

INDIVIDUAL TREE- VERSUS STAND-LEVEL APPROACHES TO THINNING: IS IT A CHOICE OF
ONE OR THE OTHER, OR A COMBINATION OF BOTH?

Christopher A. Nowak¹

Abstract: Thinning guidelines have existed for most eastern hardwood forests for 20 to 30 years. While these guidelines are presented in varying degrees of detail, they generally all contain recommendations on levels of residual stand density and stand structure, along with information on crop tree requirements. Recent attempts have been made to simplify thinning guidelines by using an individual tree approach, referred to as "crop tree management". This is in contrast to the "area-wide approach", which purportedly focuses on the stand-level alone. In this paper, I will show how the two approaches can be used together to improve thinning practice. In such a combined approach, the main focus of thinning remains on the crop tree, and the long standing tools of stand density and stand structure are used to direct stand development along desired paths.

¹Research Forester, U. S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, Northeastern Forest Experiment Station, Forestry Sciences Laboratory, P.O. Box 928, Warren, PA 16365.