

## **Understanding the Connecticut Forest Practitioner Certification Program**

In 1991, the Connecticut legislature overwhelmingly approved Connecticut's first Forest Practices legislation. The legislation is designed to protect and conserve Connecticut's forest resources by encouraging its wise and careful use. Forest practices such as commercial timber harvesting for logs or firewood are key examples of operations that are covered by the law.

An important component of the Forest Practices Act is the requirement of forest practitioners to be certified by the Department of Environmental Protection prior to conducting any commercial forest practices in Connecticut. Forest Practitioners (people who design, supervise or participate in forest practices such as timber harvesting for logs or firewood) must now be certified to conduct a forest practice in the State of Connecticut.

### **WHO NEEDS TO BE CERTIFIED?**

The law requires that anyone who advertises, solicits, contracts or engages in commercial forest practices within Connecticut at any time must have the appropriate certificate issued in accordance with the law.

Essentially, this means that if an operator advertises, solicits, contracts or engages in an activity which is undertaken in connection with the harvest of timber from forest land in excess of 50 cords, 150 tons or 25,000 board feet in any twelve month period, and the operator receives remuneration (income or goods and services in some form, including timber) for that work, certification is necessary.

### **ARE THERE ANY EXCEPTIONS?**

There are two limited provisions in the law, which allow a person to conduct a harvest operation without certification. If a person only participates in the harvesting operation, such as operating a skidder or chain saw, they may do so without certification as long as a certified forest practitioner is present on the job site to provide direct *on-site* supervision. A certified forest practitioner may provide such direct on-site supervision for up to two non-certified persons working at the same time.

The second provision is for harvests undertaken pursuant to the conversion of forest land to other uses. An individual is not required to possess a forest practitioner certification to participate in such conversions *provided* that the conversion has been *approved* by the planning commission, zoning commission, or combined planning and zoning commission and, if applicable, the inland wetlands agency of the municipality within which such land is located.

### **IS CERTIFICATION REQUIRED FOR ANYONE WHO CUTS A TREE?**

A key point to remember is that forest practitioner certification is required only for activities that occur *on* forest land. Forest land is at least one contiguous acre upon which there is no structure, maintained landscape area, access way or other improvement and which is occupied by a minimum number of trees as described in the law. Land that is occupied by Christmas trees, orchard or nursery stock is not forest land. Therefore, activities such as cutting or pruning trees in one's yard or in a maintained park, powerline pruning or cutting a tree along a driveway would generally not require a certified forest practitioner.

### **ARE THERE DIFFERENT TYPES OF CERTIFIED FOREST PRACTITIONERS?**

There are three levels of certification offered. Each level has a specific description of what activities they are permitted to do under the law. Below is a brief list of activities which they are permitted to conduct. A glossary is provided at the end of this section to further describe the terms in *Italics*.

According to the Forest Practices Act a:

Forester:

- May plan or design forest practices, including *forest management plans* and *silvicultural plans*.
- May represent the landowner as agent in the sale of *commercial forest products*.
- May execute written or oral contracts or agreements for the purchase of *commercial forest products* from woodland owners.
- May supervise a *commercial forest products* harvesting operation.
- May participate in the actual *commercial forest products* harvest operation.

Supervising Forest Products Harvester:

- May execute written or oral contracts or agreements for the purchase of *commercial forest products* from woodland owners.
- May supervise and participate in a *commercial forest products* harvesting operation.
- May mark trees as a means of clearly designating which are to be cut and/or which are to be left uncut.
- May plan and design a *harvest plan*.

Forest Products Harvester:

- May participate in the actual *commercial forest products* harvest operations
- May provide direct on-site supervision to two uncertified people participating in the actual *commercial forest products* harvest operation

**HOW CAN I BE SURE THE PERSON I AM TALKING TO IS CERTIFIED?**

Each certified forest practitioner has been issued a wall certificate as well as a wallet certificate. The wallet certificate contains the certified individual's name, the level of certification, a unique certification identity number, and a black and white photo of the certified person.

**HOW DOES A FOREST PRACTITIONER RECEIVE CERTIFICATION?**

The Division of Forestry administers the certification program. A person desiring certification should contact the Division for information and directions on submitting an application. Most applicants are required to pass an examination in order to receive certification. Only the Forest Products Harvester level has a very limited "grandfather" option available.

**A GLOSSARY OF TERMS:**

Forest Management Plan:

A broad-based "master" plan intended to guide management efforts for a tract of forest land over a 5 or 10 year period. This plan may deal not only with management of forest vegetation, but also with amenities such as trails, access roads, property boundaries, fish habitat, and aesthetic values.

Silvicultural Plan:

A plan specifically designed to guide efforts towards influencing the growth and composition of forest vegetation. This is more limited in scope than a comprehensive forest management plan and deals strictly with the establishment, culture, and regeneration of forest vegetation to achieve specific goals or objectives.

Commercial Forest Products:

Primarily trees as logs or for firewood, but may include various other products uses.

Harvest Plan:

A focused plan which deals strictly with the operational aspects of conducting the harvest of forest products. Such as a plan would deal, for example, with subjects such as: the design and creation of access routes; felling techniques; treatment of slash; erosion and sedimentation control; hours of work; and protection of wetlands or water courses.