

This article appeared in The Ohio Woodland Journal, Vol. 18, No. 3 (Summer 2011), the official publication of the Ohio Tree Farm System. Call 888. 388. 7337 for subscriptions.

Get Informed by Lee Crocker, ODNR Division of Forestry

The main goal of the Call Before You Cut program is to provide woodland owners with more information about how to take care of their woods. More woodland information will help you make good decisions about what is best for you and your land.

As a young man, my father faced the decision about what to do with the Ripley County, Indiana family farm, just like some of you will face decisions about what to do with your woods. I remember him telling me that he came to the decision that if he was going to farm, he was going to do it right. Having decided, he now needed more information to know what was right for him. He contacted the Soil Conservation Service and attended monthly Farm Bureau meetings. He learned about rotating crops, soil erosion, soil fertility and so much more. He was getting informed about farming. By the time I came along, Dad had developed very strong beliefs about the importance of rotating crops and preventing soil erosion. These strong beliefs were forged from the various bits of information he had gathered from state, federal and other local groups.

Dad also had to decide how to take care of the woods even though he was one of the more knowledgeable people in the community when it came to trees. Dad and a neighbor went together and bought the first chainsaw in the township. I vividly remember that two-man McCulloch with a 40-inch bar and a five horse power motor. It was a beast and it was very scary to hang onto the handle. Having spent countless hours in the woods squirrel hunting, he knew almost all of the larger trees in our woods. As a young boy I heard stories of special red oaks and white oaks. I was taken to the stump of a 54 inch shagbark hickory, where stories were told about shotguns that could not knock a squirrel off of the higher limbs. My father made many pieces of furniture that filled our home from lumber sawn from the farm. In 1977, despite all his previous knowledge about his woods, he needed to make a decision about selling some trees. His first reaction was to get more information by contacting the state forester. As a junior studying forest management at Purdue at the time, I saw first hand the value of getting as much information as possible before making a long-term decision about the woods. The information we received helped us to have a successful timber sale. This information helped us sell the trees for considerably more than what we were originally offered, and we were able to do what we thought was right by the woods during this harvest. Since then we have had two more timber sales on the farm. Each timber sale we also sought the advice of the state forester in the area. And each sale we have been pleased with the way the land was taken care of.

During the 33 years of my forestry career, I have tried to give woodland owners information so they can make decisions about what is right for them and their land. I have seen many successes when they made informed decisions about what to do. I

clearly remember the family that was offered \$80,000 in cash for their trees. They didn't take the cash but called me for a woodland walk and more information about what they had and how to care for it. A few years later they decided to sell and were pleased to get \$125,000 from the trees that they sold. After getting more information, some landowners will decide the best thing for them to do at the time is to wait on a harvest.

Most woodland owners only have one or two timber sales in their lifetime, and it is important that they are well informed before they make these long-term decisions. I am saddened when I am contacted by a landowner who rushed into a decision before they had gathered enough information and ended up having a bad experience. The Call Before You Cut program grew out of the idea to get more information about the woods into the hands of the owners. Woodland owners can then make good decisions about what is right for them and their lands when armed with good information. If Dad was alive today, I am sure he would contact Call Before You Cut to get one more piece of information to help him make the right decision for the family and the land. So if you have decided that you want to do what is right for you and your land, please consider visiting the Call Before You Cut website at www.callb4ucut.com , or call toll free 1-877-424-8288 for more information.

Lee Crocker is the private lands administrator for the Ohio Division of Forestry and a former chair of the Ohio Tree Farm Committee.