

## **Appendix 7**

Explanation of decision options. Twenty owners of large, forested properties (at least 20 ha in total area with at least 4 ha of forest) in Macon County, North Carolina, participated in a structured decision making (SDM) process consisting of two series of workshops with ten landowners each. In each series, landowners evaluated what they can do to their forest to maximize the achievement of their land use objectives. Landowners identified decision options that could contribute to fulfilling their objectives. These decision options are described here.

Property enrolled in the Present-Use Value (PUV) program is taxed at the present-use value rather than at the full market value. In general, forestland can be enrolled in the PUV program if there is at least one tract that is at least 8 ha in area and forestland management complies with a written sound management plan for commercial timber production. Then the enrolled forestland is assessed at its current use of commercially growing trees. Because land is assessed at a lower value under the PUV program, property taxes on enrolled land are lower than they would be at full market value. We evaluated the decision options involving the PUV program assuming that the landowner would have a forest management plan developed and timber sales administered by Forest Stewards in Jackson County, North Carolina, or a comparable organization. During crown thinning, the best trees are left about 12 m apart, which reduces competition among trees and facilitates growth. With group selection, all trees within 0.2-0.4 ha patches are cut, and in a shelterwood harvest with residual trees, trees are left 18-30.5 m apart to serve as seed trees.

A conservation easement is a legal agreement in which a property owner restricts some of their ownership rights. For example, development rights may be restricted in a conservation easement so that historic sites or ecological attributes will be protected. The landowner retains ownership of the property and can sell or bequeath the property, but the terms of the conservation easement continue with the property title for all future owners. Qualifying landowners may receive federal income and capital gains tax deductions, state income tax credits, lower property taxes, and/or lower estate taxes. We evaluated the decision options involving conservation easements assuming that the landowner would donate a permanent easement through the Land Trust for the Little Tennessee (LTLT) in Macon County, North Carolina, or a similar organization. For the past several years, funds have not been available to compensate landowners in Macon County for establishing permanent conservation easements.