

Choosing the Right LOGGING CONTRACTOR for Your Family Forest



Photo: Francisca Belart, © Oregon State University

Choosing a logging contractor for a harvest operation is an important decision. How do you go about selecting the right person for your property and your particular project? Some of the decision making is tailored to your situation as landowner, and there are some key questions about their ability to handle your specific issues that you should ask the contractors who might provide these important services.

The questions below are not the only questions you could ask and should not replace trusted relationships or “gut feelings.” They are meant to help you think through what to ask and what the contractors’ responses mean.



Questions to ask potential logging contractors

What are your qualifications?

Logging mistakes can be irreversible. Make sure you find a logging contractor who is appropriate for the type of work you need to get done. In Oregon, look for a qualified logging professional. A qualified logger participates in continuing education programs and keeps abreast of current forest and business regulations governing harvest operations in the state. Visit www.oregonloggers.org/Opl_directory.aspx for a list of qualified logging professionals.

What services do you provide?

Some loggers only conduct regeneration harvests while others work on both thinning and regeneration harvests. As the landowner, you need to know whether a contractor can address other project needs, such as log sales, harvest plans, road construction/maintenance, slash treatment, erosion control, reforestation, permitting, and harvest taxes.

How will I be charged for your services?

There can be several different answers to this question. What is important is that **you know up front whether you will be charged on a percentage or a dollar-per-unit basis**. Landowner and contractor must agree on what services are included in agreed prices.

What is included in the logging price?

It is very important that you know and understand exactly what services will be delivered and when, and whether these services are included in the agreed price. You and the contractor will need to agree on who is responsible (both financially and operationally) for any road improvements, installation of culverts, slash disposal, etc. Be sure you specifically agree that the price includes log trucking.

Do you do all the work yourself or is some of it subcontracted?

It is normal for a logger to subcontract aspects of the harvest project. Be sure you know if this is planned and that you understand how the logger will manage subcontractors. It is also important that you know who is in charge if you are out on the logging project and need to talk to someone.

Do you have the appropriate insurance coverage?

If something were to go wrong during the logging operation, you want both you and the contractor to be protected financially. Loggers should have sufficient insurance coverage for property damage and liability (including woods broadform liability, vehicle liability, and workers' compensation). Ask to see certificates of coverage before you sign a contract.

Do you use a standard written contract?

Some people may operate without a written contract when there is an experienced relationship between contractor and landowner. However, it is best to have a written contract that specifies the responsibilities of both parties in the transaction. The contract is legally binding and protects both parties from painful misunderstandings and costly disputes.

If I'm thinning, how will you determine cut-trees and protect leave-trees?

Both parties must agree in advance to how cut-trees will be determined and leave-trees protected. In thinning operations, some incidental damage to leave-trees may occur. A logger should be able to discuss methods to minimize damage to the leave-trees. Establish a specific measurement—for example, “residual damage to trees will not surpass 5 percent.” Stipulate in the contract any fines that will be charged if and when damage exceeds that level.

Where to look for a logger

The list of individuals and firms who can handle your family forest logging needs is constantly changing. However, places where you can look to find a list of potential loggers include:

- Ask other landowners who they work with and trust.
 - ❑ Oregon Small Woodlands Association: www.oswa.org/
 - ❑ Oregon Tree Farm System: www.otfs.org/
- Ask a forester.
 - ❑ Society of American Foresters: www.safenet.org
 - ❑ Association of Consulting Foresters: www.acf-foresters.org/
 - ❑ Oregon Department of Forestry: www.oregon.gov/ODF/Working/Pages/FindAForester.aspx

Establish realistic expectations

The landowner and logger should have frank discussions and clear agreements about the expectations of logging project results. Family forest owners may have unrealistic expectations that conflict with the realities of logging capabilities. Logging small tracts is more expensive, time-consuming, and difficult than larger commercial logging projects. Because managing a logging project is so complex, a family forest owner may want to seek special assistance from either:

- a logging contractor whose experience is tailored to small projects; or
- a forestry consultant who can plan and facilitate all contracted arrangements.

4 Choosing the Right Logging Contractor

- ❑ Oregon State University Extension Service: extensionweb.forestry.oregonstate.edu/directory
- ❑ Society of American Foresters: www.safnet.org
- Ask log buyers at local timber mills.
- ❑ OSU Forest Industries Directory: www.orforestdirectory.com/
- ❑ Associated Oregon Loggers—directory of qualified logging contractors: www.oregonloggers.org/Opl_Directory.aspx

Helpful resources

See these publications for more information about harvesting operations for your family forest:

- *Contracts for Woodland Owners (EC 1192)*
<https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/ec1192>
- *Small Scale Harvesting for Woodland Owners (EM 9129)*
<https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/em9129>
- *Timber Harvesting Options for Woodland Owners (EC 1582)*
<https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/ec1582>
- Oregon Forest Resources Institute: <http://knowyourforest.org>

Tamara L. Cushing, Starker Chair of Private and Family Forestry and Extension forest business specialist; and Steve Bowers, Extension harvesting specialist, both of Oregon State University.

© 2017 Extension work is a cooperative program of Oregon State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Oregon counties. Oregon State University Extension Service offers educational programs, activities, and materials without discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, familial/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, genetic information, veteran's status, reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Oregon State University Extension Service is an AA/EOE/Veterans/Disabled.

Published October 2017