
Acreage Living

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Cooperative Extension

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Iowa's Woods

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Iowa's 2.1 million acres of woodlands, representing 5.7 percent of the total land area, is a most valuable resource for the state. Its value includes the beauty of the woodlands, the habitat for wildlife, site protection for hilly landscapes, and a significant contribution to the Iowa economy through forest-land production of veneer and sawlogs, primary manufacturing of those logs into lumber and secondary processing into finished product.

Iowa's woodlands are almost all privately owned, with the majority still owned by farmers as part of their farm operations. Public ownership, including the major state forests (Shimek, Yellow River, Stephens and Loess Hills), state parks and the county park system, consists of approximately eight percent of the forest land area. National ownership of woodlands in Iowa is almost nonexistent; the state does not have a national forest, and federal ownership consists of national monuments and wildlife areas.

Private ownership is varied, from less than an acre to as much as several thousand acres in corporate ownership. Most woodland owners have 30 to 150 acres of woodland.

Iowa's forests are mostly deciduous or hardwood trees. The only significant softwoods or conifers

native to the state are red cedar found throughout the state and white pine and balsam fir in northeast Iowa. The remainder of Iowa woodlands are hardwood forests with great species diversity. In the lumber industry, hardwoods refer to deciduous broad leaf trees such as oaks, walnut, basswood, and cottonwood and softwoods refers to conifer or evergreen species.

The designation "hardwood" or "softwood" has nothing to do with the hardness of the wood. Iowa's climate and soils contribute to some of the best hardwoods in the world, including black walnut, white and red oak, white ash, and black cherry. The value and demand for these species is well recognized. Iowa also produces many other species of hardwoods which are used for wood products but less recognized because of their relative scarcity.

Other hardwoods marketed in Iowa are basswood, sugar and silver maple, river birch, hickories, black and green ash, honeylocust, Kentucky coffee tree, butternut, red mulberry, sycamore, cottonwood, aspens, willows, boxelder, and other oak species. These trees are used for furniture, crafts, cabinets, novelties, carvings, pallets, cooperage (barrels), and various other products.

Forest crops are long term investments. Many of

the species harvested today in Iowa are 80 to 120 years of age before they have reached harvest size. Most trees will have some lumber volume and value as they approach 16 inches in diameter, but will attain much greater volume and value as they get larger. Landowners usually sell trees as stumpage or standing trees, and the value per board foot for walnut may range from as little as 15 cents to as much as \$15 per board foot. Value for other species ranges from 10 cents to \$3 per board foot. Value is affected by species, quality of the trees, ease of logging, size of the timber sale, and limitations or restrictions placed on the timber sale.

When woodland owners make the decision to market or sell their timber, they should utilize a forester to assist in the process and solicit competitive bids from loggers. Iowa has more than 200 bonded timber buyers and loggers. Timber buyers inspect and submit bids for the trees for sale. If selected, they should enter into a contract agreement with the landowner, outlining the agreement on both sides, including what is to be harvested and limitations on the logger. In most cases, the landowner is paid shortly after signing a contract or at least before any harvesting is done.

The logger is responsible for harvesting the standing trees and is usually allowed 12 to 18 months to complete the harvest. Loggers often avoid harvesting in the late spring and summer to minimize degradation of the cut trees. Logging during the cooler months results in reduced loss of quality in the logs during the time period from cutting the tree until it is processed by the veneer or sawmill.

As the trees are cut and skidded out of the woodland, the logger determines the optimum cutting of the trees into logs to maximize the value of the harvested tree. Very high value logs may become veneer logs and may be shipped outside Iowa and in some cases are exported to European veneer mills. Iowa does have a single veneer processing plant in Grundy Center which produces sliced high-grade veneer.

Other logs, depending on the species and quality, are sold to other sawmills depending on their demands and products they produce. Number 1 and 2 sawlogs will produce high quality furniture and trim lumber while pallet logs will be used for production of lumber for pallet construction or railroad ties.

Sawlogs are cut into lumber with large circular saws or band sawmills. Iowa's forest industry has more than 60 sawmills in 45 counties located throughout most of Iowa. Sawmill waste, including sawdust, slabs, and edgings, are mostly burned in boilers to produce energy needed for lumber drying. Other uses of waste from sawmills are chips for paper or mulches for landscape applications.

Some sawmills use de-barkers to removed the bark before sawing and have markets for this bark product as landscape mulches. After sawing, the green lumber is stacked with spacing stickers and either air or kiln dried. Lumber which is to be used for outdoor applications is air dried and ready to use; lumber which is to be used for indoor applications or furniture must be kiln dried to reduce moisture content to 6 to 8 percent. After drying, lumber is surfaced (planed) and shipped to the secondary processors in the state for production to the finished product.

Iowa's secondary processing industry has more than 350 woodworking industries from small individual cabinet and furniture producers to large manufactures of wood products. These individuals, families, and companies convert Iowa's fine hardwood lumber into the beautiful finished product.

