

# SILVICULTURE FIELD TIP

Field tested ideas.

Contact the author for further information.



Field Tip No. 8

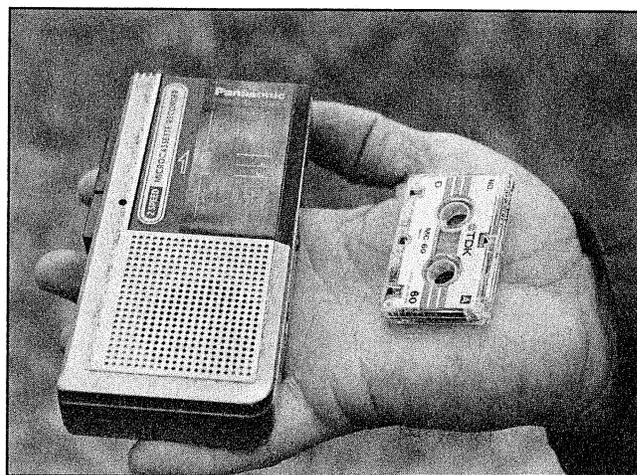
September 1997

## USE OF TAPE RECORDERS FOR DATA GATHERING

BY: Bill Barnacle, Brainerd Region Silviculturist  
Paul Peterson, Utilization & Marketing Specialist

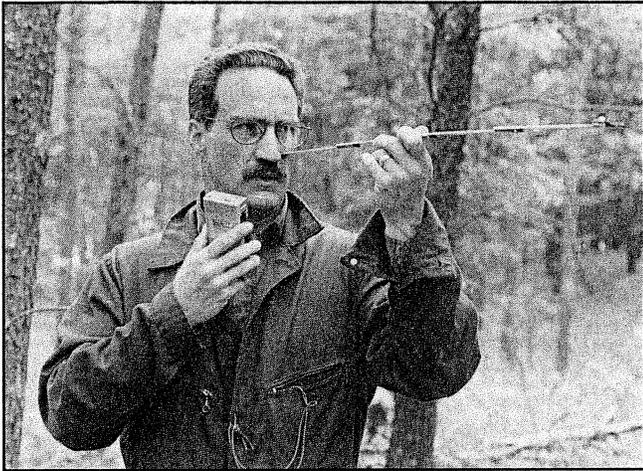
For many years foresters have used a pencil and paper to record information out in the field, such as marked trees on a timber sale or cruise data taken for some type of inventory. This can be inefficient and difficult if the weather is wet or cold or if a person is working by himself. Why not record all of the information on a tape recorder and put the information on paper or in your computer in the comfort of your office? This can be a time saver because it doesn't tie up another person to tally trees on paper and you don't have to juggle as much gear when marking alone or cruising alone.

Micro-cassette recorders are available today which are not much larger than your wallet, can run several days on a pair of AAA batteries and on one small tape can record all of the data you can generate in a day of cruising or marking. These recorders can either be voice activated or button activated. Micro cassettes can be either 60 minutes or 90 minutes on a side. Our experience is that you can record 400 to 600 marked trees (species, dbh, sticks and product) on one side of a 60-minute tape. You can probably record 20-30 plots on one side of a 60-minute tape. If you are working alone and you have a paint gun (or angle gauge) in one hand and a micro cassette tape recorder in the other you are ready for a good, productive day in the woods.



Simple micro-cassette tape recorder. 400-600 marked trees can be recorded on one side of a 60-minute tape.

If you choose to use a button activated recorder you should get a model that has buttons that are convenient to use with the fingers of one hand. We use an old Panasonic that can be started with the index finger and turned off with the middle finger even with gloves on. If you use a voice activated tape recorder with a remote microphone attached to your collar or lapel, you have to be very careful how you set the sensitivity for the recording. If it is set too high it will record every breath and snuffle. If it isn't set sensitive enough some of your data won't be recorded. You'll have to experiment to see what works for you. When you get back to the office, set the



**Bill Barnacle demonstrates use of micro-cassette tape recorder to record plot data while measuring plot.**

recorder on your desk, put it on play and transfer the data on to your tally sheet or computer. We have found that a full day of tree marking can be put on a tally sheet in about 1-2 hours.

The cost for a voice activated recorder with a remote microphone is about \$120. A button activated recorder will be about \$30, batteries and tape not included. Be sure to bring along extra batteries, especially in cold weather.

With more work and fewer foresters to go around, this can be an effective time saver.