

Helping forest land owners make smarter decisions: the role of professional foresters.

PENNSYLVANIA COUNCIL OF PROFESSIONAL FORESTERS

Our proposal:

increase forester responsibility
by amending the state law that currently provides for the regulation and licensure
of the professions of engineering, land surveying, and geology
to include the profession of forestry.

What public need would be met if foresters were licensed in Pennsylvania?

The greatest public need that would be met if foresters in Pennsylvania were licensed would be to provide for the accountability of the profession and to promote public confidence in it.

The public and individuals seeking forestry services receive the greatest benefit from programs that credential foresters. The actions of a forester, particularly in prescribing management practices, can affect the land for decades. These actions, especially if they involve timber harvesting, can affect the value received for timber, water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, and the esthetics of the forest landscape for both the present and many years in the future. Proper and sustainable management of our forests is essential if we are to ensure the health of Pennsylvania's \$5 billion forest products industry and the Commonwealth's growing tourism and outdoor recreation industries. Forest management prescriptions may involve the use of pesticides, fire, or other management tools that can have substantial negative effects on the environment if not properly applied.

Do the users of foresters' services generally have the knowledge to evaluate the qualifications of foresters and the outcome of the services they provide?

While industrial and institutional forest owners and governmental agencies have forestry expertise, the general public does not. Because individual forest owners may only use a forester once or twice during the time they own a tract of forest land — if at all — they are typically unaware of the knowledge and experience a forester must possess and the extensive judgment he can exercise. The outcome of a forester's service to landowners, particularly individual landowners, can be profound for both the landowner today and the environment for generations to come.

Does a process exist in Pennsylvania to handle complaints about foresters' services and to resolve disputes?

No such process currently exists in Pennsylvania, other than the civil legal system.

Could the use of applicable Pennsylvania laws, regulations, or standards be used to resolve issues related to foresters' services?

No existing Pennsylvania laws, regulations, or standards regulate the practice of forestry in the Commonwealth. As a result, issues or disputes that are related to foresters' services currently must be resolved using the civil legal system. This can be a long, expensive, and daunting prospect for the individual landowner. While compensation may be provided for damages, the damage to the landowner's property and environment normally cannot be reversed. Because the stakes in such disputes normally go well beyond money, it would be best if the appropriate standards of forestry practice were followed initially.

In addition, no process currently exists in Pennsylvania to bar future work by individuals who have been proven to engage in unprofessional, inappropriate, fraudulent, or environmentally damaging practices.

Will the regulation of the profession of forestry in Pennsylvania guarantee that the best and most appropriate service will be rendered in all cases and that foresters will be ethical in all of their dealings with clients?

The answer to this questions is probably no. However, a compelling argument can be made that the regulation of the profession of forestry will greatly diminish the number of cases of poor, inappropriate, or unethical forestry. This is so because those who present themselves to the public as foresters would have to meet specific educational and experiential standards and would be subject to discipline or exclusion from the profession if they deliver improper or unethical services.

How will the public benefit from the regulation of the profession in Pennsylvania?

Individuals seeking forestry services would benefit by having a degree of assurance, in hiring a licensed forester, that the individual has met the state's standards for competency to practice forestry. This assurance is especially important when the services provided affect the value of timber harvested from the land, the residual value of the forest stand, the productivity of the land, and the quality of the surrounding environment. In addition, standards associated with the proposed legislation will serve to guide foresters in their practice, thereby presenting a coherent and acceptable profession to the public.

For additional information about the proposal to license professional foresters contact:
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The nation behaves well if it treats the natural resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased, and not impaired.
THEODORE ROOSEVELT, 1910.