

Choosing a Forester

In addition to timber harvest work, professional foresters can also help with non-harvest questions, like forest trail design, appraisals, tax basis determination, advice about forest property tax programs, and managing for wildlife.

Definition of a forester

In New York, there is no legal definition of a forester, so very qualified and less qualified individuals use the title, leaving forest owners confused about competency. Unfortunately, if someone calls himself or herself a forester, there is still a lot you do not know about them. Check their credentials.

What to look for in a forester

Education and training - A professional forester should have a 2 or 4-year degree in a science field, usually forestry, from a college recognized for its excellence. In New York, SUNY Environmental Science and Forestry, and Paul Smith's College are both accredited forestry schools. Graduates of forestry schools have both theoretical and field experiences to help guide the choices you will make.

Professional affiliation - Your forester should be a current member of the Society of American Foresters (SAF), New York Institute of Consulting Foresters (NYICF), or the Association of Consulting Foresters of America (ACF). These organizations provide standards of professional conduct, training opportunities, and conferences for additional learning. A forester who belongs to these groups is demonstrating their willingness to learn more and more.

Certification - The Society of American Foresters has a certification program (SAFCF), which requires that foresters meet the profession's educational requirements, have five or more years of professional forestry experience, adhere to standards of professional practice, pass a rigorous competency exam, and participate in continuing education. The SAF notes, "You can be assured you are hiring a qualified forester if you hire a CF." Most forest owners have no idea that such competent foresters live and work in their region.

Experience and referrals - A professional forester should be happy to direct you a list to satisfied clients, even bringing you to recent jobs that bear the marks of good forestry. Ask your forester about past work, and follow up with some references to see if their circumstances are similar to yours.

Special agreements - Dozens of foresters in New York work with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation as Cooperating Consulting Foresters. These foresters have agreed to maintain ethical and educational standards, in compliance with the New York Cooperating Forester Program policy.

Where to find a forester

- Ask fellow forest owners which foresters they know
- Review the list of DEC Cooperating Consulting Foresters
- Contact timber management companies or foresters listed in telephone directories and web pages
- Contact the NYS DEC regional office in your area, Cornell Cooperative Extension, or your county Soil and Water Conservation District.

Questions to ask a forester before you hire them:

- How long have you worked as a professional forester?
- Where have you been working and with what kinds of forests?
- What is your educational background?
- Are you a current member of Society of American Foresters (SAF), New York Institute of Consulting Foresters (NYICF), or the Association of Consulting Foresters of America (ACF)?
- What training have you attended recently?
- What are your fees, and what services do you provide?
- Are you associated with a saw mill or wood products firm?
- Can you provide references from previous clients and /or agencies?
- Would you sign a contract that details the services you will provide?



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For more information about our programs and the Agroforestry Resource Center, visit our website cccolumbiagreene.org

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