

Chapter 5: Timber Sales

Growing and harvesting timber is an important part of state forest management. By harvesting trees, foresters improve the condition of our state forest lands while generating money to support tree planting, forest improvement, schools, and other public services. We produce raw materials for the state's wood products industry. Timber harvest also creates a variety of habitat types for wildlife.

Timber is harvested from state land by individuals, small businesses, or large corporations that have bought the timber from the state. A top priority for DNR Forestry in arranging timber harvests is to ensure harvests occur in a way that sustains the resource and protects the environment.

Forest Stand: An area throughout which tree species composition, tree age, and other characteristics are similar.

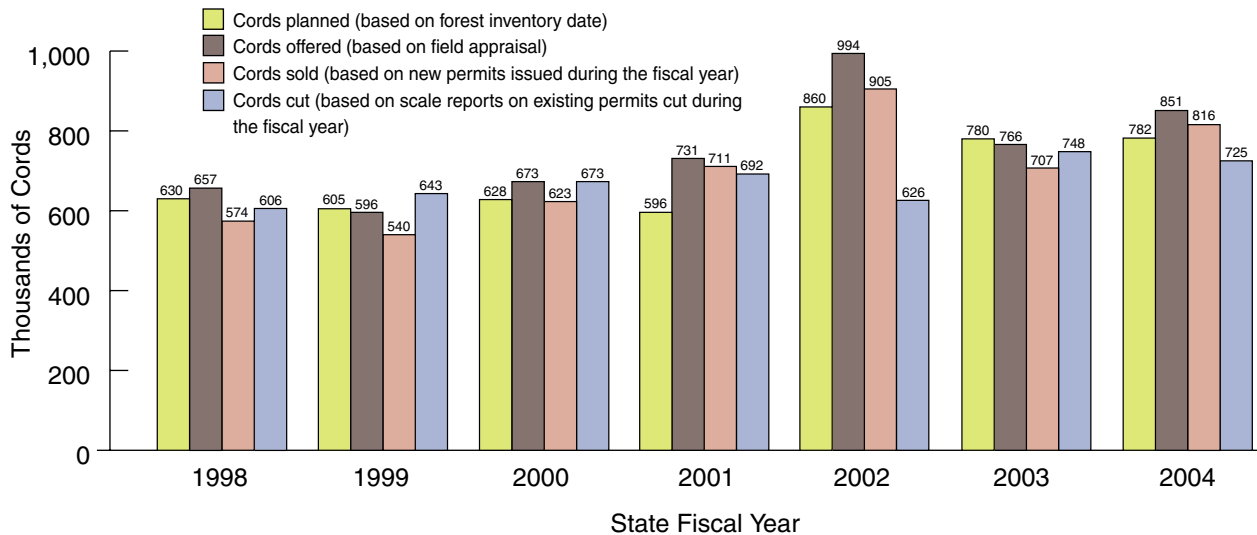
To Harvest or Not to Harvest?

The first step in a timber sale is to choose the stands to be harvested. DNR Forestry determines how much state forest land overall can be sustainably harvested for a given planning period, usually seven to 10 years. We then develop Annual Timber Harvest Plans made up of forest stands to be field visited for potential harvest. The plans specify which stands appear to be ready for harvest and the type of harvest that would likely be applied to each. Members of the public may comment on the plans, and their comments are taken into consideration in finalizing harvest strategies.

Next, foresters walk through stands listed in the Annual Timber Harvest Plan, using scientific techniques to determine the

Promoting White Pine. Harvests can be used to selectively nurture certain tree species. For instance, DNR Forestry is currently working to increase the amount of white pine on state lands by allowing harvest of white pines in pine forests only to the extent that it promotes growth and regeneration, and requiring harvests of other forests containing white pine to leave enough white pine to produce seeds for the next generation.

State Land Timber Sales Program Recent History



Source: DNR Division of Forestry

Why Harvest Wood From State Lands?

Why not just leave trees alone? Harvest produces numerous benefits. It:

- **creates forest disturbance that helps maintain a mix of forest types and ages to support diverse wildlife and recreation**
- **reduces fire risk**
- **provides a source of funds for forest management, education, and other public services**
- **provides economic activity that supports local communities**
- **provides wood and paper to meet our needs.**

amount of various types of wood available for sale. DNR foresters (with advice and assistance from Wildlife and Ecological Services staff) also decide what type of harvest is most appropriate, depending on the type of trees, characteristics of the site, nontimber values to be protected (aesthetics, wildlife habitat, etc.), and desired composition after harvest. Some harvest methods remove most of the trees on a site. Others remove only selected trees, leaving the rest to mature or to provide seeds or shelter for the next generation. Common harvest methods are:

- clear-cut
- seed tree
- shelterwood
- salvage cut
- sanitation
- group selection
- single tree selection
- commercial thinning.

