



# **Managing and Harvesting Lowland Forest Types**

**Large Commercial Forest Landowner Perspective**

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# Managing and Harvesting Lowland Forest Types- Large Commercial Forest Owner Perspective

A few comments regarding the bigger picture -

Productive lowland forest types constitute a significant portion of the total forest resource in Michigan:

- Lowland forest types across MI – approx. 5MM ac. – or 25% of productive timberlands;
- While net growth, and accessible, operational portion might be somewhat less than for upland forests;
- They represent a significant and important part of the productive working forest;
- Do not want to forgo management and harvest



## Managing and Harvesting Lowland Forest Types- Large Commercial Forest Owner Perspective

Private landowner perspective, specifically regarding Longyear's forest lands ;

- Longyear owns and manages 103,000 acres of forest lands in US and CA. UP lands total 74,000 ac., 88% is productive/operable forest totaling 65,000 ac.
- Lowland Forest Types cover 6300 ac – about 10%.
- May constitute only 10% of Longyear's forest;
- Would not want to forgo the timber harvest and income opportunity
- Harvests from these forestlands produce good quality veneer, sawlogs, sawbolts and pulpwood, which contribute significantly to the overall business.



## Managing and Harvesting Lowland Forest Types- Large Commercial Forest Owner Perspective

Simply recognize there are some limitations associated with conducting operations in these types:

- Wet, soft, ground conditions for significant portions of the year;
- Higher exposure to water quality issues;
- Habitat issues unique to lowlands;
- The greater affect of season on forest operations;
- Perceived as more sensitive to disturbance.



## Managing and Harvesting Lowland Forest Types- Large Commercial Forest Owner Perspective

Require more care in operational planning:

- Scheduling of harvests is more season sensitive;
- Winter / frozen ground; for stands of significant area and timber volume;
- Mid-summer / dry ground; smaller patches and narrow drainages associated with adjacent upland harvest areas.



## Managing and Harvesting Lowland Forest Types- Large Commercial Forest Owner Perspective

- If significant roads are needed, winter logging is usual the choice
- Recognize that not all the ground will be accessible, even in winter;
- Specialized equipment may be an option – but, it's usually not readily available and usually expensive compared to normal harvest setups;
- Modified harvest prescription or special silvicultural alternative may be required



## Managing and Harvesting Lowland Forest Types- Large Commercial Forest Owner Perspective

If a manager knows his forest, has reasonably good data and up-to-date maps, planning and scheduling operations in lowland types is entirely feasible;

Some additional challenge compared to scheduling of upland operations; but not anything that should severely limit management and harvest of lowland forest types.

Restricting management and operations in lowland forest types is usually driven by other agendas.



# Managing and Harvesting Lowland Forest Types-

## Large Commercial Forest Owner Perspective

However, we've seen a change among forest managers over past 15-20 years due to certification and audit process;

- While we know how to manage and operate effectively in lowland forest types, we have become more apprehensive of operating in lowlands;
- Different expectations were created by the Water Quality Act of 1978;
- Had to accommodate more permitting and scrutiny of our activities around water;
- Further heightened by Water Quality BMP's and monitoring;
- Further formalized with the certification in the 90's;
- Now beholden to certification systems, monitoring, documentation, and audits;





# Managing and Harvesting Lowland Forest Types- Large Commercial Forest Owner Perspective

Result is we're increasingly cautious with water-related challenges;

However, we must guard against becoming so cautious that we give up the opportunity to manage a significant portion of the forest resource.

Signs of this we have encountered with our foresters and contractors:

- Avoiding the lowland stands when developing harvest plans;
- Over-buffering stream-sides, drainages, swamp and pond margins
- Foresters avoiding marking timber in lowland margins; stream valleys;
- Or, if marked, contractors not harvesting trees in those same areas;



## Managing and Harvesting Lowland Forest Types- Large Commercial Forest Owner Perspective

Trend requires some diligence and commitment to re-examine the real intent, .....to protect water quality, soils, unique wetland habitats, and other resources.

But, the outcome should not be avoiding active management of lowland forest types.



## Managing and Harvesting Lowland Forest Types- Large Commercial Forest Owner Perspective

Caution regarding over-zealous auditors  
inserting values for standards;

Must be challenged to return performance  
measurement back to achieving functional  
intent, and meeting standards.



## Managing and Harvesting Lowland Forest Types- Large Commercial Forest Owner Perspective

There will always be pressures for more restrictions on operating in lowland forest types:

- Water quality risks
- Sensitive soils
- Unique habitats

Creates this “aura of sensitivity” which begins to limit our will to manage and harvest

It is our responsibility as forest managers to challenge that thinking and avoid slowly losing another important piece of the productive forest