

"Call Before You Cut" a Collaborative, Multi-media, Outreach Effort

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ABSTRACT

In 2006 Ohio's Division of Forestry, Ohio State University Extension, Rural Action and partners launched "Call Before You Cut". This state-wide, natural resources/consumer protection campaign provides easily accessible information to help woodland owners make informed decisions about their forest resources. This campaign utilizes the following strategies to reach woodland owners: a toll free number, web-page, radio advertisements, bill boards, posters, information packets and educational events. It features a top-ten list of reasons to "Call Before You Cut". The main goals are to encourage woodland owners to utilize professional foresters to assist with management planning and timber harvests, and to hire Master Loggers to conduct their timber harvests. This effort received extensive media coverage at the local, state and national levels. During the first ten months, 607 woodland owners (21,000 acres) have called the toll-free number to request information about harvesting timber. An additional 3,000 people have visited the website.

Keywords: outreach, family forests

BACKGROUND

About 80 percent of Ohio's 8 million acres of forest is owned by private individuals. Less than 5 percent of these owners indicate that managing for timber is a priority; however, more than 25% of them have harvested timber in the last five years (FIA 2005). Too often woodland owners make quick decisions about harvesting timber due to short-term financial need. This often leads to poorly planned harvests that are detrimental to forest and water resources, and the financial interests of the landowner.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the campaign are to: 1) provide consumer protection for woodland owners by making information about selling timber readily available, 2) Encourage sustainable timber harvesting methods to insure future ability of the forest to meet landowner's objectives 3) support the use of Professional Foresters to assist woodland

owners with timber harvesting decisions, 4) facilitate the development of forest management plans which guide future decisions, and 5) promote the use of trained Master Loggers to minimize impacts of timber harvesting on forests, as well as soil and water resources.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

"Call Before You Cut" originated as a tri-fold flyer which was designed by Rural Action Sustainable Forestry and its partners. The goal was to provide woodland owners in Athens, Ohio and surrounding counties with contact information for agencies and organizations which distribute resources to help them manage their woodlands. Several thousand of these brochures were distributed at various venues over a ten-year period. In early 2006 Rural Action convened a committee that began the process of updating the brochure.

During the process of revising the old brochure, ODNR Division of forestry proposed expanding "Call Before You Cut" into a state-wide effort. The original partners at the table at the start of this process included ODNR - Division of Forestry, Ohio State University - Extension, and Rural Action Sustainable Forestry. Additional Partners who have since joined in to support the effort include: ODNR – Division of Soil & Water Conservation, Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Society of American Foresters, Ohio Better Business Bureau, The Nature Conservancy, and the Ohio Tree Farm Program.

THE TOOL BOX

The toll-free number, 877-424-8288, which is staffed week-days by a live operator at Division of Forestry headquarters, and a web-page, callb4ucut.com, are the primary methods of distributing information to Ohio's Woodland owners. Information primarily consists of pamphlets, fact sheets and brochures that have been developed by the partnering agencies to educate woodland owners about forest management and timber harvesting. Promotion of the campaign has been accomplished through: Radio ads (2,000 in fall of 2006), Billboards (20 on major roads), Posters (4 distinct posters to appeal to different audiences; 1000 printed), Information packets (distributed by mail upon request), and educational events. Most of the materials used in the campaign can be viewed at callb4ucut.com.

A "Top 10 List" of reasons to "Call Before You Cut" is featured on the web-site and in the promotional materials (Figure 1).

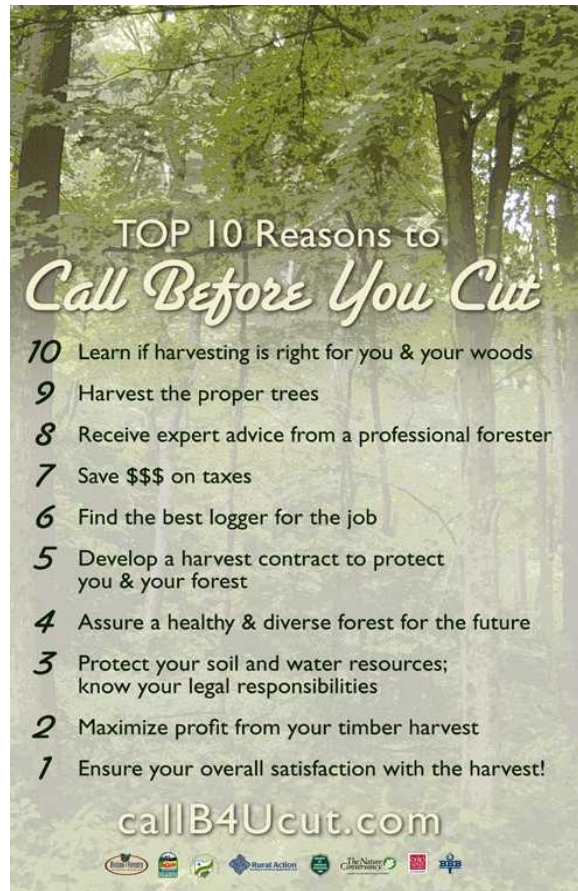


Figure 1. Poster of the "top-ten" reasons to "Call Before You Cut".

MEDIA COVERAGE

Numerous local, state and national media outlets have covered the Ohio's Call Before You Cut campaign. PDF files of media coverage can be found at callb4ucut.com (click on News).

"...but with one ill-planned, poorly executed cutting, all of those benefits can be squandered for a century. That's why 'Call Before You Cut', a program of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and several partner organizations, is an excellent initiative.... Call Before You Cut could play an important role in preserving Ohio's woodland bounty."

The Columbus Dispatch editorial; October 9, 2006

Outlets providing coverage include but are not limited to:

- The Coast to Coast Edition of the Sunday *Washington Post*
- *Forestry Source* - a Society of American Foresters publication
- *Farm and Dairy* magazine
- *Farm World*
- *Columbus Dispatch*
- *Ohio's Country Journal*
- *Dayton Daily News*
- *Buckeye Farm News*
- *Ohio Woodland Journal*

RESULTS

The initial response to the campaign has been strong. In the first 10 months, more than 600 woodland owners representing over 21,000 acres of forestland have called the toll-free number to request information. Approximately 300 people visit callb4ucut.com monthly. One mid-western state forestry agency has agreed to “franchise” the Call Before You Cut program. They have agreed to financially support Ohio’s effort in exchange for use of our concepts and materials. Another state agency has called to inquire about utilizing the concept. A total of nine organizations have agreed to support the effort.

WHAT'S NEXT

The Call Before You Cut campaign is still new. Future plans for the program include:

- Continue to recruit organizations and agencies to partner in the effort.
- Seek additional sources of funding and support.
- Schedule media events to keep the focus on the effort.
- Develop new materials to support the campaign (ie. business cards, new posters, billboards, and radio advertisements).
- Regularly update callb4ucut.com and informational packets distributed through 1-877-424-8288.
- Seek additional states to “franchise” Call Before You Cut, with the goal of fostering a nation-wide Call Before You Cut campaign.

LITERATURE CITED

USDA Forest Service. "Forest Inventory and Analysis". (July 2005).
<http://fia.fs.fed.us/>.

"Call Before You Cut". (August 2006). <http://www.callb4ucut.com>.