Consulting Forestry

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THE profession of forestry has been recognized to date mainly by its activities in government and state forestry, including extension and farm services, and in private business through the employment of foresters for large concerns.

But also a part of the growth of forestry in the United States whose role has been many times overlooked is the consulting forester. His history presents a story of trail blazing and success in the forestry field. In most cases he started with little more than the tools of his education and experience, and through confidence in himself and belief in his profession, through ambition, promotional efforts and ability has promoted forest conservation by bringing thousands of acres of forest land under supervision and management. In addition, he enjoys an independent, successful, professional career.

The fact remains, however, that our public is still grossly ignorant of forestry in our country. They are still under the impression that a forest ranger is the little man in the West in the steel tower or the romantic figure proudly sitting on a horse and viewing the countryside from a beautiful mountain top.

They are unaware that they have an opportunity to enjoy the services of a growing profession in the management of their woods and in the realizing of a profit from their timberlands. Of 630 million acres of total forest land in the United States, 461 million acres, or 70.4 per cent, are under private ownership, and only four per cent of 4 million private forest owners are practicing good forestry. These figures speak for themselves. They indicate the ignorance of private forest land owners. They indicate the gigantic job ahead of government services and consulting services both in technical, conservational, and promotional activities.

The question arises, "How can there be room for consulting forestry on a pay basis when advice is offered free by extension, state, and federal farm forestry services?" There is a place for the extension forester and the consultant working side by side. In farm forestry cruising the woods, marking trees, and giving the farmer a sample contract is beneficial, but it is not enough. If the public forester believes that farm forestry will be profitable for the individual under intensive management, he should advise the owner to engage a consulting forester.
There is a class of land owners who own so large an area of forest land that advice from the public forester would be out of the question. Yet the area is not so large as to require the services of a forester for year-round employment. (Consulting foresters in the field judge this area to be from 800 to 20,000 acres approximately.) Here is the place of the consulting forester who can be retained annually for his advice or may be employed for a short time for special activities.

In addition to not knowing there is such a person as the consulting forester, the public, if it has heard of him, is a little hazy as to what a consultant forester is, where to find one, the scope of his services, and his charges.

A consulting forester is a technically trained forester who, acting independently of any organization—federal, state or private—sells his professional services in forest matters. These services may be numerous and usually are the result of computation both in the field and in the office, calculations, and advice based on knowledge and experience. His purpose is to give the client the information he desires and to aid him in his objective, whatever it may be.

**What Comprises the Consulting Field in America Today?**

The Society of American Foresters listed eighty-eight qualified consulting foresters or consulting firms in the United States in the January issue of the Journal of Forestry. It is significant to note the distribution of these in the various forest regions of the country. With 92 per cent of the forest land in the South in private ownership, it is obvious that this section would be an ideal place to practice in the consulting field. Also, the rapid advance of forestry in the South with rapid growth conditions is indicative of opportunities in that area. In the following chart I have placed these foresters in a forest region according to their operating headquarters, but many of the firms in the qualified list indicated their territory very generally such as "South," or "Southeast." One consultant named his territory as "anywhere."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>No. of Consulting Foresters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Southern Region</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Atlantic</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake States</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central States</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocky Mountains</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Nineteen Forty-eight* 39
However, this list does not comprise the total number of consulting foresters. I estimate that there are around 200 practicing in the field as consulting foresters. Brewster writes that he has heard it said that there are 150 consulting foresters in the South at the present time, most of them being little more than cruisers, however.

The organization of the consulting firms range from one man handling all the work to larger, older firms with five or six regular year-round technically trained foresters in addition to a few compassmen, laborers, etc. It was difficult to accumulate any detailed statistics on their organization, but from 36 replies to my questionnaire, I was able to arrive at the following conclusions concerning these firms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Territory</th>
<th>South</th>
<th>N. W.</th>
<th>Mid. At.</th>
<th>Lake</th>
<th>N. E.</th>
<th>Rocky Mt.</th>
<th>Can.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Replies</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firms with 1 C. F.'s</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firms with 2-3 C. F.'s</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firms with 4 or more C. F.'s</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The organization expressed by these men is of a simple nature, and as I said, comprises either an individual practicing alone with perhaps a few seasonal employees who may assist in cruising work, or a highly efficient organization of three or more foresters, each with his own specialty, a small crew for cruising, etc., and miscellaneous office personnel. In the majority of cases semi-skilled personnel and laborers as part of the firm were the exception rather than the rule, and their employment was much on a part-time basis.

