



**North Carolina Department of Agriculture
and Consumer Services**
N.C. Forest Service



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Commissioner

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The state budget approved by the state General Assembly directed the N.C. Forest Service to start charging for woodland plans, which are commonly referred to as forest management plans. The budget bill allowed the N.C. Board of Agriculture to review and approve the fees, which it did in August.

With the budget and fee schedule in place, the N.C. Forest Service is once again preparing woodland plans. The agency had put a moratorium in place to allow time for the fee system to be developed and for training of agency staff to occur.

“The North Carolina Forest Service has been helping protect, manage and promote North Carolina’s forests for nearly 100 years,” said Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler. “They have a lot of experience assisting woodland owners with valuable and tax-saving management advice. I believe the Board of Agriculture approved reasonable fees that will allow the N.C. Forest Service to continue delivering the professional services its customers have come to expect.”

Landowners who have requested a woodland plan can expect to be contacted by N.C. Forest Service staff to discuss their objectives and how the agency can be of assistance. This will likely include a discussion about the types of woodland plans, their benefits and the related fee.

Woodland plans will have a base charge of \$45. In addition to that base charge, there will be an additional fee of \$3 per acre for forest management plans and forest stewardship plans, both of which are comprehensive plans. Practice plans, which are simpler plans that usually address just one management practice, will cost \$2 per acre in addition to the base fee.

If a landowner decides to have the N.C. Forest Service prepare a woodland plan, a simple one-page agreement will be signed. Once the woodland plan is prepared, the plan and an invoice will be sent to the landowner for payment. Payment options will initially include check or money orders, with an online payment system becoming another option this Fall.

The N.C. Forest Service offers a wide variety of forestry programs and services that are still free of charge.

There are many financial and environmental benefits that come with having a woodland plan. Certain types of plans can qualify the landowner for participation in the state's Forestry Present Use Valuation Program, resulting in significant property tax reductions. The tax savings realized in the first year alone are usually more than enough to cover the cost of a woodland plan. Woodland plan preparation fees can also be considered a deductible management expense for annual tax purposes.

Woodland plans provide detailed forestry recommendations, but they can also provide landowners with advice on wildlife habitat, soil and water protection, recreation opportunities and aesthetics. They can also help qualify landowners for forestry recognition programs, including forest certification. Landowners interested in leaving a legacy for their family should start by having a woodland plan that outlines how best to achieve their current and future goals.

Landowners interested in state or federal cost-share programs typically need an approved woodland plan. Participation in many of these programs results in a cost savings of 40 percent or more, depending on the program. Cost-share payments help to reduce the initial capital investment needed for many forestry projects, which leads to higher overall financial returns to the woodland owner.

Landowners interested in getting forestry advice and a woodland plan should begin by contacting their local county ranger for more details. Click on the "Contact Us" section of the N.C. Forest Service's website (<http://ncforestsservice.gov>) for county information. Landowners also can call the agency's central office at 919-857-4801 for assistance.

The website also contains detailed information on forestry programs and services available to landowners, including a "Frequently Asked Questions" section addressing woodland plans.