

A photograph of autumn leaves in various shades of red, orange, and yellow, set against a clear blue sky. The leaves are attached to thin, dark brown branches. The image is used as a background for the title slide.

# Landowner - Consulting Forester Relationships: Implications for Engagement

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# Acknowledgements

- Ian Foertsch, Master of Forestry student
- Center for Research on Sustainable Forests Family Forest Program



# Past & Future Support

- Sustainability Solutions Initiative

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maine's sustainability solutions initiative



*Supported by National Science Foundation award EPS-0904155 to Maine EPSCoR at the University of Maine.*

# Introduction

- Assumption:
  - Consulting foresters are uniquely able to help landowners with small woodlot stewardship.
- Yet, according to the Maine NWOS:
  - Only 29% received advice or information about their woodlot in the last 5 years, and
  - Of those, only 26% had private consultants as their advice or information source

# Research Questions

- What encourages landowners to work with foresters?
- To what extent do landowners perceive a conflict of interest?
- What are landowner preferences for billing?
- What services are most important to landowners?
- How well have consulting foresters performed these services?

# Methods

- Survey
  - Built using academic literature
  - Feedback from Association of Consulting Foresters
  - Pre-tested on real landowners

## Maine's Landowner Survey



### PLEASE READ FIRST:

The person most familiar with your land should complete this survey. This is an effort by the School of Forest Resources to understand the issues and values important to the woodland owners in Maine.

Thank you!

# Methods

- Sample Selection
  - Bangor & Portland regions
  - Three landowner groups

Sample	Size	RTS	Completed	Response Rate
Harvested with a Forester (F)	300	27	174	63%
Harvested without a Forester (NF)	300	30	110	41%
No Recent Harvest (No Harvest)	300	31	120	45%



**WHO RESPONDED?**

# Results

Characteristic	Forester Used – Mean or Percentage	No Forester Used – Mean or Percentage	No Harvest – Mean or Percentage	Total Sample
Age	64 yrs	61 yrs	65 yrs	63 yrs
College	65%	24%	52%	50%
Full Time Employment	44%	46%	45%	45%
Retired	37%	32%	36%	35%
Male	75%	81%	74%	76%

# Results

Characteristic	Forester Used – Mean or Percentage	No Forester Used – Mean or Percentage	No Harvest – Mean or Percentage	Total Sample
Acres	143 ac	126 ac	56 ac	111 ac
Length of ownership	30 yrs	28 yrs	30 yrs	30 yrs
Homesite	72%	70%	74%	72%
Written management plan	70%	35%	46%	54%
Tree Growth Tax Law	72%	44%	60%	62%



**WHAT ENCOURAGES  
LANDOWNERS TO WORK WITH A  
FORESTER?**

# Results

Reason	Forester Used - Mean	No Forester Used - Mean	Significance
Wood market knowledge	4.24	2.67	p<0.001
Forestry knowledge	4.09	3.00	p<0.001
Regulatory knowledge	4.01	2.65	p<0.001
Wanted rep. with mills & loggers	3.90	2.45	p<0.001
Past experiences with foresters	3.74	2.76	p<0.001

Mean values on a Likert-scale  
5 = Very important, 1 = Very unimportant

The background of the slide features a soft-focus photograph of thin, brown tree branches with several leaves. The leaves are in various stages of autumn, showing shades of yellow, orange, and red. The background is a pale, clear blue sky. The text is centered in the lower half of the image.

**TO WHAT EXTENT DO  
LANDOWNERS PERCEIVE A  
CONFLICT OF INTEREST?**

# Results

Agree or disagree that forester:	Mean
Maintained ability of property to produce valuable timber	4.56
Receptive to my input and concerns	4.47
Followed my wishes as much as possible	4.45
Acted in the best interests of the land	4.36
Acted in my best interests financially	4.31
Sought to limit soil damage and water quality impacts	4.25
Sought to protect wildlife habitat or biodiversity	4.21
Recognized rare and sensitive natural communities	3.95

