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A TRUE STORY: LEARNING FROM THE MISTAKES OF OTHERS

Recently, a lady who lives in another state phoned me to discuss her timberland here in Rapides Parish.

Many years ago she inherited a small tract of land and, other than paying the taxes, had nearly forgotten the property and had never cut any timber until recently.

A few months ago a timber buyer contacted her and offered \$20,000 for all the trees with a stump diameter of 14 inches and larger. Her sister, who had also inherited a similar tract, had sold timber last year and had been paid close to \$25,000. She told the buyer this and after some discussion, he offered to match the price the sister had received.

I inspected the tract and found a thick stand of huge pine and hardwood stumps. There was almost no standing timber except cull hardwoods and a few unmerchantable pines. By measuring all the stumps on a sample area and estimating merchantable heights, I was able to determine that the actual timber value had been nearly \$50,000. Also, most of the trees with stump diameters less than 14 inches had been cut.

I confronted the buyer with my findings and he claimed that another logger had stolen these smaller trees after he had finished cutting the larger ones. Without any solid evidence, it was impossible to prove who took the timber.

Being left with a tract that will produce no timber income in her remaining lifetime, the landowner reluctantly decided to sell the land her father had worked so hard to buy. She hired us to market the property for her.

A professional consulting forester can help you avoid a similar tragedy by:

1. Carefully selecting and marking with paint only the trees which need to be sold.
2. Measuring and calculating the volume and value of trees to be cut.
3. Marketing the timber to take advantage of the competition among buyers and sell timber at the highest possible price. In most cases the consultant's small commission on the sale (usually 8%) is more than paid by the increased money he is able to get for the landowner's timber.
4. Preparing or reviewing the terms of the buyers Timber Sale Agreement or Deed to make sure the owner's interest is protected.
5. Inspecting the logging operation regularly to enforce the restrictions provided in the contract and to insure a minimum amount of damage to the unmarked trees.
6. Long-term timber management can greatly increase future income from growing timber as well as meet other needs of the owner such as hunting and recreation.

If you do not have an independent consulting forester helping you on your property, you may never know how much money you are losing. Call for a preliminary inspection at no charge or obligation to you.

Glen Stephens