



TEXAS A&M FOREST SERVICE

Timber Management: Timber Harvest BMPs

Forest landowners, primarily those who have never harvested timber before, are often unaware of the outcomes associated with a timber harvesting operation, and the need for Best Management Practices (BMPs) to protect their water resources. Knowing what to expect or stipulate can help prevent misunderstandings and hard feelings, as well as protect the health and productivity of your forestland for future rotations. However, it is also important to keep your expectations in balance with an efficient operation. Remember, the more demands you place on your contractor, the less income you will receive from the operation. Listed below are some reasonable BMP expectations that forest landowners should have regarding operations conducted on their property.

- Roads should be left in good condition. Forest roads should be reshaped if necessary and stabilized to prevent erosion from occurring. Ditches and water control structures should not direct runoff into streams. However, it should not be expected that these roads will look like interstate highways.
- Water resources should be protected. Buffers, or streamside management zones (SMZs), should be left along streams and other sensitive areas. Careful, selective harvesting may be done; however, roads, landings, and firebreaks should be located outside of these areas. Equipment and logging debris should be kept out of stream channels if possible.
- Streams should be crossed appropriately. If stream crossings cannot be avoided, then the least number of crossings necessary should be used. Crossings should be suited to the intended traffic, duration, and hydrological characteristics of the stream. Dirt crossings should not be used.
- Operations should be halted when the tract is too wet. Rutting caused from operating during wet conditions

can lead not only to impacts to water quality, but site productivity as well. Operations should cease when significant rutting is evident.

- Trash generated from the operation should be disposed properly. Tires, hydraulic fluid containers, batteries, seedling bags, and other trash should be properly disposed of and not left on site.
- Operations should be conducted on the contour. Conducting operations on the contour can significantly reduce the amount of erosion, especially during mechanical site preparation and machine planting.
- Chemicals should be kept out of waterways. Herbicides and fertilizers should not be applied directly to waterbodies. Equipment should be serviced away from streams.
- For more information, please visit <http://tfsweb.tamu.edu/BMP> or contact your local Texas A&M Forest Service office.



An SMZ, a minimum of 50 feet wide, should be left along both sides of all perennial and intermittent streams.