



## Cowlitz County Assessor's Office *Guidelines for Timber Management Plans*

Under the provisions of 84.34. RCW, each application for an Open Space Timber Land classification must provide certain information, including a Timber Management Plan. The management plan is the basis for the covenant into which property owners enter with the citizens of the county when they sign a Current Use (Open Space) Timber Land Taxation Agreement. Classification of property as Open Space Timber Land represents a shift of taxes and a greater tax burden for small landowners throughout the county. Each application submitted will be reviewed and used to determine if the property will be managed for commercial production and harvest of timber. Application and management plans are evaluated for compliance with state laws, the County comprehensive plan, and resource management regulations. An application must demonstrate that quality management of commercial grade timber will occur. The County Assessor reviews applications, and reports and recommendations are forwarded to the Board of Commissioners for public hearing.

### **The Timber Management Plan must include the following information:**

- A. APPLICATION:** Name, mailing address, daytime telephone number, tax parcel number, Section, Township, Range for subject property, address for subject property, number of total acres in property and number of acres to be classified as Timber Land, and *signatures of ALL owners of record*.
- B. LANDOWNER'S GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:** Each Timber Management Plan must include a statement that identifies the landowner's goals and objectives for managing timber and nurturing trees on the property *for commercial production and harvest*. The statement may include written affirmation that the owner will produce commercial quality timber and wood fiber, and manage the forest to protect water quality, minimize soil erosion, slow storm water runoff to reduce flooding and storm damage, provide habitat for wildlife and/or other actions that will maintain or enhance the natural ecological equilibrium.
- C. HISTORY, MAPPING, INVENTORY, AND SITE PLAN CONTENT:** In addition, the applicant must provide information about the property, the timber crop and management details. Using an aerial photograph, good quality photocopy of an aerial photograph, or line map: a) Show legal property lines, roads or other physical features, and b) Number and outline the different commercial timber management stands on the site. The text of the management plan should reference and describe acreages, percent of commercial species, age of crop trees, stocking levels of crop trees per acres, identify the soil information and soil productivity in each stand/unit. If the timber has recently been harvested, identify replanting schedule and stocking plans and schedules. Be specific about the date and year for these schedules. The plan must also answer the following series of questions:
  - Will there be livestock or wildlife grazing allowed within the crop stand? When (crop years)?
  - Has the land been subdivided or platted?
  - What plans do you have for dividing the property? Is the property currently part of an application for subdivision, short subdivision, or large lot subdivision?
  - Do you pay forest fire protection assessments to Dept. of Natural Resources for the subject property?
  - Is the timber crop in compliance with restocking levels, forest management, fire protection, insect and disease control, weed control, and forest debris control requirements of Title 76 RCW (Forest practices act and regulations) or applicable administrative rules authorized under Title 76 RCW?
  - Are there any easements, leases, or options affecting the property? If so, what kind of easements? Show these areas and the acreages of the easements on the site plan.
  - What are your experiences and activities in growing and harvesting commercial grade timber?

**D. COMMERCIAL SPECIES AND TIMBER STOCK DENSITY:** For purposes of the Current Use Open Space Timber Land agreement, the following are considered to be commercial species:

**CONIFEROUS TREES**

Douglas Fir, Western Hemlock, Sitka Spruce, Grand Fir, Noble Fir, Western Red Cedar, Lodge Pole Pine

**DECIDUOUS TREES**

Red Alder, Big Leaf Maple, Black Cottonwood, Hybrid Cottonwood, Other (upon DNR approval)

Except for “leave trees” as defined in DNR Forest Practices Regulations, crop trees are those that will be harvested during commercial thinning, periodic harvest, or final harvest. Stocking levels vary widely depending on species, site conditions, and landowner objectives. However, to remain qualified for Current Use Timber Land taxation status, the minimum stocking levels listed below must be maintained for units being managed as even-aged stands as defined by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources.

MINIMUM COMMERCIAL TIMBER STOCK/ACRE	
Commercial Crop Age (Years)	Minimum Commercial Crop Trees per Acre*
Younger than 5	190
5 – 40	175
41 – 80	100
Older than 80	75 – 50

\* For uneven-aged stands, timber stocks must be maintained at or above 190 trees per acre at all times. For both even-aged and uneven-aged stands, trees must be uniformly distributed over the land.

**E. ACTION PLAN:** Each management plan must include and identify the actions and timber management practices that will be used in the production and harvest of the commercial timber stand. These actions/practices should include schedules for regeneration, brush and plant control, insect and animal control, pre-commercial thinning, pruning, commercial thinning, fertilizing, and harvesting for even-aged stands, and anticipated periodic harvest dates and management schedules for uneven-aged stands. Be specific in identifying the steps that will be taken and the timetable for demonstrating active management of the property for commercial timber production and harvest.

- **NOTE: In all cases a comprehensive Timber Management Plan must be prepared by a professional forester or agency or by someone with sufficient knowledge of timber management practices to prepare such a plan.** An approved “forest stewardship plan” as part of the Department of Natural Resources’ Forest Stewardship program, or a “conservation plan” developed by the Soil Conservation Service, will meet the requirements for a Timber Management Plan if it answers the above questions. Otherwise, the applicant will have to submit supplements to commercial forest stewardship or conservation plans that answer all the questions.

