Reading your Land

Adapted from the Virginia Forest Landowner Education Program, *Dylan Jenkins*

instructions

1. Suggested tools to bring with you: camera, pen, paper and tree ID guide. (a great pocket version is **Tree Finder** (*May Theilgaard Watts),* $3.50 from www.naturestudy.com.
2. Take a walk through the forested and open land of your property. As you walk look for evidence of human use and natural disturbances. Record your observations even if they are obvious. Your record will be helpful if you decide to harvest or make land improvements. It will also assist your family or future owners in carrying out management plans.
3. Use the back of this sheet or another piece of paper or draw a rough map of your property. When you record disturbance or land use in the table below, also note the location on your map. Also note water bodies, roads, caves or significant land features. When you're finished, you will have a rough timeline of your property and its past use.
4. You may want to combine the information and photos you collect here with a topo map or aerial photo. Affix photos or your notes to the corresponding area on the topo map. It may be an activity the entire family wants to participate in. With a little guidance, kids can learn a lot about the surrounding forest. Their curiosity is particularly useful for observing nature's clues.

past land use and disturbance

	human use/disturbance																							natural disturbance						
	structures					agriculture					forestry					water			insect/disease					weather				wildlife		
location, date and size (of each disturbance)	Building/foundation	Dam/pond	Fence/wall/rock pile	Road	Utility (EG: gas or power line)	Drainage ditch	Farming	Gullies/soil erosion	Orchard	Streambank erosion	Cut/pruned limbs	Logging road/trail	Planted trees/rows	Scars on bark	Stumps	Streams or ponds	Bridges/other water crossings	Caves or sinkholes	Damaged leaves	Needle or leaf decline	Peeling bark	Tree decline/death	Exposed or rotten wood	Broken tree limbs/tree tops	Blown over trees	Crooked tree trunks	Charred bark or limbs	Beaver dams/ponds	Heavy deer browse	Nests/dens