

# Programs for Woodland Owners

Maine Forest Service  
Landowner Class  
Week One



# Overview - Programs

- Current Use Tax Programs
  - i. **Tree Growth Tax Law**
  - ii. Open Space
  - iii. Farmland Tax
- Be Woods Wise Program/WoodsWISE
- American Tree Farm System
- Woodland Owners of Maine
- NRCS and Cost-share Funding

# Current Use Programs in Maine

- Statewide programs based on state law
- Are administered locally by the town assessor
- Maine Revenue Service is assessor in unorganized townships
- Have eligibility requirements for land
- Usually reduce the valuation (therefore taxes) of classified land
- Have significant withdrawal penalties for changing the land use OR failing to meet requirements

# Current Use Programs Available

- Farmland (*Tax Bulletin 20*)
- Open Space (*Tax Bulletin 21*)
- Tree Growth (*Tax Bulletin 19*)
- Go to Maine Revenue Service (MRS) website:  
<http://www.maine.gov/revenue/forms/property/appsformspubs.htm>

# Tree Growth Tax Law

- Tree Growth Tax Law (TGTL): in effect since 1971.
- Purpose:
  - “to tax all forest lands according to their productivity”
  - “encourage forest landowners to retain and improve their holdings of forest lands”
  - “to promote better forest management”
- Administered by town assessor **not MFS**
- TGTL runs with the **land**, *not* the landowner

# How Land is Valued

- Valuations per acre for classified forest land established by the MRS, with data from MFS, adjusted each tax year
- Valuation rates are determined for Softwood, Mixedwood, and Hardwood stands in each county
- Number of acres x value per acre = assessed value

# Tree Growth Requirements

- Minimum 10 forested acres
- Primary objective must be to grow and harvest forest products
- Must have a current forest management & harvest plan, updated at least every 10 years
- Must recertify at least every 10 years with licensed forester

# Commercial Forest Products





# Timber Harvesting

- Harvesting of commercial\* forest products is required, as recommended in the forest management & harvest plan
- Harvesting land classified under TGTL is not prohibited
- Harvests on TGTL land is not regulated differently from other land

# Getting Into Tree Growth

- Have a written *forest management and harvest plan* prepared or reviewed, and signed, by a Maine licensed forester
- Do not give this to the town/assessor
- Submit a **Tree Growth Application Schedule** to the town/assessor
- Submit a map of the parcel showing the classified and other land uses to the town/assessor

ASSESSOR'S USE ONLY  
Recertification Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**TREE GROWTH APPLICATION SCHEDULE**  
(Title 36 M.R.S.A., Sections 571 through 584-A)  
Refer to Property Tax Bulletin #19 for detailed information

**PART A**

1. Check one:

A.  First year of classification for parcel - must be filed on or before April 1

B.  New tree growth plan and application for parcel already classified

C.  Adopted previous owner's forest management plan

D.  Recertification of forest management plan

E.  Assessor requested new schedule.

2. Are there any structures or improvements on the property?  Yes  No

**PART B**

1. Name of Owner(s): \_\_\_\_\_

2. Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Number of Lines FD No.

3. Location of Parcel: \_\_\_\_\_  
Town or Municipality County

4. Identification of Parcel(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
Section Lot Ln

5. A. FOREST TYPE LANDS USED FOR COMMERCIAL FOREST PRODUCTION

Type	Number of Acres
1. Softwood	1. _____
2. Mixed Wood	2. _____
3. Hardwood	3. _____
<b>TOTAL ACRES:</b>	4. _____

B. LAND UNSUITABLE FOR COMMERCIAL FOREST PRODUCTION

Type	Number of Acres
1. Natural Water and/or Man-made Water Areas	1. _____
2. Wetlands (swamp, marsh)	2. _____
3. Ladges and Barrens	3. _____
<b>TOTAL ACRES:</b>	4. _____