**What Services Are Consulting Foresters Offering to the Public?**

Following is a list of the services consulting foresters are prepared to render:

- Arboriculture and tree preservation
- Cost and economic studies of forest operations
- Forest and wood utilization
- Forest management and silvicultural practice
- Forest protection from disease, fire, and insects
- Forest taxation
- Game and wildlife management
- Logging engineering
- Market studies and trade promotion
- Naval stores operations
- Pulpwood operations
- Range management
- Surveying and mapping
- Timber valuation and appraisal
- Timber volume and quality estimates
- Tree planting and reforestation; reproduction studies
- Wood preservation, wood seasoning, wood technology.

These represent a complete service to either the timber owner or buyer, to the operator of a forest industry, or to the public having interests or holdings in timber investments. The larger and older, more successful firms maintain a policy that varies.
their professional services with the demands of their clients. One consulting forester expressed it in a few words: "Anything to do with practical forestry"; another said, "From the seedling to the lumber yard."

Most of the successful firms are making a service available from a complete management plan for persons living within their territory and adjacent to their lands to a complete service for out-of-state owners, some of whom have never seen their forest lands. In this case, the land is handled as if it were the consultant's own. In addition, other services are offered in setting up small mills, planing plants, and other types of small woodworking plants.

After putting these into operation, these plants are then turned over to the owner, and the service continues with consulting information and efficiency studies. The knowledge and experience necessary to carry on such an extensive, complete, and thorough consulting service is indicative of the high professional standards of this field in forestry. It is no wonder that these men stressed experience both in management and industry, since real success for the consultant does and will depend on a complete knowledge of all forestry subjects.

A few better organized firms are able to offer cruising and inventory services for large holdings at a reduced cost and increased accuracy through the use of aerial photography and light sampling.

One firm maintains that they received additional work in management in 30 per cent of the cases in which the contract started as a simple inventory. This was done by showing clients with the precise information of the inventory the advantages of better management and a more complete service. Another example forwarded by a larger firm of the Lake States of their services included:

1. Wood procurement for large paper mills and hardwood distillation plants.
3. Quasi-legal work representing clients in court, etc.

Still another consultant, working alone and averaging an income of over $20,000 a year for the past ten years, specializes in securing timber for sawmills and plywood factories. This service includes cruising, compilation of complete logging plans with location of roads, camp selection, supervision of construction, and reforestation, etc.

From these statements it can be seen that the success of the consulting forester depends on his flexibility and accuracy in every phase of his work.

*Nineteen Forty-eight*
There are many fine opportunities enjoyed by consultants who own their own timberland. Many do, and many advocate such action. Through independence in their field they have an excellent opportunity to carry on forestry on their own. The advantages are twofold:

1. They enjoy a profit and also insert an element of security into their business.
2. Through owning their own timber, they are better able to understand the problems of the private owner regarding taxes and markets, etc.

**How do Consultants Obtain Clients?**

Consultants are obtaining their clients through two general methods—by salesmanship, and by maintaining a high reputation for integrity, accuracy of work with present and former clients, with state and federal forestry agents, and with other private foresters.

Salesmanship may take many forms, such as promotional letter, personal calls and explanatory folders. One large organization in the Lake States said, "We make it our business to know what is going on in our territory, and if the situation develops where our services fit in, we make direct proposals outlining the services we are prepared to render." In general, the consultant should follow the code of salesmanship that is followed in every profession.

There is a divided opinion regarding advertising. Some consultants maintain it unethical to advertise, while others plainly state that they run ads in newspapers, in trade journals, and other publications. I am of the opinion that if this profession is to achieve standing with law, medicine and other higher professional services, the ethics of minimum advertising should be followed in forestry as they are in these fields.

Many of the consultants starting out have obtained their first jobs through contacts they made while working as extension, state, or federal foresters in the area where they have since hung out their shingle. Here is seen the advantage of acquiring experience in the area where the forester intends to become a private operator.

Even with contacts, it is still up to the consulting forester to sell forestry to the clients, to show them where and how it will pay. Even before the consultant begins to practice, he must know his business and be able to present his case fluently and accurately on paper or in speech.

The clients consist of a great variety of people and organizations. Among these are large owners who wish to buy or operate, sellers, sawmills, pulp companies, veneer plants, banks, trust companies, real estate offices and estate owners, large and small.
Most of the larger consulting firms preferred large timber owners of from 5,000 acres to 20,000 acres as clients. One consultant said, “For technical work clients contact me; for sales, I contact them.”

What Are Consultants Charging in the Field Today?

Basically clients are charged on the amount of the consultant’s time and other costs involved. These may take many forms. Consultants are paid in approximately six methods. The first, most stable and satisfactory to the consultant, is the retainer fee method, where the forester receives a predetermined annual salary for the complete administration of a forest property. This annual fee is not applicable in many cases where a consultant’s services might be desirable for the short-term job.

