

# Best Management Practices

## Protect Our Water Resources and Save You Time and Money

What's the best way to put the most money in your pocket from a timber harvest? Did you know that water quality Best Management Practices can actually save you money? What is the benefit of properly closing out a tract after a timber harvest?

If you didn't know the answer to one or more of these questions, or if you had to stop and think for a moment before answering, the information in this pamphlet is for you!

The Virginia Department of Forestry is very interested in helping you get the most out of your timber harvest and in helping you to ensure that the quality of Virginia's water is the best it can be.

And, these two goals don't have to be mutually exclusive! By following the tips in this pamphlet, you'll be well on your way to a successful, profitable and legal harvest.

### For More Information

For more information about VDOF services or programs, please contact your local Virginia Department of Forestry office or visit:

**[www.dof.virginia.gov](http://www.dof.virginia.gov)**

**Western Region Office, Salem:**

Phone: (540) 387-5461

**Central Region Office, Charlottesville:**

Phone: (434) 977-5193

**Eastern Region Office, Providence Forge:**

Phone: (804) 966-5092



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900 Natural Resources Drive, Suite 800  
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# TIMBER HARVESTING AND WATER QUALITY

*Best Management Practices  
Protect Virginia's Water  
Resources and Save You Time  
and Money*



Virginia Department of Forestry

# Pre-Harvest Planning

## What is pre-harvest planning, and why is it so important?

Pre-harvest planning is a series of action steps that will help you make more money and keep you in compliance with applicable laws. Begin by reviewing topographic maps and aerial photos of the tract. Put your feet on the ground and walk the route you've identified to eliminate unwanted surprises. Flag your haul roads and main skid trails to avoid any miscommunication between you and your equipment operator. Install proper drainage structures on forest roads. Designate and mark streamside management zone boundaries. Plan to cross any streams at a 90-degree angle where gradients can be kept to a minimum. Lastly, if you will be harvesting on steep slopes or wet ground, consider alternative systems, such as cable logging or helicopter logging.

Virginia law requires that you notify the Virginia Department of Forestry prior to starting a logging operation. Department personnel will then conduct a harvest inspection of the logging operation to identify any potential water quality issues.

Implementing these pre-planning steps will mean that you'll be able to work your tract for more days; keep sediment out of the streams, and enjoy a more financially rewarding timber harvest.

# Harvesting Tips

## How will BMPs help you make more money?

At first glance, Best Management Practices (BMPs) appear to involve costs that will affect your bottom line. But, in reality, BMPs are an investment in your harvest activity that can actually save you money. While this pamphlet is not a substitute for the Water Quality BMP manual, which is available from the Virginia Department of Forestry, the tips listed here will help keep you in compliance with the Silvicultural Water Quality Law and keep your tract open to more days of timber harvesting – both of which will put more money in your pocket.

Since most violations of the water quality law are at stream crossings, temporary bridges are often the most economical and environmentally sound means of crossing a stream.



By installing proper drainage structures on forest roads, you keep those roads open during wet weather – and that enables your crew to continue harvesting your tract. To reduce or prevent erosion, properly locate and construct skid trails. Skid trails located parallel to the contour and are well drained will remain operable in most weather conditions.

Those placed on steep slopes

with no break in gradient can erode severely and pose a threat to water quality. Remember to install drainage structures at frequent intervals (depending on slope) to divert surface water off the skid trail.

## Tract Closeout After Harvesting

### Why should you properly closeout a tract after harvesting?

Again, the answer is to ensure that you keep more of the money you make by not violating any applicable laws.

Start by removing all temporary stream crossings, reshape stream channels to their original profile and stabilize them. Replant bare soil areas to prevent erosion and help support wildlife. Test the soil to determine if lime or fertilizer is needed to ensure germination. Mulching the site with hay or straw traps needed moisture and acts as an insulator for soil temperature stabilization. Lastly, properly install a silt fence or other sediment-trapping device that will prevent sedimentation until the protective vegetative cover is established.

## The Bottom Line

Virginia's forests are a renewable natural resource and an important source of income for you, your family and your company. By taking a few moments to prepare a pre-harvest plan, ensure BMP compliance and properly close out a tract after harvesting, you improve your bottom line by making more money and you've done something good for the environment.