C. LAND NOT USED PRIMARILY FOR COMMERCIAL FOREST PRODUCTION

Type	Number of Acres
1. Building areas	1. _____
2. Fields	2. _____
3. Gravel Pits	3. _____
4. Transmission Line or Pipeline R/W area	4. _____
5. Roads, Class 1 (includes culverts, ditching, gravel)	5. _____
6. Roads, Class 2 (unimproved haul road)	6. _____
7. Agricultural area (for: _____)	7. _____
8. Other areas (for: _____)	8. _____
<b>TOTAL ACRES:</b>	9. _____

D. TOTAL AREA OF PARCEL (A4 + B4 + C9) \_\_\_\_\_

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# Maintaining Tree Growth

- Follow your forest management and harvesting plan
- Ok to amend or modify if things change—just write it down!
- Have licensed forester review if applicable
- Must recertify at least every 10 years
  - Forester signs to certify landowner has been following plan
  - Outline activities scheduled for next 10 years
- Update the plan and file a new Application Schedule

# Transfer of Ownership and TGTL

- Tree Growth sticks with land from one owner to the next
- New owners have one year to either:
  - Adopt previous owner's plan
  - Have a new plan prepared



# Getting Out of Tree Growth

- Roll over into Open Space or Farmland (no penalty if land qualifies)
- Withdraw some or all acres and pay penalty/acre removed
  - Based on a percentage of the difference between the acre-specific “just” value and the TGTL Valuation on date of withdrawal
  - The percentage can change with years enrolled
  - The details of the formula are in Bulletin 19.
  - Minimum = difference in taxes paid, last 5 years, plus interest

# Farmland Tax Law

- Minimum 5 acres
- Use for farming, agriculture, or horticulture
- Parcel must produce \$2,000/year (gross)
- Can include forestland and other non-farmland
- Firewood does not count towards the income requirement
- Map showing acreage locations must be submitted to enrol
- Income report required yearly

# Open Space

- No acreage minimum, max 15,000 acres
- Land that is preserved or restricted in use to provide a public benefit
  - ▫ Conserving scenic resources ▫ Enhancing public recreation opportunities ▫ Promoting game management ▫ Preserving wildlife or wildlife habitat
- Building/improvement areas must be excluded
- Multiple valuation categories
  - • Ordinary Open Space • Public Access Open Space • Permanently Protected Open Space • Forever Wild Open Space • Managed Forest Open Space

# Be Woods Wise

- Maine Forest Service District Foresters
  - Free on-site walk and talk
  - Offer information and help answer forest management questions
- Resources/Information
  - Woods Wise Wire
  - Collection of online resources
  - Programs and educational opportunities
- WoodsWISE Cost Share Assistance





# Woods WISE

- Woods **W**ise Incentive for **S**tewardship **E**nhancement
- Cost Sharing for woodland resource action plans (WRAP)
  - Available to landowners owning 10-1,000 acres
- Plans must be prepared by certified stewardship foresters and must meet certain requirements
- Steps Involved:
  1. Landowner applies and is approved based on available funds
  2. Work is done, paid for and documented by landowner and their hired forester
  3. MFS reviews and approves work done
  4. MFS reimburses landowner for a portion of the completed work

# American Tree Farm System

- Federal program run at the state level
- Certification program based on “standards of sustainability”
- Property and plan are inspected for compliance
- Recognition of exemplary forest management
- Outstanding tree farmer of the year
- National conference



# Maine Woodland Owners

- The program formerly known as SWOAM
- Member supported program
- Members have access to exclusive information and resources
- Land Trust program
- Advocates politically on behalf of forest landowners



# USDA NRCS – EQIP/WHIP

- Cost share funding available for qualifying conservation practices (wildlife, water quality, etc)
- Non-industrial private forest owners can apply through their county office
- Property will be given a “farm number”
- Involved plan for property prepared by a TSP
- Application does not guarantee funding but there is no limit on years you can apply



For more information talk  
with your local NRCS office