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This is a new column in the *Florida Land Steward* newsletter that is provided as a service by the Florida Chapter of the Association of Consulting Foresters (ACF). We hope to provide timely articles about a variety of natural resource topics, though this first one will be more introductory in nature centered mostly around the concept and title of a Forester. A "forester" is defined by *the Dictionary of Forestry* (SAF, John A. Helms, editor, 1998) as "a professional engaged in the science and profession of forestry". Most if not all articles provided in the *Florida Land Steward* are composed by those with professional degrees and training in forestry, wildlife management, natural resource science, or other related fields. Many of these authors have also obtained certifications through professional organizations such as the Society of American Foresters (SAF), the Wildlife Society, ACF, and others. Why can this be important? One reason is that in Florida, anyone can use the business title of Forester or Wildlife Biologist even if they have no formal training or experience. Our neighboring states have Registered Forester laws; you must be recognized as a Registered Forester with the respective State Forestry Boards to advertise yourself to the public as a "Forester". Florida also had a Registered Forester law at one time, but it was discontinued in 1979 by Governor Bob Graham.

State agencies typically have minimum professional education standards when hiring "foresters" or "biologists". When employing a private sector forester, landowners might want to utilize professional foresters with credentials from organizations that advance the professionalism, competency, and ethics of professional forestry. Two well-regarded designations include full membership in the Association of Consulting Foresters and designation as a Certified Forester (CF) with SAF. For qualifying foresters, the post nominal initials "ACF" and/or "CF" will appear after their names in correspondence. Both designations require minimum college educational requirements, on-going continued education standards, and adherence to a code of ethics or be potentially subject to discipline/expulsion. SAF was established in 1900 as the professional organization for professional foresters (& now related resource professionals) and ACF was established in 1948 specifically for consulting foresters. Both organizations have stood the test of time.

I do not know if I have ever met a practicing professional forester that has expressed the thought, "I wish I had chosen a career in a different field other than forestry". The nature of forestry work varies widely by employer and position, though most positions require an interesting blend of biological and social sciences and often economic/business skills. If you know a young man or woman desiring to become a professional forester, where would they start? My recommendation is to obtain an AS degree and find a university with a SAF Accredited forestry program. In Florida, the University of Florida, School of Forest Resources and Conservation (SFRC) has multiple SAF Accredited forestry programs with diverse specializations including Forest Resource Management, Urban Forestry, Business Management, Protected Areas Management, and Recreational Resources Management. Still other non-accredited forestry and natural resource programs exist at SFRC, and if looking at a career outside of forestry, programs in Fisheries & Aquatic Management and Geomatics, Surveying & Mapping. Other SAF Accredited forestry programs exist in many other states.

It is with great pleasure that the FL-ACF can potentially assist the forest landowners of Florida in a small way as a contributor to this newsletter. Forest landowner's goals are unique to each ownership, but are often driven by a desire to conserve the land for its value to provide income, wildlife habitat,

environmental benefits, beauty, recreation, solitude and many other benefits. In future articles, we hope to provide you information that will assist in making informed decisions to accomplish these goals. I believe Stewardship Forest / Tree Farm landowners commonly feel strongly about practically employing a land ethic in the management of their forests. I leave you with a quote from Aldo Leopold, forester & ecologist, who eloquently argued for a land ethic in his writings many decades ago.

“Examine each question in terms of what is ethically and aesthetically right, as well as what is economically expedient. A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.”

Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1949)