



Buying forestland? Consider this...

Things to investigate before you buy

Motivation drives actions

When it comes to WHY someone purchases forestland, the reasons are many and diverse. They can be personal (a place to raise a family or to 'get away from it all'), ecological (to enjoy beauty or to protect wildlife habitat), or utilitarian (for hunting or timber products). No matter the reasons WHY, forest landowners will need to decide what kind of forest steward they will be and know that stewardship activities will need to occur at some point. These could include practices such as thinning out trees to reduce wildfire risk or grading roads to keep them passable. Management needs on forestland can also change over time in response to events or disturbances and you may need to take actions which run counter to your original ownership goals such as replanting forests after wildfire.

When looking for forestland to purchase, it is a wise idea to not just look at the trees for their beauty, but to look at the entire forest (or stand) and become familiar with the characteristics of the land, the ecology of the area, and the health of the forest. California forests are fire adapted, but the increasing severity and impacts of wildfires are not easily or wholly mitigated by management activities. What would you need to do to feel safe? Give thought to the financial aspects of owning forestland, because some management activities can be quite expensive.

Managing forestland can be challenging and rewarding. The more knowledge you have about the property, the more empowered you will be to act.

Places for more information (search the web for the following...)

1. [UC ANR Forest Research and Outreach](#)
2. [UC ANR Forest Stewardship](#)
3. [UC ANR Forestry and Range YouTube](#)
4. [UC ANR Forest Research and Outreach bog](#)
5. [UC ANR Fire Network](#)
6. [CA Association of Resource Conservation Districts](#)
7. [CA Prescribed Burn Association](#)
8. [CA Dept. of Forestry and Fire Protection](#)
9. [Forest Landowners of California](#)
10. [CA Board of Forestry Registered Professional Foresters Roster](#)



Ariel view of forest property. Photo by Forest Stewardship Workshop Participant.

Forestland assessment

The UC Forest Stewardship 'Before you buy forestland' checklist draws attention to factors you should consider, though each property will have its own set of unique characteristics and challenges. The checklist, while not all encompassing, is a way to spark ideas to further conversation with your realtor or natural resources professional.

Considerations include:

- Does the property location align with your current or anticipated lifestyle?
- Does the property's land characteristics create opportunities or barriers (i.e. water availability or access)?
- Are the trees healthy or stressed?
- How wildfire resilient is the forest?
- Does the built environment meet defensible space guidelines?
- What are the property's insurance needs?
- Do you have the knowledge, skills, ability and funds to actively manage a forest, including trees, plants, roads, and watercourses?



Landowners learning how to use and service forest vegetation management hand tools.
Photos by Kim Ingram, UCCE



When to reach out to a professional

You or your realtor may not have all the answers to these questions. Consider reaching out to your local UC Cooperative Extension office, Resource Conservation District (RCD), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), CAL FIRE office, Fire Safe Council, fire department, or a Registered Professional Forester (RPF) in your area for forest health and wildfire mitigation questions.

Zoning and property boundary questions should be directed to your county planning department. Questions about taxes, including property taxes, cost-share income and estate taxes, should be directed at your county tax assessor's office or Certified Public Accountant.

Additional Resources: “Before you buy forestland” 3-part series at: <https://ucanr.edu/site/forest-research-and-outreach/beforeyoubuy>

Explore videos, newsletters, blogs, publications centered around things you should know before you buy forestland.

Session 1: Forest Stewardship – Learn about motivations for buying forestland; what to look for when assessing forest health; and what kind of work is involved in managing a forest.

Session 2: Living with Wildfire – Learn about wildfire risk and evacuation planning; the importance of defensible space; and how to use prescribed fire as a fuel reduction method.

Session 3: Financial Practicalities – Learn about generating income from your forest; cost-share programs to assist with forest management; conservation easements; and navigating California's insurance landscape.