

# Modern technology partners with traditional skills

*This forester utilizes the latest GIS, GPS, and digital imagery technology to meet the needs of his clients.*

**T**om Hittle (B.S. 1983) graduated from college over 20 years ago, but he and his employees use the latest tools in their work throughout Wisconsin, Michigan and Minnesota. Tom says that one of the best parts of his job as Forestry and GIS Operations Manager is working with new technologies, including GIS and GPS applications, digital imagery, and digital mapping applications.

Tom's employer, Steigerwaldt Land Services, is based in Tomahawk, WI. The company provides forest land management and investment advice, forest inventory, GIS and digital mapping services, real estate appraisals and brokerage services, right-of-way appraisals, and land acquisitions services. Clients include federal and state natural resource agencies, land conservation groups, and industrial and private forest landowners.

Tom is responsible for many of the day-to-day business operations of this 17-person company. "I work extensively with clients tailoring our services to meet their needs and then with our staff to accomplish the project goals," says Tom. He enjoys the diversity of his job, its fast pace, and daily challenges. As a small, independent company, Tom says they feel fortunate to have control over what they do and how they tackle many aspects of their work. Tom has even served as an expert witness, testifying in court on timber volumes, values, and forest management practices for his clients.



*Tom Hittle enjoys utilizing the latest technology to meet the needs of his clients.*

Looking back on his time at the UW-Madison and his forestry training, Tom notes that a highlight was his internship with Wisconsin DNR between his junior and senior years. The internship allowed him to experience first-hand the responsibilities of a forester. He still maintains contact with his internship supervisor, Tim Mulhern (B.S. 1976), Wisconsin DNR Forestry Division Deputy Administrator, and says they have continued to work together on projects over the years. He also feels his education

helped him think "outside the box" and apply his knowledge and skills to new and varying situations.

Tom's advice to current students: Make sure you have a good grasp of the fundamentals but keep an open mind and be willing to continue the learning process beyond college. This includes being involved with professional organizations like the Society of American Foresters (SAF) and keeping up with new developments in the field through periodicals and newsletters. He also advises students to identify a special interest within the broad area of forestry and to gain expertise in that specific area, such as forest pest management, digital mapping technologies, timber sampling/inventory methods, or real estate appraisal or law. As an employer now himself, he says these special skills make one job candidate stand out over the others.