



# TEXAS A&M FOREST SERVICE

## *Common Questions:* What are BMPs?

An estimated 80 percent of our nation's freshwater resources originate from forests that cover about one-third of the United States. Forests provide a number of essential economic, social, and environmental functions in addition to supplying us with the cleanest water of any land use. They absorb rainfall, refill aquifers, slow and filter stormwater runoff, reduce floods, and provide habitat for wildlife. Forest operations associated with harvesting and regeneration can potentially generate nonpoint source (NPS) pollution that degrades water quality if done improperly.

Forestry Best Management Practices (BMPs) are the principal means of controlling NPS pollution during forestry activities. These voluntary conservation practices help protect your soil and water resources, two key elements necessary for growing a healthy, sustainable, and productive forest. BMPs can include such measures as leaving a buffer zone of trees next to a stream, installing a culvert to cross a stream, or establishing grass on forest roads to prevent erosion.

The Texas A&M Forest Service, with cooperation from the forestry community, monitors the implementation of these guidelines by evaluating randomly selected forest operations. Compliance with the non-regulatory BMPs has steadily risen to 95 percent, according to a 2011 survey by the Texas A&M Forest Service.

In Texas, we continue to demonstrate that we can voluntarily maintain and improve our water quality while managing our forestlands; however, we must continue to do so in order to avoid the pains of mandatory restrictions. We strongly urge you to use BMPs on your future forest operations and help protect the quality of Texas' water resources. With your help, we can continue to ensure the sustainability of our forests and maintain clean water for all Texans to enjoy.



Streamside Management Zones (SMZs) prevent sediment from entering streams and provide shade, helping maintain cool water temperatures.



Logging debris or slash can be used to stabilize and prevent erosion on skid trails and temporary roads.

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## **What Can I Do to Protect My Property?**

- Use a professional forester to help plan and conduct your forest management activities, and be sure to choose a logger that has been trained in BMPs when harvesting your timber
- Become familiar with BMPs and include them in your timber sale contracts
- Leave a strip of trees 50 feet wide along both sides of streams when harvesting your timber to prevent sediment from entering the water.
- Prevent erosion from your forest roads by installing appropriate water control structures that allow water to drain quickly away from streams. Stabilize and retire roads that you no longer use.
- Avoid building roads across streams whenever possible. When necessary, cross streams at straight, narrow sections and at right angles. Remove temporary crossings and any logging debris from stream channels, and be sure to stabilize stream banks following operations.
- Make sure the ground is stable enough for heavy equipment so rutting does not occur.
- Conduct operations on the contour of the land.
- Read and follow manufacturers' labels before applying silvicultural chemicals such as fertilizers and pesticides.
- Properly dispose of all oil and trash associated with the operation.
- For more information please visit <http://tfsweb.tamu.edu/BMP> or contact your local Texas A&M Forest Service office.