

Sustainable Forests

A resource for Georgia landowners, sponsored by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative Implementation Committee of Georgia.

A Publication of the SFI Implementation Committee of Georgia

Fall / Winter 2005

Since 1995, the Georgia Committee for the Sustainable Forestry Initiative has promoted the practice of sustainable forestry in Georgia. We've sponsored logger and forester education and we've communicated with forest landowners like you. Why? Because these groups are important to the future of Georgia forestry. As landowners, you own more than 65 percent of the state's forested area and



contribute both to our economy and quality of life in Georgia. This periodic publication is designed to help you get the most of your forests. We would appreciate your feedback and suggestions on topics that are important to you.



A Closer Look at Your Forest

Robert Frost wrote about “the love of bare November days...the desolate, deserted trees, the faded earth, the heavy sky.”

Late fall into winter is a great time for reflection, for taking stock. As a landowner, it's also a good time to take a critical look at your land. When the leaves are off the trees and the undergrowth has died back, you can really assess the condition of your property.

In this dormant season, take a closer look at your timberland and make sure you're applying Best Management Practices for Forestry. In addition to the trees, consider the condition of your forest roads and culverts—are they stable and not eroding? Are your streams or wet areas clear from debris, and is the water flowing clear and cool?

If you're unfamiliar with BMPs, read about them now. They're not just nice things to do—they protect your property and help you avoid costly fines.

BMPs Formalize Common Sense Practices

BMPs is the common acronym for Best Management Practices that are designed to minimize erosion and potential sedimentation into streams and lakes during forestry activities.

BMPs are essentially common sense practices that have been written down in a manual and formalized. Georgia BMPs for Forestry were developed with input from foresters, hydrologists, soil scientists, fisheries biologists and environmentalists. Georgia has a very diverse terrain—from the North Georgia mountains and the Piedmont to the Southern coastal plain—so it is important to understand the BMP needs for your part of the state, but there are a few categories of BMPs that are important statewide:

Streamside Management Zone or SMZ: This is the area next to a perennial or intermittent stream. The SMZ



should be managed to keep shade over the streams and to serve as a filter zone to trap any erosion from upland areas. These zones vary in width based on topography and stream type, but range from 20 to 100 feet on an intermittent stream and from 40 to 100 feet on a perennial stream.

Timber can be harvested in SMZs, but some portion of the trees should be left to provide shade over the stream.

Perennial streams require that 50 percent of the canopy cover be left within the zone while intermittent streams require 25 percent canopy cover. SMZs should never be clearcut. Even BMPs for agriculture recommend a 15-foot, no-cut buffer next to streams. Landowners who are constructing ponds can

clearcut the SMZs provided they get the proper permits from the Army Corps of Engineers.

Roads: Another important category is roads. During harvesting operation, these areas will experience a great deal of heavy truck traffic; therefore, they should be planned to accommodate this heavy usage. On many private landowner tracts, there are existing woods roads and crossings that will not hold up to this expected traffic. Old roads and crossings should be evaluated as they may already be out of BMP compliance. If they will not hold up, they will need to be relocated or reconstructed to meet BMP requirements. While this could be an added expense, with minimal upkeep, they will be there for future operations.

Stream Crossings: The Georgia Forestry Commission has observed that stream crossings in particular are not very well planned before an operation begins. Consequently, loggers are often not compensated by the landowner or buyer to construct proper stream crossings. This puts the landowner in violation with the Federal Clean Water Act. There are 15 federally mandated BMPs to consider for stream and wetland crossings. Therefore, every forest road and stream crossing to be used during a forestry practice should be evaluated and the costs associated with any improvements determined before an invitation to bid goes out to perspective buyers.



Q&A:

Compelling Reasons to Follow BMPs

Beyond protecting the value of your property, if you don't practice BMPs, you could be in violation of Federal or Georgia water quality acts, and that can lead to fines.

Q. Are BMPs voluntary or regulatory?

A. They are voluntary in the sense that landowners are not required to get a permit from the Georgia Environmental Protection Division or any county erosion-control issuing authority—specifically for a timber harvest or mechanical site preparation for an ongoing forestry operation. However, BMPs are required in certain sensitive areas identified by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, such as Protected River Corridors, mountaintops, water supply watersheds, and all stream or wetland crossings.

Q. Are there fines associated with non-compliance?

A. Yes. Under the Georgia Water Quality Control Act, fines and penalties can be as much as \$50,000 per day if a water quality standard such as turbidity or stream temperature has been exceeded due to non-compliance with BMPs. The law states that landowners are ultimately responsible for any violations.

