may also be more economically feasible if the two methods are combined in a given forest property.

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Marking also has definite advantages if standing trees are to be sold to a timber buyer. Marking eliminates possible misunderstandings between the landowner and buyer as to which trees are to be cut.

An overall improvement of the forest will result if the trees are marked by a professional forester. The marking should be done by placing two paint marks on each tree: one paint mark on the trunk about 5 feet above the ground, and a second mark at the base of the trunk. The mark can be a spot, band or number. By placing a mark at the base of the tree, the landowner can check to see that only marked trees were cut.

When you are ready to harvest timber from your woodland, contact your district forester to schedule a time to meet and look over the woods. A district forester can provide a sample timber sale contract for your review. Consultant foresters are available to provide timber marking services for a fee. A consultant forester can provide complete marketing assistance including marking, advertising the sale, contacting the buyers, conducting the sale, timber taxation assistance and follow-up on the logging job.