



BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES – A WAY TO PROTECT YOUR LAND

An estimated 50 percent of our nation's freshwater resources originate from forests that cover about one-third of the United States. Forests provide a number of essential economic, social, and environmental functions in addition to supplying us with the cleanest water of any land use. They absorb rainfall, refill aquifers, slow and filter stormwater runoff, reduce floods, and provide habitat for wildlife.

Roughly 14.4 million acres of forested lands in Texas are suitable for the production of timber. Forest operations associated with harvesting and regeneration can potentially generate nonpoint source (NPS) pollution that degrades water quality if done improperly. Forestry Best Management Practices (BMPs) are the principal means of controlling NPS pollution during forestry activities.

WHAT CAN I DO TO PROTECT MY PROPERTY?

- Use a professional forester to help plan and conduct your forest management, and be sure to choose a logger that has been trained in BMPs when harvesting your timber.
- Become familiar with BMPs and include them in your timber sale contract.
- Use available resources such as aerial photographs, topographic maps, and soil surveys in conjunction with site reconnaissance to plan forestry operations. An online application, Plan My Land Operation, located at <http://texasforestinfo.com> can help with planning forest operations.
- Leave a strip of trees at least 50 feet wide along both sides of streams when harvesting your timber to prevent sediments from entering the water, maintain cool water temperatures, and to provide valuable wildlife habitat.
- Prevent erosion from your forest roads by installing appropriate water control structures that allow water to drain quickly away from streams and wetlands. Stabilize and retire roads that you no longer use.
- Avoid building roads across streams whenever possible. When necessary, cross streams at straight narrow sections and at right angles. Remove temporary crossings and any logging debris from stream channels, and be sure disturbed stream banks are reshaped and stabilized following your operations.
- Make sure the ground is stable enough for heavy equipment so rutting does not occur.
- Conduct operations on the contour of the land.
- Read and follow manufacturers' labels before applying silvicultural chemicals such as fertilizers and pesticides.
- Properly collect and dispose of all equipment fluids and trash associated with the operation.
- Join the Texas Forestry Association and your local county landowner association to stay up to date on the latest forest information.

Forestry BMPs are voluntary conservation practices that help protect your soil and water resources, two key elements necessary for growing a healthy, sustainable, and productive forest. BMPs can include methods such as leaving a buffer zone of trees next to a stream, installing a culvert to cross a waterway, or establishing grass on forest roads to prevent erosion.

Texas A&M Forest Service (TFS), with cooperation from the forest sector, monitors the implementation of these guidelines by evaluating randomly selected forest operations. Compliance with the non-regulatory BMPs has steadily risen to 95 percent, according to a 2011 survey by TFS.

Computer models have estimated that over the past 25 years, BMPs have prevented over 100,000 tons of soil per year from eroding off East Texas forests; enough to cover a football field, end zone to end zone, 40 feet deep. Each year, these practices keep over 12,000 tons of soil out of our lakes and reservoirs.

In Texas, the forest sector continues to demonstrate that it can voluntarily maintain and improve water quality while managing forestlands. We strongly urge you to use BMPs on your future forest operations and help protect the quality of Texas' water resources. With your help, Texans can continue enjoying clean water produced from sustainable forests for years to come.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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