

Best Management Practices for Forestry

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In this issue I want to digress from talking about hardwood silviculture only. I have stated previously that I wanted to use this opportunity to address questions I receive in the field from landowners and other folks that work in the woods. With that said, here is the question: Are “Best Management Practices for Forestry” voluntary or mandatory in Alabama? A simple question, with a little more complex answer.

The Administrative Code of the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) prohibits the deposition of pollutants into or the degradation of the physical, chemical, or biological integrity of waters of the state. With regard to silviculture, non-point source pollutants include, but are not limited to, sediment, organic materials, temperature, trash, pesticides, and nutrients that are man induced.

Alabama’s Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Forestry are non-regulatory guidelines suggested to help Alabama’s forestry community maintain and protect the physical, chemical, and biological integrity of the waters of the state as required by the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, the Clean Water Act, the Water Quality Act, and the Coastal Zone Management Act. There are exceptions to the rule:

1. Roads and stream crossings within wetlands and other waters of the U.S. must be constructed and maintained in accordance with the following U. S. Army Corps of Engineer baseline BMPs (from Section 404, Corps of Engineers Permit Requirements, 40 CFR Part 233.22) in order to retain exemption status for the road operation. These 15 BMPs are included in Alabama’s BMPs for Forestry and are listed on pages 19 and 20 of Alabama’s BMP manual. You may obtain a copy of this manual by contacting your local Alabama Forestry Commission office or by visiting the AFC website: www.forestry.alabama.gov. Click the left tab “Manage Your Forest” then scroll to Best Management Practices. If you are not familiar with these BMPs and operate within wetlands, I suggest you read and get familiar with them.

2. American Forest Foundation (AFF) 2010-2015 Standards of Sustainability for Forest Certification (i.e., Tree Farm)
Standard 4: Air, Water, and Soil Protection
Performance Measure 4.1: Forest owner **must** meet or exceed practices prescribed by State Forestry Best Management Practices (BMPs) that are applicable to the property.
Indicator 4.1.1: Forest owner **must** implement specific BMPs that are applicable to the property.
Indicator 4.1.2: Forest owner **must** minimize road

construction and other disturbances within riparian zones and wetlands.

In order to maintain third-party certification, inspections of Tree Farmers must show consistent implementation of BMPs across the state. If predictions hold true and an energy bill or carbon bill is ever passed, a landowner will have to have third-party certification to be eligible to participate.

3. Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) Standards for 2010-2014 Programs

Section 6 – Guidance to SFI 2010-2014 Standard
Part 5 – Objective 10 – Best Management Practices Monitoring:

Objective 10 calls for adherence to Best Management Practices: “to broaden the practice of sustainable forestry through the use of best management practices to protect water quality.”

The use of BMPs to protect water quality is a critical component of sustainable forest management and is emphasized in the SFI Standard with requirements for on-the-ground management, monitoring, training, and research. The SFI 2010-2014 Standard strengthened requirements for best management practices application with a new indicator:

10.1.3 Contracts for the purchase of raw materials include provisions requiring the use of best management practices.

This new indicator will further highlight the importance of BMPs and their use by all suppliers throughout the supply stream. To view the complete list of requirements in the new SFI Standard go to www.sfiprogram.org.

Back to the answer of the original question: Yes, Alabama’s BMPs for Forestry are voluntary guidelines to help the forest landowner avoid degrading the waters of the state. However, if you operate on certain types of ground or participate in certain programs, BMPs are no longer voluntary, but required. If you are a landowner selling timber, you may be asking the logger to cut and operate within areas he really does not need to be in if you are not implementing BMPs. If the timber buyer has a contract that does not include BMPs in the fine print, it should be a red flag. Please add them.

The most important guidance that these BMPs can offer the forestry community is to THINK and PLAN before you ACT. As always, feel free to contact me with any BMP questions. ☺

Literature cited:

Alabama’s Best Management Practices for Forestry
American Tree Farm System – Inspector Manual
SFI Standard 2010-2014

HARDWOOD CORNER