

# MANAGING HARVEST RESIDUE

## AN OVERLOOKED RESOURCE

Residue generated from logging operations, if managed properly, can be an important resource for landowners. Generally referred to as woody biomass, this material typically includes limbs, tops, bark, and unutilized trees. Other sources of woody biomass may include pre-commercial thinning and stand improvement operations. A professional forester can help advise you on when these operations may be necessary.

Harvest residue can potentially serve many important functions. Distributing this material throughout the site can provide additional organic matter and nutrients to the soil, especially on deficient sites. It can also be used to stabilize sensitive, erosion prone areas, such as skid trails on steep slopes or stream crossing approaches. Increasingly, this residue is now also being considered as a potential alternative (renewable and sustainable) raw material source for the production of energy products.

As oil and gasoline prices rise, there is increased interest in exploring woody biomass as a raw material source for energy production, whether this is for electrical generation, advanced biofuel development, or other energy products. This is primarily due to the fact that woody biomass is a renewable feedstock produced from currently unused or underutilized material, and is considered by many to be 'carbon neutral', releasing carbon when utilized in similar amounts to that used for tree growth.

Other practical measures include timing operations to avoid wet, saturated soils, combining biomass harvests with other management activities, avoiding removal of stumps, root systems, snags, and other material from steep slopes and sensitive areas, and promptly reforesting the site.

In summary, effectively managing harvest residue is part of sustainable forest management. As markets continue to develop for woody biomass, landowners should stay informed in order to be better positioned to responsibly achieve their forest management objectives.

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR RESIDUE MANAGEMENT

Harvesting this residue can produce many benefits for landowners including:

- additional source of income
- reduced site preparation costs and increased efficacy
- improved access and aesthetics
- reduced wildfire risk
- improved forest health

As with other forest operations, Texas best management practices (BMPs) should be followed when harvesting woody biomass. BMPs are designed to protect water quality, but also provide other benefits including wildlife habitat/biodiversity, soil productivity, and aesthetics. Leaving streamside management zones, or buffers, along waterways and sensitive areas not only to protect water quality, but can also aid in biodiversity. Implementing water control structures (waterbars, wing ditches, etc.) on roadways help prevent erosion, protecting water quality and soil productivity.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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