Mean values on a Likert-scale  
5 = Strongly agree, 1 = Strongly disagree



**WHAT ARE LANDOWNER  
PREFERENCES FOR BILLING?**

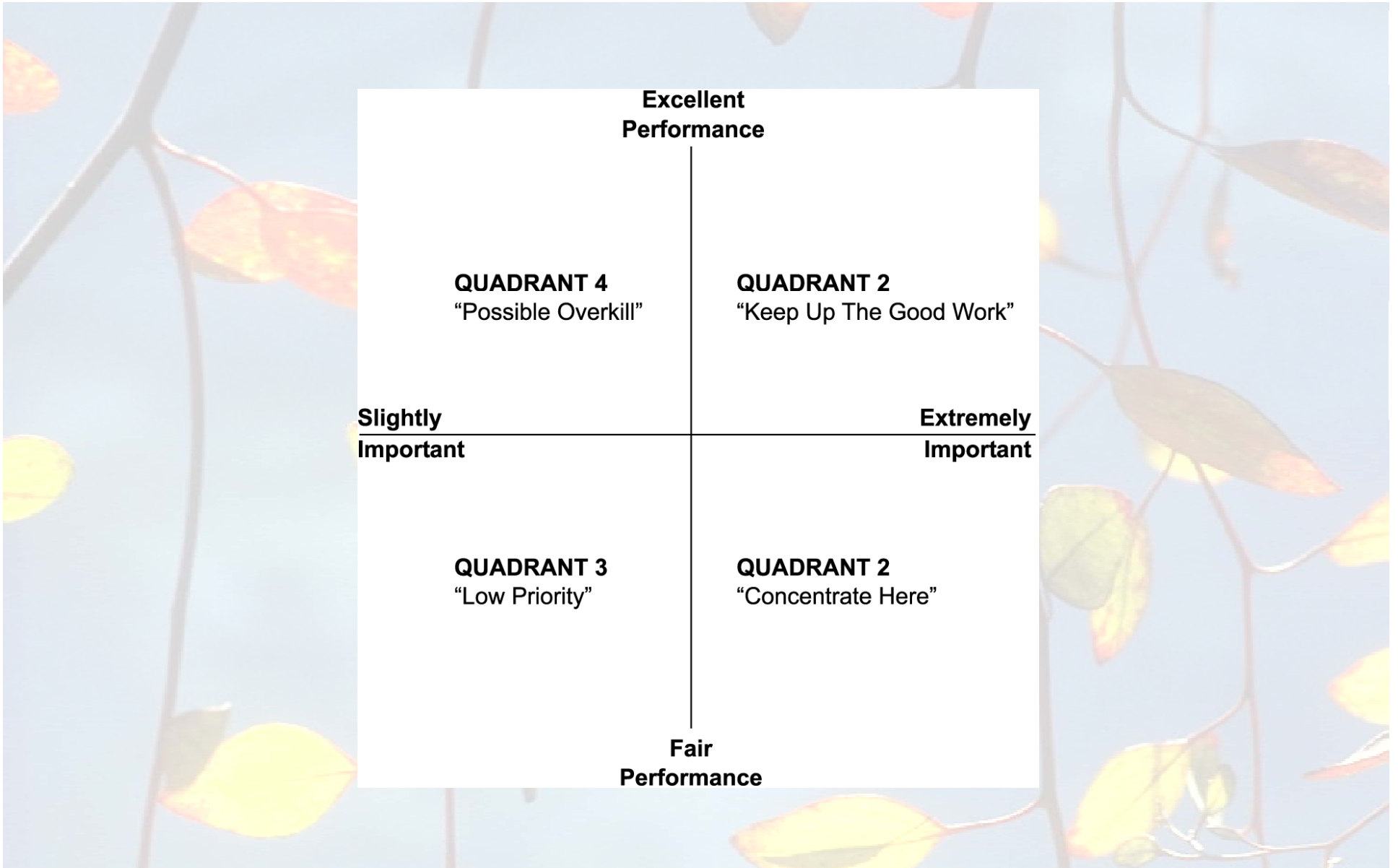
# Results

<b>Billing Method</b>	<b>Past - Timber Harvest (if applicable)</b>	<b>Future - Timber Harvest</b>	<b>Future - Wildlife Habitat Improvement</b>	<b>Future - Writing a Management Plan</b>
\$/hour	20%	36%	49%	70%
% of sale	38%	38%	24%	10%
\$/mbf	12%	19%	14%	7%
Other	30%	8%	14%	13%



