

TIMBER HARVEST FAQ'S

Have you been wondering about how Forestry projects are managed and planned here in Pelham? Here are some Frequently Asked Questions from the Forestry Committee about how the timber harvest process works:

How does a Conservation Property get designated as a Town Forest?

When the Conservation Commission has purchased a parcel and decides they want it to be a Town Forest, a Warrant Article is placed on the ballot for the Town's people to vote on. A majority favorable vote is required for the warrant article to pass and hence the parcel to become a Town Forest.

What happens once a conservation property is voted as a Town Forest?

Once a property is voted as a Town Forest, it is largely managed by the Forestry Committee with oversight by the Select Board and Conservation Commission. The Committee works with a licensed forester who designs a Forest Management Plan for each property by evaluating the properties characteristics and developing a plan that will maximize the property for wood products, wildlife habitats, wetlands protection and recreational use.

Where can I find the Forest management plans for Pelham?

All Forest Management plans can be found online at:
pelhamweb.com > Boards > Forestry Committee > Town Forest Management Plans

What are the benefits of harvesting timber?

Promotes Forest Regeneration: Sustainably harvesting timber promotes forest regeneration. The newly available space in the understory, having greater access to sunlight, water, and nutrients, encourages new trees and other plants to seed in, take root, and grow.

Increases Biodiversity: Timber stands containing a wide variety of native tree species at multiple age classes, provide food for a wider variety of wildlife species.

Enhances wildlife habitat: Fallen, dead tree remains enhance habitat by providing additional sources of food, cover and shelter for wildlife. A variety of insects, a vital source of food for many wildlife species, can be found in downed and/or decaying debris. Small mammals, reptiles and amphibians, may also live in and/or under this debris. Downed tree canopies, branches and brush piles also provide protection and cover to a variety of wildlife species.

Improves timber quality and increases value: Trees are selectively marked, and a harvest is conducted every 10-15 years. This results in a continual source of income as well as continued maintenance, benefiting the health and productivity of the timber stand. Timber harvests may also be used as a forest improvement practice to reduce stocking levels and alter species composition of the stand, as well as to remove any poorly formed, unhealthy, or over-mature trees.

Promotes growth productivity & efficiency: Thinning a stand of trees, by the use of a sustainable timber harvest, allows the trees left standing post-harvest better access to vital nutrients and space, allowing them to grow faster, more productively, and efficiently. These healthier trees are also more resistant to blight and insect damage.

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Provides wood for consumer products, lowers risk for forest fires: The United States is more forested today than it was 50 years ago due to research advancements and ongoing education regarding sustainable forest management practices. The reduction of poor-quality trees also lowers the risk for forest fires. Harvested timber is used for a variety of products such as veneer, sawlogs, firewood, wood chips, and wood fuel.

Provides a source of income: Timber harvesting often results in the generation of income. Income is never a primary goal of timber harvesting on town forests. The proceeds from Timber Harvesting creates a source of income for the continued Forest Stewardship for the Town's conservation areas.

Promotion of recreational opportunities: Once a timber harvest is completed, trails can be planned (if not already existing) with careful attention paid to minimize disturbance to wildlife, avoidance of wet areas, steep slopes, rare plant species, habitat edges and special habitats.

Who manages the Timber Harvest?

The timber harvest is managed by the Town Forester who is hired by the Pelham Forestry Committee. The Town Forester works collaboratively with the Forestry Committee in all aspects of the timber harvest to ensure a successful completion.

How is a Timber Harvest planned?

A property is selected by the Forestry committee through consultation with the Town Forester. The Town Forester determines the harvest and excluded areas on the property based on stand recommendations from the forest management plan; additionally incorporating stand conditions, soils, water, and topography. Access roads and landing areas are laid out to minimize impact and improve efficiency. Within the harvest area, all trees to be harvested are marked with blue paint to be cut. As the harvest commences the main skid trails are laid out for the crew to use as needed, avoiding wet and other sensitive areas.

How is a Timber Harvest conducted?

Trees are cut down with a chainsaw or feller buncher. Once cut, the trees are pulled to a landing area by a skidder. Once trees are on the landing, they are processed into various forest products with a chainsaw or a loader/slasher. Forest products are then separated into various piles to be loaded onto trucks and transported to markets. The combination of equipment and methods vary from one logging contractor to another.

Is a buffer left between the timber harvest and the adjacent private lands?

Yes, variety of buffers are incorporated when conducting a timber harvest. When harvesting near boundary lines shared with private lands and residences, only high-risk trees are selected for removal as deemed appropriate. Aesthetics and forest health are highly considered when making these decisions.

What is the income from timber harvests used for?

Proceeds from Timber Harvests are placed in the Forest Maintenance fund to be used for continued maintenance and stewardship of the Town Forests.