Q. Have there ever been any fines made against a landowner?

A. Yes. A South Georgia landowner was recently fined \$25,000. In North Georgia, a landowner was fined approximately \$350,000.

Q. Where can I find more detailed BMPs guidelines for my part of the state?

A. The Georgia BMP Manual for Forestry is a 64-page manual that provides detailed guidelines for loggers, landowners and foresters. Call 1-800-GA-TREES to request a copy or to get your questions answered.

Q. Who monitors BMPs?

A. The Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) has been designated by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division to coordinate the forestry water quality program in Georgia. GFC foresters provide BMP advice, investigate complaints, and monitor BMP implementation. They have a supply of BMP manuals, sample timber sale contracts, maintain a call log of reported complaints, and are available to monitor ongoing forestry operations on behalf of landowners.

Improving the View



Although BMPs for forestry do not specifically address visual quality, forestry operations are highly visible and subject to the perceptions and opinions of the public. Conducting forestry operations in an aesthetically acceptable manner is important to the future of forestry. Careful planning is recommended to proactively improve forest aesthetics. Practices that can improve visual quality include:

- Removing litter and spreading slash
- Minimizing mud on paved roads
- Minimizing soil disturbance
- Considering a vegetative buffer in sensitive areas
- Locating logging decks out of public view
- Configuring the shape, size and place of the harvest
- Leaving scattered trees around the margins of harvest areas

Become a Georgia Tree Farmer Today!

The American Tree Farm System (ATFS) is the oldest and largest conservation, education, certification and advocacy program for private forest landowners in the United States. Enrollment in ATFS is free and the benefits of becoming a Tree Farmer include free advice from a registered forestry professional, an inspection of your forestland, access to unique learning opportunities and publications, and networking opportunities with other landowners. ATFS members play a lead advocacy role in the public policy arena. SFI program participants also recognize certified Tree Farmers as a source of certified wood.



There are already 3,200 Tree Farmers in Georgia. Why don't you add your name to the list? Contact us for more information today.

Return the Tree Farm Reply Card or contact:

Tim Lowrimore
Georgia Forestry Association
P.O. Box 1217
Forsyth, GA 31029
478-992-8110



Yes, Please send me some information on Georgia Tree Farm.

Name:

Address:

City: State & Zip Code:

E-mail Address:

County Where Property is Located:

Number of Acres Owned:

Would you be interested in local landowner meetings? ____ Yes ____ No

Are there any forestry-related topics that you would like to have more information about?

--

Georgia Forestry Association
P.O. Box 1217
Forsyth, GA 31029

Be Prepared When Disaster Strikes

Hurricanes, tornadoes, and ice storms cause extensive forest damage by uprooting, wounding, bending and breaking trees. Standing water, which often accompanies hurricanes, can cause additional stress and mortality. When disaster strikes, be ready to deal with damaged timber. Read more on: <http://www.forestpests.org/storm/index.html>.

Christmas Tree Trivia

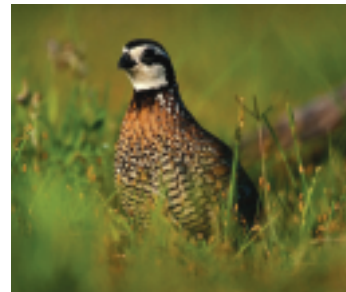
- Approximately 25 to 30 million real Christmas trees are sold in the U.S. every year.
- The top-sellers are: balsam fir, Douglas fir, Fraser fir, noble fir, Scotch pine, Virginia pine and white pine.
- Oregon, North Carolina, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Michigan are the top producers of Christmas trees; Georgia is No. 22 on the list.

Source: National Christmas Tree Association



Attracting Bobwhite Quail

If you're interested in building bobwhite quail and other grassland species populations, review the information available through the Georgia Wildlife Resources Division or order a copy of a new DVD, "CP33 Upland Habitat Buffers" from Mississippi State University. Georgia DNR supported the DVD that details the benefits and implementation of the Conservation Reserve Program's field buffer practice for quail habitat. Order the DVD from Rick Hamrick by e-mailing rhamrick@cfr.msstate.edu or write Rick at Mississippi State, Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Mississippi State, MS 39762-9690.



For More Information Request a comprehensive landowner information packet from the SFI Implementation Committee of Georgia. Call 706-542-7691 or log on to www.sfi-georgia.org.



Sustainable Forestry Initiative
SFI Implementation Committee
Warnell School of Forest Resources
University of Georgia
Athens, Georgia 30602-2152

www.sfi-georgia.org

Presorted
1st Class Mail
US Postage
PAID
Permit # 165