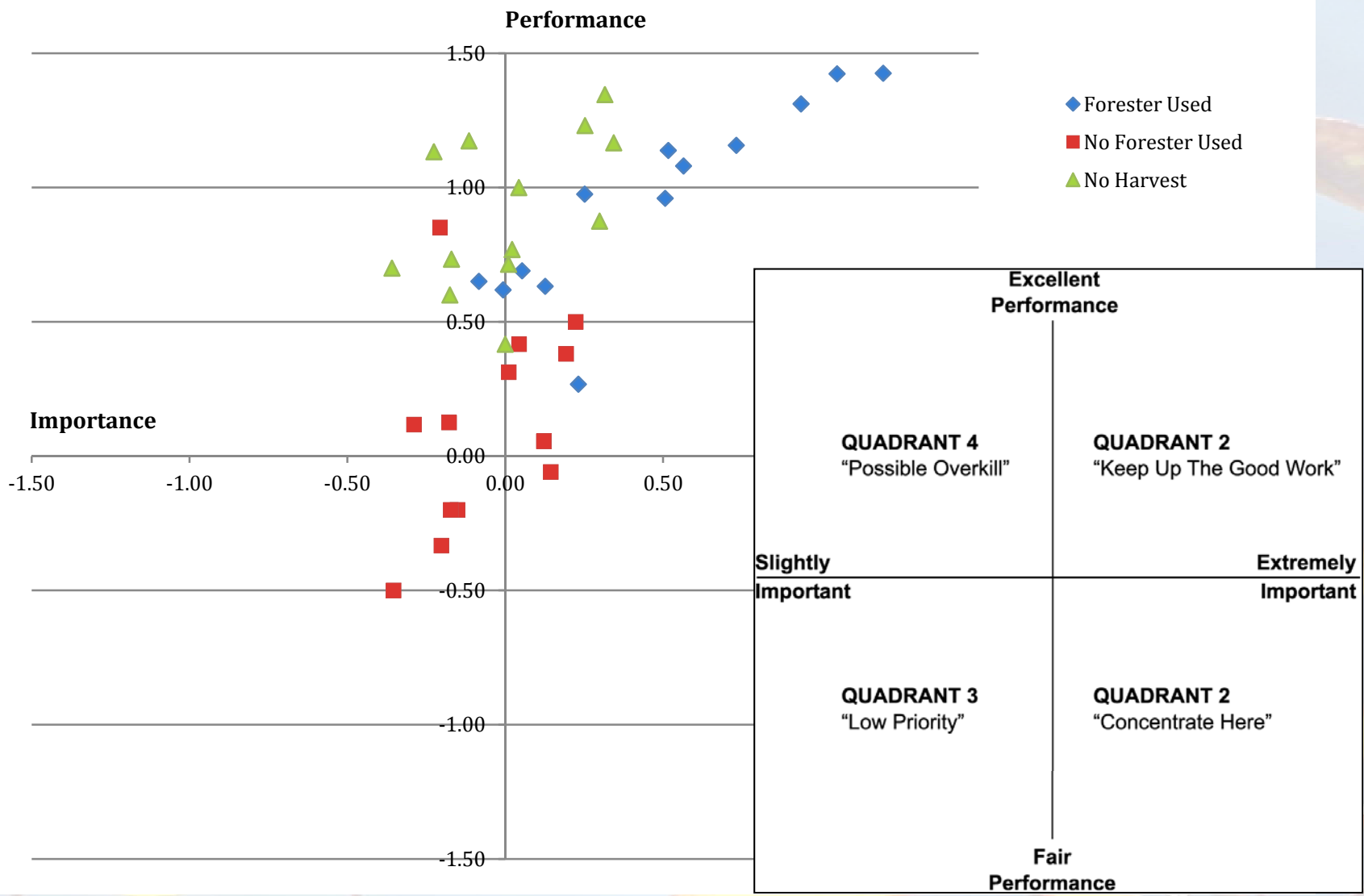
**WHAT SERVICES ARE MOST  
IMPORTANT TO LANDOWNERS?**

**HOW WELL HAVE CONSULTING  
FORESTERS PERFORMED THESE  
SERVICES?**



# Possible Services

- Conducting timber sales
- Writing management plans
- Performing timber stand improvement
- Identification of rare plants
- Boundary maintenance
- Pruning
- Land surveying
- Tree planting
- Forest pest/disease inspection
- Forest tax consulting
- GIS and mapping
- Wildlife habitat improvement
- NTFP assessments and management



# Next Time

- Better capture the “No Harvest” landowners
- Delve deeper into the question of why and when landowners engage foresters
- Evaluate perceived conflict of interest and other reasons with “No Forester Used” landowners
- Expand the range of services tested

# Take Home Messages

- Few landowner or land characteristic differences between groups
  - Need to pay attention to the intangibles
- Socioeconomic status a striking difference for “No Forester Used” landowners
  - Need to tailor communication

# Take Home Messages

- Once engaged with a forester, landowners rate their knowledge and advice as valuable, with little perceived conflict of interest
  - The first step is often the hardest
- Give careful thought to billing preferences
  - There appears to be clear signals for fee-for-service

# Take Home Messages

- Few current services were in the “Concentrate Here” quadrant
  - Need to look at “Possible Overkill” areas
- “No Forester Used” and “No Harvest” had, overall, low importance for many current services
  - Need to look at more services

# Questions?



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