Historically, stands were considered eligible for harvest when they reached harvestable age for the species. In recent years, growing awareness of and interest in preserving the ecological value of mature trees has increased the use of a management approach known as extended rotation forestry. In this practice, harvest of some stands is delayed beyond “normal” harvest age to provide “old forest” characteristics. The older stands provide reservoirs of habitat for plant and animal species that thrive in a mature forest.

Making the Sale

Once the timber contents of a stand have been determined, the timber is offered for sale, primarily by a public auction. Loggers, most of whom are independent business owners, bid on the timber and the sale goes to the highest bidder.

DNR Forestry offers three types of sales. A regular auction sale is used for large sales. Intermediate auction sales are used for small business set-aside sales of up to 3,000 cords. Informal sales take place without an auction and are limited to sales of 500 cords or less. DNR can also issue special product and fuelwood permits. We issue an estimated 1,600 to 2,100 harvest permits per year.

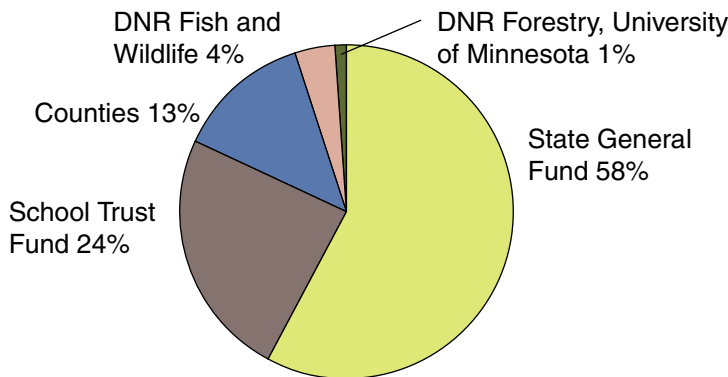
Harvest

DNR foresters supervise the harvest to make sure it’s done according to terms of contract. Loggers harvesting state land must follow the Voluntary Site-Level Timber Harvesting and Forest Management Guidelines established by the Minnesota Forest Resources Council to protect cultural resources, soils, riparian areas, visual quality, water quality, and wetland quality.

Regeneration

An important part of harvest is preparing the land to produce the next generation of trees. We are required by law to reforest an amount of land equal to land harvested each year. Regeneration can be natural, in which seeds, sprouts, or root suckers from the harvested trees provide the new growth, or it can be artificial, with seeds or seedlings planted to create the new forest.

Distribution of Timber Revenues From State Lands



Cord: An amount of wood equal to a stack 8 feet long, 4 feet wide, and 4 feet high.

Future Issues

As the world around us changes over time, so do the opportunities and challenges associated with timber production on state land. Markets are constantly changing, and DNR Forestry needs to work to remain competitive with other public and private timber providers. As more and more people make their homes in or near the forest, we will need to be increasingly sensitive of minimizing the aesthetic impacts of harvest.

A major change for the future will be the types of trees offered for harvest. Currently about half the harvest on state land is aspen. Because of age imbalance caused by logging a century ago, subsequent fires, and a long-standing poor market for aspen until the late 1980s, there will be a significant reduction in harvestable-age aspen in years ahead. The large paper companies and oriented strand board (OSB) plants that use primarily aspen have already begun to shift their needs away from aspen to other hardwoods and softwoods.

Good Wood

Wood products produced from state-owned timber are among the most environmentally sound products you can buy. Why?

- Wood is a renewable resource. The cycle of life means that, when we manage forests properly, we can both use trees and ensure they're available for future generations.
- Laws governing state tree harvest and the need for public accountability help ensure the wood was harvested in the most environmentally sound way possible—a higher standard.
- Wood uses less energy to manufacture than many other products.

Public Involvement

The public plays an important role in decisions regarding timber production from state lands. We offer opportunities to review and provide input on forest management plans, annual timber harvest lists, and individual timber sale offerings. Members of the public also have an opportunity to bid on timber auctions.



Photo: Minnesota DNR

Oriented Strand Board (OSB): A structural panel made by gluing, heating, and compressing together three to five layers of thin flakes or strands of wood that are oriented at right angles to each other.

Forest Certification. In recent years an increasing number of landowners have sought third-party certification of their forest lands. Such certification provides independent verification of a landowner's claim that wood was produced in an environmentally sound, sustainable manner. DNR is currently pursuing forest certification with a goal of having the 4.5 million acres of state-administered forest lands certified by the end of 2005. DNR will seek certification both by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). Certification is expected to improve forest management and enhance markets for timber harvested from state land.