Where Applicable:

Rake only is a method of mechanical site preparation used to pile or windrow debris after an intensive final harvest. This operation serves to facilitate planting operations and/or improve access for other more intensive site preparation equipment. This method can only be used if there is not a large number of stumps or standing stems present on site. If too many stumps or standing materials exist, shearing and piling, mulching or some other site preparation method would need to be used.

Description:

Rake only is accomplished by using a dozer with a rake blade to push debris into piles or windrows. The rake blade should be equipped with teeth on the lower edge to reduce the amount of large roots near the soil surface and minimize soil movement during raking. Once piled, the debris can then be burned. If piles do not take up a large amount of area or diversity for wildlife habitat is desired, these piles can be left and planted around. On slopes exceeding 7 percent, parallel windrows should be located no more than 150 feet apart with openings of at least 20 feet for every 150 feet of windrow. Ends of windrows should be at least 66 feet from property boundaries and residual stands. The Streamside Management Zones (SMZ’s) along streams should be protected by planning the use of this equipment so as to minimize disturbance of these areas. Site preparation activities should skirt SMZ’s and stream channels and any debris should be placed well above the ordinary high water mark of any stream, or body of open water. The recommended time frame for rake only is during the months of June through September.

Benefits:

Raking helps to reduce the amount of large roots near the soil surface minimizing residual sprouting thus reducing competition with planted pines. Regardless of the planting method used, ridding the site of debris will help facilitate a better planting job. Quite often sites that have been raked might also be wildland machine planted resulting in more uniform spacing and better survival.

Other Recommendations:

Care should be taken to disturb as little soil as possible during this procedure. As with any mechanical site preparation, this operation should be conducted so that windrows are pushed up along the contour of the land to help prevent soil erosion. Windrows should be as narrow as possible. Avoid this practice on steep slopes, deep sandy soil types, and other highly erodible soils. Extra care should be taken to avoid soil compaction on clayey soils and on wet sites.

Cost:

This operation normally costs approximately $80-$100 per acre depending on tract size, amount of debris, availability of vendors, access, etc.