The wood industry in Iowa is not a large industry, but is a major contributor to both the economy of the state and the beauty of the finished product from our renewable and diverse woodland species. Next time you look at a piece of beautiful furniture produced in Iowa, appreciate everyone involved — the tree farmer, the logger, the sawmill, and the craftsman.

Iowa Farm*A*Syst Publications Now Available at Local Farm Bureau Offices

by Jamie Ridgely, Agren Incorporated

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As a farm or acreage owner, have you ever asked yourself any of these questions, "...How do I know the well water my family drinks is safe? ...Does my open feedlot meet Iowa regulations? ...How often should my septic tank be pumped? ...How should I dispose of used oil?"

These questions and many others are addressed by Iowa Farm*A*Syst (FAS), a new farmstead groundwater and surface water assessment program developed by Iowa Farm Bureau Federation. FAS is a positive, proactive tool available to Farm Bureau members and others to help protect water quality. FAS uses a series of fact sheets and assessments to help farmers and acreage owners

identify potential water pollution sources on their property. In addition, the materials alert users if they are in violation of Iowa law. "We feel this is an excellent program for Iowa because it is voluntary, comprehensive, and confidential," stated Rick Robinson, director of Local and Environmental Affairs for Iowa Farm Bureau Federation.

The FAS publications include 11 stand-alone sections, each one containing a fact sheet and an assessment survey. FAS can be used as a "self-assessment," or local trained professionals can use it as part of a broader watershed protection program. The publications that comprise the Iowa FAS program include:

- F Assessing Your Farmstead Characteristics
- F Assessing Your Water Well Condition & Maintenance
- F Assessing Your Household Wastewater Management
- F Assessing Your Open Feedlot Manure Management
- F Assessing Your Confinement Livestock Manure Management
- F Assessing Your Milking Center Wastewater Management
- F Assessing Your Dead Animal Management
- F Assessing Your Pesticide Storage & Management
- F Assessing Your Fertilizer Storage & Management
- F Assessing Your Petroleum Storage & Management
- F Assessing Your Hazardous Materials Storage & Management

Printed copies of the Iowa FAS materials are available to all rural residents free of charge at your county Farm Bureau office. The materials can also be downloaded and printed via the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation Farm*A*Syst web site at <http://www.ifbf.org/government/farmasyst/default.asp> For additional information on the Iowa FAS program, contact Agren, Inc. at 712/792-6248 or info@agren-inc.com

Publication of the Iowa Farm*A*Syst materials has been funded in part by the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation and by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources through a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under the Federal Nonpoint Source Management Program (Section 319 of the Clean Water Act).

Forage Sampling and Testing

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Most Iowa corn and soybeans leave the farm, while most forages remain on the farm as live-stock feed. Knowing the nutritional content of forages is important for feeding balanced rations. The nutritional value of forages can be estimated by several different methods. Textbook tables can give general estimates, but do not account for plant maturity, moisture content, or handling and storage methods. Physical observation of leafiness, maturity, color, mold, and foreign material give additional indications of forage quality.

Taking an accurate forage sample and sending it to a forage testing laboratory will give the best measure of the nutritional quality. ISU Extension has two excellent publications that give good advice on forage testing. "Forage Testing Laboratories" PM 1098a and "Forage Sampling and Sampling Equipment" PM 1098b can be obtained free of charge by calling your county ISU Extension office. You can also obtain these publications via the ISU Extension Homepage at this address: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/>

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Lingo Lexicon:

Kyoto Protocol - an international agreement developed at a 1997 conference in Kyoto, Japan and signed by 160 countries, including the United States. This agreement would commit industrialized nations to decrease their greenhouse gas emissions to target levels 6-8% below 1990 emission levels. The greenhouse gases addressed by the agreement include carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and hydrofluorocarbons. A brief summary of the agreement can be found at the following State Department web site: http://www.state.gov/www/global/oes/fs_kyoto_climate_980115.html

The US Senate has chosen not to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. Statements of current US policy on global climate can be found at this State Department web site: <http://www.state.gov/g/oes/climate/>

Iowa Concern Hotline

Iowa Concern provides confidential assistance and referral for stress, legal questions, and financial concerns for Iowa families in times of crisis and change. The hotline has an attorney available to provide legal education about family law, agricultural contracts, and financial concerns. The attorney cannot represent an individual in a court situation, but can provide assistance in how and what to have in order before paying an attorney to put together the case. Stress counselors are also available to help people deal with stressful situations and refer for more mental health assistance. Operators who answer the hotlines have had training in listening skills to help people deal with their concerns and are also familiar with local resources that may be options.

The Iowa Concern Hotline is answered 24 hours a day by a person. Legal questions can be addressed during the 8am to 5pm work day. Call 1-800-447-1985.

Acreage Living is published monthly. For more information, contact your local county ISU Extension office.

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