

## Owning land carries heavy responsibilities: [www.heraldtimesonline.com](http://www.heraldtimesonline.com)

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This guest column was written by Carroll Ritter, environmental education coordinator for Sycamore Land Trust.

Those who plan for productive outputs from the land often are involved closely with management plans. They may have a plan to harvest timber, sell off tracts or transfer parcels to their children.

Land can be a good producer of sustainable products, especially if the owner has a well thought out plan that considers the land's capacities, amenities and limitations. It is especially valuable to understand soils, slopes, species, invasives, harvesting methods and impacts on the land from equipment, livestock and even people.

Trespass is a large issue and, when coupled with damage, can adversely affect the land and the owner's state of mind. Fortunately, help is available from your local conservation officer, district forester, Natural Resources Conservation Service conservationist, county Soil and Water Conservation District, consultant forester, or even a friend who understands these things.

Some landowners are particularly concerned about the future of their land. What happens when they are gone? Will anyone care about their wishes? What if I just want to enjoy the land as it is and as nature directs? What of the joy that comes from the big old trees, the calls of barred owls, the brook flowing through or the hillside resplendent with yellow trout lilies? What about tax issues, inheritance, etc?

The decisions on what to do with land are easy to some and troubling to others. Each of us will inevitably have to make decisions, whether in the short term, or in the future.

Organizations such as Sycamore Land Trust work with many types of landowners and are often able to assist with their individual needs. Several of the properties that Sycamore Land Trust holds are used for nature programs and school groups. This educational benefit is another value.

Whether productive uses are desired or perhaps absolute preservation, the strategies and people to give advice are out there. What you do with land is an individual choice, but for land's sake, make it well thought out.

Down to Earth welcomes reader submissions of no more than 400 words on topics of interest to the local environmental community. Submissions will be edited for grammar, spelling, punctuation, clarity, length and good taste.

Authors must provide first and last names, as well as relevant affiliations. Submission is no guarantee of publication, and there will be no compensation for articles. Please send contributions to [dte@heraldt.com](mailto:dte@heraldt.com).