Several methods are in use for reaching the appropriate amount of payment for such work. They are the lump sum method based on acreage, timber values, and the amount of detailed information desired. This usually includes a fee for professional services, charges for field work, charges for office work, and charges for travel expenses. The per-diem method is one in which irregular work is accomplished or when advance activities cannot be clearly defined. The per-acre method is based on the area of land involved, and many times serves as a basis for the lump sum method.

There is also the per thousand board foot method, which is little used and many times is inadequate because the type of timber is of greater importance than board footage. The percentage method is used where selling timber and land are involved. The forester may represent either the buyer or the seller. Field work involved will take an extra charge.

Foresters active in the field have charges on the per diem method ranging from $25 to $100 a day for the leading consultants’ services. From figures obtained, however, the average charge among firms was from $25 to $35 a day for personal services.

A leading southern firm charges $40 a day plus expenses for a two-man crew or $52 a day plus expenses for a three-man crew, in each case involving a technical forester. Another concern in the Middle Atlantic region charges $50 to $60 a day including expenses for one forester and assistant. In the West Coast a leading consulting firm charges $60 a day for a fully qualified professional forester and $25 for a trained field assistant. One forester who has been practicing in this field for thirty years was charging $10 a day in 1916 and maintains that rates have varied little in the past few years. He now charges $25 a day.
These firms whose prices I have quoted are not necessarily the average type of consultant but the older, better established firms.

Concerning the charges on a per acre basis, one firm in the South quotes prices varying from 10 cents per acre on large tracts to as much as $1 per acre on small tracts for the timber survey program. Another firm in the South receives 25 cents per acre for cruising large tracts, $1 per acre for marking and spotting, and 40 cents an acre for writing a management plan.

In the West Coast, Grogan and Donaldson Consulting Firm estimates costs for inventory and appraisal as follows:

“For a 10 per cent grade cruise and appraisal of old growth timber costs vary from $2.37 per acre for 160 acres to $1.75 per acre for 640 acres. Four sections would cost about 85 cents per acre.

“A 5 per cent grade cruise and appraisal would range from $1.35 per acre for 160 acres to 72 cents per acre for 640 acres.

“There has been set up a schedule for merchantable second growth examination ranging from $1.35 per acre for 160 acres to 60 cents per acre for 640 acres.”

They estimate that cost in the Northwest exceeds that of cruising in the Middle Atlantic region to the extent that the cost of a 100 per cent cruise in the Middle Atlantic region approximates that of a 10 per cent cruise in the Northwest.

What Equipment is Maintained by Consulting Foresters in Their Work?

Equipment maintained by consulting foresters varies with the individual from an $800 to $5,000 investment by those just beginning in the field to a $10,000 accumulated investment for those who have become well established. Donald R. Brewster, consulting forester in the South, maintains that equipment for an active consulting office will total to $5,000 or more.

Absolute essentials consist of a mode of transportation—car, jeep, truck, or station wagon—cruising equipment—tapes, compasses, levels, scale sticks, increment borers—and miscellaneous office equipment. Again the larger, older firms maintain, in addition to multiple sets of the above, transits, stereoscopes, printing calculators and aerial photographs. (Many are registered surveyors in their own territory.) Their equipment represents not only a financial investment but a cumulative investment of time and effort. A firm in the Northwest maintains a cross-indexed coverage of Oregon and Washington by maps and Army photographs, which is quite a detail in itself.

Who Shall Be a Consulting Forester?

Here is the question that if it could be answered conclusively and definitely would be of great aid to the individual. In recent
years much research has gone into the psychology of aptitudes. I wonder how many of us end up in the work for which we are best suited. But let us consider the subject from a “common sense” standpoint. First of all, we should be doing some work that we will be happy doing. In other words, we should select the type of work most interesting to us and work from which we derive the most satisfaction and sense of accomplishment. Secondly, we should have a mental and physical aptitude capable of doing this work. Thirdly, we should prepare for this work conscientiously and diligently. Here is the difficulty; for just as students of senior high school standing do not have any idea of what they want to make their life work, so the student of forestry in his junior and senior year is left undecided as to what to make his future.

To be a success in the consulting field, a forester should have certain inherent qualities of character and temperament. Among these he should have a pleasing personality, basic sales ability, initiative, personal ambition, aggressiveness (not to the point of being obnoxious, however), and natural promotional ability. He should like people, cultivate them, be able to work with them, and have a high sense of technical integrity. He should, in addition, desire a certain independence (not contrariness), freedom of thought, and be practical and efficient in business administration. These traits of character are not a clearcut matter, but in general, it can be said that it is difficult to develop them after the impressionable age. It is rather obvious that the quiet, introvert type of individual would not enjoy as much success in the consulting field—meeting people, selling your product, forestry—as the individual who likes people and has an open personality, natural sales ability—other things being equal.

