

WOULD YOU LIKE A HEALTHY FOREST?

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Free program for landowners to discuss timber management options For private woodland owners, our forests represent one of our most valuable assets. The decision to harvest, and how to do so, can either improve or set back the future value of the land, its potential for wildlife habitat and as a source of pleasure for families to enjoy now and into the future. A new service of the Minnesota Forestry Association (MFA) and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Division of Forestry encourages landowners to consider their goals for their woodlands. Whether they intend to gain income from timber, improve wildlife habitat and water quality, or reduce fire and disease risk, landowners can access assistance to tailor a plan for their woodlands and contribute to a healthy forest. The Call Before You Cut program is a free service offered by MFA to private landowners to help manage their woodlands to meet their individual goals. Upon request, landowners receive a no-obligation packet of information about timber harvest on private lands, factors to consider and helpful resources to manage a timber sale. "It truly is a great program to offer private landowners who are interested in selling timber," said MFA President Dennis Thompson. "Confidential, no-strings-attached advice on one of the most important management decisions a landowner can make that will have lasting effects." The Call Before You Cut program may be new for Minnesota, but it is certainly not new in the Midwest. Initial talks concerning the program in Minnesota began in 2011. Currently, six other states offer a similar program, the idea being to give private landowners as much information as possible on harvesting their timber. According to information provided by Thompson, when a landowner calls the number, 218-879-5100, they leave their address. A participating organization (in the case of Minnesota, MFA), will then send them a folder full of valuable information on harvesting timber such as: A sample timber sale contract; a Best Management Practices booklet; a list of consulting foresters; a list of local DNR offices; a list of Soil and Water Conservation Districts which provide forestry services; the "Mistakes people make when selling timber" brochure; a sample certificate of insurance; and a list of Minnesota Logger Education Program loggers. The idea for the Call Before You Cut program is loosely based off the Call Before You Dig campaign from the power companies, a mandatory program. However, the Call Before You Cut program with MFA is completely voluntary. Landowners harvesting timber are not required to call the number provided, and landowners who do call the number and receive the packet of information are under no obligation to harvest timber. "We just want to get as much information out to the landowners as possible," said Thompson. As participants in the Call Before You Cut program, landowners may also qualify for a free, two-hour consultation with a forester to walk their land and discuss the site's unique

needs and opportunities. Whatever a landowner's reason for harvesting, MFA recommends working with a professional forester as they are uniquely qualified to assist with a timber harvest plan that meets the landowner's expectations. The Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce also recognizes the advantages of offering private forest landowners an opportunity to discuss their specific needs for timber management goals. "From the Chamber's perspective of building healthy businesses and communities, renewable forest management is imperative for clean air, clean water, recreation and our industries," said Chamber President Bud Stone. "The Call Before You Cut program gives us a great tool to manage our privately owned forest lands for sustainability, wildlife habitat, water quality, reduced fire risk and maybe even some income from the sale of timber."

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