Best Management Practices During a Timber Harvest

There are many different techniques forest owners and forest workers should be using to control erosion during a timber harvest. Forest owners can apply these practices to smaller-scale projects like firewood cutting and timber stand improvement as well.

The key concept in preventing forest soil erosion during logging is to contain small amounts of water over short distances.

Moving water has tremendous energy. Each gallon of water flowing down a skid trail or through a log landing has the potential to carry away several pounds of loose soil. An afternoon of rain on a forty-acre hillside deposits more than two million gallons of water. This water has the potential to wash away hundreds of tons of forest soil, which will take more than 100 years to re-develop.

Best management practices reduce the amount of forest soil washed or blown away in adverse weather. They have been proven to improve the quality of streams and ponds by reducing sediment. Through all these practices, the principle remains: contain small amounts of water over short distances.

Physical control of sediment and erosion starts the minute a logging crew arrives at the timber harvest site. Within the first few hours or days, they establish the attitudes and procedures that will keep forests soil erosion to a minimum. Before the first chainsaw is started, several hours of preparation, map reading, and walk-throughs have already taken place. If a crew shows up on a job site unprepared for erosion control, the forest and area streams will suffer irreparable or expensive damage.

Landowners and foresters can help prepare a logging crew by making it clear that erosion control is a priority. It is very important to meet together and explain how, when and where erosion is to be managed. Best management practices are an economical approach to timber harvesting.

Compared to the cost of repairs, BMPs are relatively cheap and easy to install.

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