I have set up here rather the ideal man, but my point is that a forester interested in the consulting field should tend toward this type of personality. Unfortunately, it is difficult for us to criticize ourselves and our personalities objectively, but thought on the subject would never be wasted. According to George Vitas, consulting forester of Washington, D. C., promotional ability is among one of the absolute qualifications of a successful consulting forester.

In addition to the inherent qualities which I have mentioned, the 36 consulting foresters that answered my questionnaire without one deviation stressed experience, experience, experience to enter the field and be successful. How much and what kind? The majority of the consultants expressed the opinion that at least five years’ varied forest experiences with much emphasis on timber cruising, surveying, work in the woods, and work in

_Nineteen Forty-eight_
the area where the forester intends to set out his shingle were the primary requisites. They said that ten years' experience would be even better. Most of them felt that training in college was adequate for theory, but that for the consulting field the student should study economics, business law, accounting, and develop himself in the use of the English language both in writing and in speech.

With the spread of the gospel of farm forestry through the land and with more and more private forest operators and land owners realizing the advantages of intensive forest management, there will be a growing need for the qualified consulting forester.

In private forestry with operation under a system of free enterprise, timber must pay satisfactory interest or the owner will clear his land, liquidate his investment, and invest his money elsewhere. The consulting forester with his technical knowledge and judicious advice is the means by which the business-minded land owner can realize this satisfactory dividend.

The concept that farmers cannot afford a fee for the consultant's service and realize a profit is false. But unfortunately this is the prevalent belief among the few forest owners who know there is such a service. In the sale of timber alone, forgetting management for the moment, examples have shown that owners have received at least 50 per cent more for their forest products after paying for forestry service than if they had sold out to the highest bidder.

In answer to my questions, "What do you feel the future holds in the consulting field?" and "Is the profession crowded?" 5 per cent felt the future was poor and advised foresters to stay out; 28 per cent felt the future was good but limited depending on the individual, trend of extension forest activities, pending laws, etc.; and 67 per cent of the consulting foresters felt the future was bright and unlimited. None felt the field was crowded.

David B. Cook, supervising forester for the Conservation Department of the State of New York, expressed the opinion that there was a need for 200 foresters in that state alone but that they must be able and willing to set up as private operators.

My recommendations for this field include further education of the public and dissemination of information concerning the services available by consulting foresters both by government and private forestry agents.

Greater cooperation from the state and federal governments in recognizing the private forester is needed. The groundwork is being laid, as evidenced by aid to the farmer, but this should merely pave the way for the entrance of the consulting forester.
in applying more intensive and fundamental forestry to a responsive public.

Thirdly, more foresters with a background substantially adequate in experience and education to carry on the many details of the consultant are needed who are willing to sacrifice the security of government and permanent private positions. It is a field of endeavor for the ambitious, independent men of this profession.

The ultimate purpose of every forester should be to provide a service that will be of benefit to the individual land owner or operator and thereby be of benefit to the country as a whole. With this objective in view, the consulting forester will take an important place among the higher independent professional careers.

PERSONAL LETTERS

Atkinson, S. Gayley, Roslyn, Pennsylvania.
Bailey, H. V., Alexandria, Virginia.
Bango, Henry L., Minden, Louisiana.
Banthof, George, and Company, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
Bourget, M. Albert, Quebec, Canada.
Brewster, Donald R., Savannah, Georgia.
Bromley, W. S., Bromley Forestry Agency, Ironwood, Michigan.
Bunting, Charles H., San Francisco, California.
Cook, David B., Albany, New York.
Coolidge, P. T., Bangor, Maine.
Cox, William T., St. Paul, Minnesota.
Crosby, Lloyd R., Crosby Engineering and Management Company, Glenwood, Oregon.
Dunham, W. E., Southern Foresters, Savannah, Georgia.
Feiss, Sherman, Bigley and Feiss, Foresters, Inc., Eugene, Oregon.
Forest Managers, Incorporated, Neptune Beach, Florida.
Frontz, LeRoy, Allenwood, Pennsylvania.
Gray, Norman H., Lovell, Maine.
Grogan and Donaldson, Tacoma, Washington.
Henderson, Brantley, Jr., Tidewater Land and Timber Service, Williamsburg, Virginia.
Holst, Monterey L., East Greenwich, Rhode Island.
Hult, Gustaf, Corvallis, Oregon.
Knoth, Robert K., Charleston, South Carolina.
Merrill, Fred B., Slidell, Louisiana.
Milne, R. B., Petersburg, Virginia.
Read, Arthur D., West Monroe, Louisiana.
Somberg, Seymour, Forestry Aids, Lane, South Carolina.
Vitas, George. Vitas and Schakilje, Washington, D. C.
Wall, Myron S., Jr., Jackson, California.

Nineteen Forty-eight 47
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