**PUBLIC HEARING**

A public hearing is required after notice is published in the county’s official newspaper at least ten days prior to the hearing. **THE APPLICANT MUST EITHER: a) attend this public hearing, OR b) return a signed letter to the board explaining that you cannot attend, and asking the board to act on your application in your absence.** The County Assessor will recommend approval, approval with conditions, or denial based on the application, site conditions and content of the management plan. When the Board approves an application, the property owner is mailed an Open Space Taxation Agreement for signature(s) and return to the Board within 30 days. **The agreement is binding, and property will be removed from the program if the owner fails to manage the property in conformance with the approved management plan, or approved amendment to the plan.**

## APPLICATION CHECKLIST

This checklist is provided to assist the applicant in submitting a complete application. A complete Current Use Open Space Timber Land application will include the following:

- Completed application, including Assessor's map showing tax parcel numbers, signatures of all owners of record, total contiguous acreage owned, and the acreage proposed for reclassification.
- A Timber Management Plan prepared by a professional forester, including:
  - Aerial photograph of the property showing property lines and timber management units.
  - Table showing timber stock inventory of various timber management units/stands.
  - Soil type information and timber productivity rating.
  - Site plan (to scale) showing location of buildings, yards, roads and driveways, fences, ponds, streams, location and dimensions in feet of all easements, leased or optioned areas, and property boundary.
  - Forest fire protection assessment/payment verification.
  - Answers to each question in preceding sections of this guideline.
  - Copy of recorded deed or contract of purchase.
- Application fee, currently \$51.00. Checks should be made payable to **Cowlitz County**.

## SOURCES OF ASSISTANCE:

The following organizations may be able to assist you in preparation of a comprehensive Timber Management Plan:

- The **Department of Natural Resources (DNR)** manages public funds available to provide one-on-one assistance for landowners through its Forest Stewardship Program. The DNR regional office for Cowlitz County is located in Castle Rock and can be reached at (360) 577-2025. You can also visit the state DNR web site at [www.wa.gov/dnr/](http://www.wa.gov/dnr/) (click on "education and Assistance"). You can purchase DNR photos and/or maps by contacting DNR at (360) 902-1234.
- A list of **recognized Consulting Professional Foresters** for Cowlitz County is on the back of this publication. You are free to select your own forester to prepare your management plan, as long as he or she has adequate knowledge of timber management practices. In this case, the forester's qualifications must be included as part of the management plan.
- **Washington State University Cooperative Extension** has a web site that has a wealth of forest management information, including how to select a consulting forester and a list of consulting foresters for the Northwest Region. The Natural Resource Sciences Coop Extension homepage is <http://ext.nrs.wsu.edu/>.
- Other possible sources of information include the **Association of Consulting Foresters, Society of American Foresters, Cowlitz Conservation District, and USDA Natural Resources Soil Conservation Service**. The Washington State Department of Natural Resources in cooperation with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) may have programs offering technical assistance and cost sharing in applying environmental and economic resource management principles and practices for non-industrial, private forest landowners, through the Forest Incentive Program (FIP). You can contact the NRCS Conservation District at (360) 425-1880.

If you have other questions or concerns regarding your Current Use Open Space Timberland application, please contact the **Cowlitz County Assessor's Office** at (360) 577-3010.

**COWLITZ COUNTY**  
**RECOGNIZED CONSULTING PROFESSIONAL FORESTERS**

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This list is not intended to be a recommendation nor is it exclusive; it is simply a list of those foresters who have submitted management plans that either met or exceeded the requirements for approval of classification as Open Space Timber Land. Applicants are free to select their own forester to prepare the management plan, as long as he or she has adequate knowledge of timber management practices. In this case, the forester's qualifications must be included as art of the management plan.

***Niemi Forestry***

*P.O. Box 239  
1600 S. 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Kelso WA 98626  
(360) 578-3817*

***Halme Forestry Inc (dba HFI Consultants)***

*Timothy D. Halme  
10 South Parkway Ave #201  
Battle Ground WA 98604  
(360) 723-5523 or (360) 600-2342  
[www.halmeforestry.com](http://www.halmeforestry.com)*

***Robert Burns, Forester***

*3315 NE 163<sup>rd</sup> Street  
Ridgefield WA 98642  
(360) 576-1914*

***Department of Natural Resources***

*601 Bond Road  
Castle Rock WA 98611  
(360) 577-2025*

***Ecological Land Services, Inc.***

*1157 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, Suite 220  
Longview WA 98632  
(360) 578-1371*

***Chilton, Inc***

*John Thomas – Forester  
PO Box 470  
Ariel, WA 98603  
(360) 225-0427 or (360) 957-0039*

***Steve Pedersen, Forester***

*Forest Resources Inc  
289 Chehalis Valley Dr  
Chehalis, WA 98532  
360-748-0717*

***Natural Resources Conservation Service  
& Cowlitz Conservation District***

*2125 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Longview WA 98632  
(360) 425-1880  
(Two agencies with foresters able to assist  
with timber management plan information)*