

Forest Management Notes



Athens-Clarke County Community Tree Program

Selecting a Natural Resources Consultant

Introduction

Georgia landowners own and care for a large majority of our natural resources. These landowners have a wide variety of management goals that can include objectives related to wildlife, timber, agriculture, recreation, and investment returns. Since land acquisition and management typically has a high cost and can potentially have a high return it is important that landowners use natural resource consultants to help them successfully meet their objectives. Consultants should be selected based upon their certifications, experience, and reputation.

Qualifications for Consultants

Forestry – Georgia regulates and licenses forestry consultants using a licensing system. Registered Foresters are required to demonstrate a combination of educational and work experience before they are allowed to take a forestry examination. Once an individual is licensed as a Registered Forester, they must meet biannual continuing education requirements that ensure they continue to be up-to-date on the latest research in the industry. Citizens can file complaints against Registered Foresters with the Georgia Secretary of State. A registration review board investigates complaints and determines any punitive actions related to a complaint. Administrative actions taken against a Registered Forester are permanently attached to their registry file which is available to the public through the Secretary of State.

The Society of American Foresters is the professional association that regulates certification for the forest management industry. Their Certified Forester program serves as a competency and credentialing standard for foresters. Applicants must demonstrate a more-rigorous combination of educational and work experience before they are allowed to take a forestry examination. Certified Foresters must also meet stringent continuing education requirements to maintain their certification. Since Georgia does not require Certified Forester status to practice forestry, this designation can indicate a professional is willing to go above and beyond to establish competency in their field.



Wildlife – The Wildlife Society is the professional association that regulates certification for the wildlife management industry. Their Associate Wildlife Biologist (AWB) and Certified Wildlife Biologist (CWB) certification programs are designed to provide sound stewardship of wildlife resources under the guidance of well-educated, experienced, and dedicated wildlife biologist. AWB must demonstrate that they have met rigorous academic standards and they are able to represent the profession as an ethical practitioner. CWB must meet all of the requirements for AWB and document at least five years of work history that demonstrates their expertise in applying the principles of ecology to the conservation



and management of wildlife and its habitats. CWB must meet continuing education requirements to maintain their certification. Since Georgia does not require any type of certification to manage wildlife, either certification can indicate a professional strives to establish competency in their field.

Recreation – As of 2010, there is not a major national association that regulates natural resources recreation. However, The National Recreation and Park Association is a professional association that regulates certification for the recreation and parks industry. Their Certified Park and Recreation Professional (CPRP) certification is granted to individuals employed in the recreation, park resources and leisure services profession who meet their education and work experience requirements. Certification is maintained by meeting minimal continuing education requirements (2 hours every 2 years). This certification will generally indicate that a professional has a solid background in recreation and tourism. Since there is not a major national professional association to certify specialist in natural resources recreation, landowners may be better off by asking potential consultants about their specific area of study and work history. Persons previously employed by the National Parks Service are probably better qualified to create hiking trails that someone employed by the Fish and Wildlife Service.



Where to Find Natural Resources Professionals

Georgia Registered Forester – Secretary of State

<https://secure.sos.state.ga.us/myverification/Search.aspx>

Certified Forester – Society of American Foresters

www.safnet.org/certifiedforester/findcertifiedforester.cfm

Associate or Certified Wildlife Biologist – The Wildlife Society

joomla.wildlife.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=41&Itemid=245

Certified Park and Recreation Professional – National Recreation and Park Association

http://ipv.nrpa.org/cprp_registry/default.aspx

History and Work Experience

State licensure and professional certification may help landowners to screen potential candidates, but it cannot be the only factor used to pick a natural resources consultant. Landowners want to be sure the consultant they select actively works with the particular field they are interested in. Since, natural resource management requires an educational background broad enough for students to understand the entire ecosystem and not just their particular interest, it can be fairly easy for natural resource managers to cross over from field to field. Occasionally planting a food plot on an old logging site does not make a traditional forester an experienced wildlife manager; just as the occasional all terrain vehicle trail does not make the average wildlife biologist an experienced recreation specialist.

Landowners should look to hire individuals or companies with documented work experience. If a consultant claims to manage wildlife they should be able to produce wildlife management plans they have written for previous clients. If they claim to manage timber, they should have

references to other clients they have represented. The natural resources industry is small, so a positive reputation will quickly establish for the better consultants.

Like all professions, work experience is necessary to develop an in depth understanding of how to manage natural resources. Younger or less experienced consultants should have partnerships with professionals who are well-established in the field. These partnerships can provide landowners the youthful passion of a younger professional and the history of experience of an established professional.



A well-rounded natural resource consultant can help you to meet your timber, wildlife, and recreation objectives.

What should a service cost?

The cost to manage natural resources will widely vary based upon the service required and the location of the property. Always use contracts when working with natural resources consultants. Well-written contracts help to define the scope of the project and will clarify 90% of the questions that arise during the typical project.

Most short-term projects will have a daily rate or total project cost. If a daily rate system is used, get the consultant to define a maximum number of days it will take to complete the project. If the project is to be paid as a single total item, clearly define how payments are to be made and what items are covered in the project. For example, a consultant may quote \$1,750 to establish and plant a small wildlife food plot. A land owner would need to determine if this quote includes ancillary items such as brush removal, herbicide application, fertilization and liming, and the application of straw to stabilize the soil. Total project cost items tend to require periodic payments. Typically the consultant may want 20% down to cover supply expenses, 60% by the time the project is 50% complete and 100% at project completion. Payment terms should be defined in a consultant's contract.

Some acquisition and sale activities are paid by commission. These activities typically have high risk and high reward. Agents who facilitate land purchases are typically paid 6-10% of the total price. Foresters typically receive a commission of 15-40% for a first thinning, 10-20% for a second thinning, and 10-16% for a final harvest. Commissions vary based project size, location, and harvest method.

For more information, contact the Athens-Clarke County Community Forestry Coordinator at (762) 400-7519 voice, (706)613-3566 fax, or by e-mail at Mateo.Fennell@accgov.com