



HEALTHY FORESTS PROTECT WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY

Forests play a vital role in providing clean water to us all.

More than 50 percent of the nation's freshwater resources originate from forestland, which covers about one-third of the United States. Forests also absorb rainfall, refill groundwater aquifers, slow and filter stormwater runoff, reduce floods, and maintain watershed stability and resilience.

To sustain healthy forests and protect water resources, viable economic markets, wise forest management, and well-targeted forest conservation efforts are critical.

Best Management Practices (BMPs) are the principal means by which water resources are protected during wise forest management. These conservation practices are designed to provide an economical way of protecting soil and water resources – two essentials that are key to growing healthy, sustainable, and productive forests.

The Southern Group of State Foresters and state forestry agencies provide leadership in BMP development, education, training, and monitoring. State forestry agencies and partners **work to prevent water quality problems before they arise.** Each state implements BMP programs according to the nature of its forest industry, landowner characteristics, ecological conditions, and accepted socio-political approaches.

Routine studies show that even though approaches to BMP implementation vary widely from state to state, they are effectively providing protection to our water supplies:

- National implementation rates average 91 percent;
- In the South, implementation rates average 92 percent;
- In Alabama, implementation rates average 97.75 percent.

BMP monitoring is recognized as the most reliable source for calculating interaction between forest management and water quality. This has increased the demand for data collection and analysis by states. Unfortunately, federal **resources to support state BMP programs have not kept pace with greater demands on these programs.** For decades, forest agencies have proven their dedication to meticulous practices that protect waters of the South.

With support from elected leaders and people who call the South their home, clean water and the forests that safeguard them will remain steadfast for generations to come.

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