

Welcome and Course Overview

Welcome to Woodland Options for Landowners! Our hope is that by completing the readings and activities in this course, you will become more familiar with your woodland resources and develop a strategy to reach your goals. Throughout the course we'll provide readings and visual materials to help you understand the concepts and gain the skills needed to read your land. We'll also ask you to conduct meaningful activities designed to reinforce these concepts and skills. In addition, you'll have the opportunity to engage in online discussions and learn from foresters and experienced landowners from your region of the state. A field trip will complete the experience by giving you the opportunity to practice and sharpen your new skill set while interacting face to face with natural resource professionals. You should come away from this course knowing more about your forests, what they have to offer, and how to manage your forests for your goals while allowing future generations to meet their goals as well. The following paragraphs provide an overview of the course, the contents of each course module, and what you will learn by participating in each section of the course.

Module 1: Vision, Goals, and Family Resources is designed to help you step back and take stock of your family and human resources. This critical first step in forest planning is often overlooked but is vital to accurately inventory your family's long-term goals and to identify family members' special skills, interests, and other resources that will impact the decisions and actions you make on your woodland. During this section you'll talk with other family members, heirs, and stakeholders to learn about each person's goals and expectations on your forest land. You'll be asked to gather pictures and documents that relate to your forest and finally to draft a basic vision statement for your property. Later, we will revisit your goals and vision statement after you've been out on your property and have learned more about your property's natural resources.

Module 2: Stewardship and Sustainability will help you to picture your property in the larger landscape. In addition, this module will help you to reflect on how past land management decisions have impacted the forests that you now control and manage, and how your decisions and actions will impact the ability of future owners to meet their goals from the forest. This section will briefly cover land and forest use history in the southeastern United States from pre-European settlement to present day. You will then be asked to do a little detective work and

investigate the history of land use on your property and your locality. You will use this information to create a timeline of land use history on your property.

Module 3: Boundary Lines and Property Deeds will teach you how to locate a legal description of your property and to locate your property boundaries on the ground. While many landowners believe they know where their boundary lines are located, the fact is, most do not. Improperly located and marked boundary lines lead to many problems including timber theft, trespass, and liability issues. Properly identifying your boundaries will greatly aid in reducing the likelihood of these problems and is the first step to successful forest management. During this section, you will visit your county courthouse to locate your property deed. From your deed search, you will learn more about previous owners, identify neighboring property owners, and find a legal description of your property boundaries. You will also learn how to use a compass and attempt to identify your property boundary lines.

Module 4: Maps, Photos, and Soil Surveys will teach you how to use the basic tools of forest resource assessment. Topographic maps, aerial photographs, and soil surveys are powerful tools that landowners and foresters use for planning decisions and on-the-ground forest management activities. Learning to use maps and photos will give you a birds-eye view of your property and help you to predict land and vegetation features before visiting/walking your property. In this module, you will obtain a topographic map, aerial photo, and soil survey for your property and learn how to use these tools to identify important natural resource features in your forest. Using your compass skills and information on property boundaries from Module 3, you will begin to make a map of your forest property that will be used and further developed in Module 5.

Module 5: Forest Ecology and Management provides an introduction to the nuts and bolts of forest resource management. The four sections of this module include: dendrology (tree identification), soils and site, basic forest ecology, and silviculture. In the dendrology section you will identify the more common tree species and forest cover types on your property. In the soils and site section, you will learn the importance of soils on influencing tree growth and health. Basic forest ecology introduces concepts of nutrient cycling, regeneration, disturbance, and succession. Finally, the silviculture section will review basic forest management practices landowners and foresters use to manipulate stand growth and species composition. Taking your forest map from Module 4, you will identify forest management units, or stands, and other physical features on your forest property.

Module 6: Assistance, Planning, and Options will expose you to the many types of professional assistance that are available to help you assemble a management plan for your property. During this module you will revisit your goals and vision statement developed in Module 1. Using the data collected on your property during previous modules, you will start to think about which types of silvicultural activities may be appropriate for your forest and develop strategies to help you reach these goals. You will also have the opportunity to contact natural resource personnel in your area and discuss future courses of action to manage your property.

Again, we welcome you to Woodland Options for Landowners and look forward to working with you. You are now ready to proceed to [Module 1: Vision, Goals, and Family Resources](#). Enjoy the course!