

Timber Harvest Cost Summary

When a landowner wants to harvest timber on their property, there are four types of expenses to consider, and each one varies depending on the market and government oversight.

Registered Professional Forester (RPF) Services

In order to harvest timber in California, a Registered Professional Forester must conduct the cruise, mark the trees to be removed, and file the necessary paperwork. Typical rates for a consulting forester are \$90 per hour and for a technician they are \$60 per hour.

Logging

Either the forester or landowner will contract with a logger to cut the trees, remove tops and limbs and cut them into logs, move them to a “landing”, and load the logs onto a truck. The logger can also clean up the logging slash for an additional cost. Loggers in California must be Licensed Timber Operators (LTO). The cost is based on what kind of logging will be done (tractor, cable, or helicopter), the volume per acre, and the silvicultural method, as clearcutting is less expensive than single tree selection. For the Santa Cruz area, the cost is calculated in units of dollars per one thousand board feet (MBF) harvested. Typical costs for this area on flat ground are approximately \$215 per MBF. A log truck can hold an average of 5,000 board feet (5 MBF), so one truckload of logs costs approximately \$1,075 to log.

Trucking

Once the logs are loaded onto a truck, there are costs associated with getting the logs to the mill, including the hourly wage of the truck driver, fuel, and truck maintenance. The typical rate in this area at this time is \$110 per hour, and the closest mill is a 1 hour and 12 minute round trip drive for a regular car. If a truck were to take 1 hour and 20 minutes to make the round trip, the cost would be about \$150 per trip.

Yield Taxes

The landowner is also required to pay a yield tax, which varies by species. Tax rates are adjusted every six months. The tax rates expressed in “MBF” (thousand board feet) are approximately \$20 per MBF for Coastal Redwood and \$10 per MBF for Douglas-fir.