

## **WEST VIRGINIA DIVISION OF FORESTRY LANDOWNER ASSISTANCE - SERVICE POLICY**

The following policy has been established to guide employees of the West Virginia Division of Forestry in the activities and services rendered to private forestland owners. Supervisors shall ensure that all employees thoroughly understand and adhere to this policy:

### **I. DOF Responsibility**

- A. Division of Forestry (DOF) employees will render professional technical services to private forestland owners within the scope and guidelines of the forestry programs under the direction of the State Forester.
- B. DOF employees will:
  - 1. Respond to a request (call landowner) within 30 calendar days to determine the extent of the assistance requested, the level of service the DOF will be able to provide based on workload and service policy and to schedule an appointment if applicable.
  - 2. Provide all new landowners with an information pertinent to their needs. This can include brochures and information briefs on the services and programs offered by the WVDOF,
  - 3. Maintain a log (Revised Form FM-1, Record of Requests) of all requests for assistance that tracks the status until completion (sent via email). This log will be reviewed by the Regional Forester on a monthly basis, and periodically throughout the year during project reviews.
- C. The landowner will be fully responsible for locating and marking property boundaries when necessary. The WV DOF will not assume boundaries are correct as marked or conveyed. The landowner or representative will accompany the DOF representative, when practical, on the first visit to the property. Prior to any timber marking, make sure the landowner owns the entire property without other owners.
- D. The following services will NOT be provided by the DOF:
  - 1. Appraisals for tax purposes except for the State Tax Department.
  - 2. Real estate sales or appraisals
  - 3. Appraisals for estate settlement cases.
  - 4. Appraisals for leasing of forestland including utility and/or industrial easements.
  - 5. Appraisals for damage claims that might involve litigation between two or more individuals or companies except for those cases involving work done by the DOF.
  - 6. Timber theft and trespass investigations except as requested by federal, state, county and/or local law enforcement.

7. Resolution of disputed ownership.
  8. Cases involving litigation or cases that are likely to result in court action.
  9. When in doubt, consult with a more senior forester or your supervisor.
- E. DOF employees may provide the landowner with a bid packet and list of potential timber buyers, and have the landowner mail the packets, act as the landowner's agent during negotiations of timber sales, be present during the bid opening meeting or make recommendations on awarding sales to prospective bidders. May also provide a sample contract (containing an optional performance bond clause) and recommend the landowner contacts an attorney.
- F. All landowner requests for timber management assistance will be governed by the Service Forester's project workload.

A management plan or practice plan must be prepared prior to or in conjunction with any timber marking or sale assistance project. A sales prospectus that describes: any necessary pre-and post-harvest activities to assure desired regeneration and limit the spread of NNIS along with any special practices that should be implemented during harvest, such as constructing water holes, special seed mixes to benefit wildlife, slash placement to limit deer browsing, etc. can fill this need.