

FORESTRY GUIDELINES

FORESTRY GUIDELINES THAT APPLY FOR DURATION OF PLAN

1. **TIMBER HARVEST METHODS**

- a. **Timber Harvest and Wildlife Enhancement** Where feasible and prudent, timber harvest will be done in a manner that enhances wildlife habitat. Moose habitat is the priority for enhancement activities because this is one of the six most important moose areas in the Susitna Basin. Habitat enhancement activities for fish and/or wildlife species other than moose shall occur when biological and/or population statistics indicate that improvements in survival, reproduction, and/or population numbers may be significantly improved through habitat enhancement/rehabilitation activities.
- b. **Areas Where Timber Harvest/Habitat Enhancement Activities will be Limited**
 - (1) **Subunit 2 and 5C** No timber harvest activities shall occur in subunit 2A, 2B, and 5C unless specifically requested and/or approved by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game except as provided in the guidelines for these subunits.
 - (2) **Scenic Areas** Timber cuts in areas visible from the Hatcher Pass Road will be designed to minimize visual impact wherever possible.

2. **TERM AND TYPE OF TIMBER SALE**

The timber in this management unit that is available for timber harvest will be managed for small commercial sales; each sale would generally be 200,000 to 300,000 board feet (30 to 45 acres) up to a maximum of 1.5 million board feet (approximately 215 acres, this would generally be divided into blocks of 40 to 50 acre cutting units). The length of sales will generally be 3 to 5 years. Any sale between 6 and 10 years in length must be reviewed by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and agreed to by the Division of Land and Water Management to ensure that the sale does not preclude other uses of the unit. No sale will exceed 10 years in length, and a 10-year sale may not be done any later than three years after the adoption of this plan. However a 5-year sale is allowed as long as 8 years from the adoption of this plan if the agencies agree that it is appropriate, i.e., will not block some other major use. (See subunit 5 for description of sales proposed during the next six years.)

INTERIM FORESTRY GUIDELINES

These guidelines will be superceded by the *Susitna Regional Forest Plan* guidelines when that plan is adopted.

1. TIMBER MANAGEMENT METHODS

a. Areas Where Timber Harvest Activities will be Limited

(1) **Timber Harvest Buffers** Timber harvest buffers will be laid out in the field during the actual sale design and will be based upon the following guidelines:

(a) **Buffers Around Cutting Units** Cutting units should generally be surrounded by a 100-foot buffer unless such a buffer is detrimental to wildlife or their habitat or unnecessary as a screen between the cutting area and most users of the area. Required buffers may be increased or decreased based on specific summer line-of-sight requirements necessary to maintain a natural-looking environment and to provide for restricted views from one cutting unit to another cutting unit. Prevention of windthrow should also be considered in determining buffer width. No more than 300 feet will be required between harvest units although on occasion more will be left.

(b) **Eagle and Peregrine Falcon Protection Buffers** Eagle nests trees and Peregrine Falcon nests shall be protected as required by federal law. There will be no disturbance of natural vegetation within a 330' radius around any eagle or Peregrine Falcon nesting tree and/or nesting site.

(c) Activities Allowed in Timber Harvest/Habitat Enhancement Buffers

- * Selective-tree cutting.
- * Disease and insect control and prevention with pesticides and herbicides subject to Department of Environmental Conservation regulations and the guidelines of this plan.
- * Grazing, consistent with the grazing guidelines in this chapter.
- * Access and utility line development across buffer areas should be kept to a minimum. Access and utility facilities should be located
 - outside of buffers to the extent feasible and prudent,
 - perpendicular to buffers, upon entering the buffer, to the extent feasible and prudent,
 - so as to reduce visual impacts from primary access routes,
 - and require consultation with ADF&G if they cross or are located within buffers.

(d) See also guidelines for lakeshores and stream corridors in this section.

- (2) **Other Unique Habitat and/or Plant Communities** Timber harvest shall be restricted in certain limited areas with unusual habitats. Examples include isolated stands of over-mature timber valuable for tree-hole-nesting bird life and other wildlife species or plant species such as Calypso orchid habitats. Interagency review will be required prior to resource development in the area of rare or endangered species if identified in the future.
- (3) **Slope Restrictions** Special consideration will be given to any timber harvest/habitat enhancement projects on slopes exceeding 40 percent. Mechanical scarification is discouraged where slope is greater than 40 percent. Research projects on contoured mechanical scarification are allowed. The findings may increase the acceptable slope for scarification applications.
- (4) **Areas with Heritage Resources** The Division of Forestry (DOF) will make every effort to protect heritage resources and to notify the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (DOPOR) if any are found. Timber harvest will not be allowed in areas of known and recorded Alaska Heritage Resources until DOPOR has approved the method for protecting the heritage resource and given approval to proceed with timber harvest methods.

b. **Review of Timber Sales and Cutting Plans**

The Department of Natural Resources will include any proposed harvest in this management unit in its general five-year timber harvest schedule. This five-year schedule will be circulated for interagency review annually, at the time it is updated. In addition, prior to offering a particular sale, information on that sale will be circulated for interagency review and public notice as required by AS 38.05.945. Both documents will include the following information: a map of the proposed cutting areas, a legal description, volume to be cut, length of sale, access, and reforestation plans.

c. **Design of Timber Cuts**

- (1) **Forest Clearing Size** The width of any harvest operation resulting in forest clearings shall be established by the Division of Forestry in consultation with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. The Department of Natural Resources will consult with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to design forest clearings that are appropriate for moose habitat enhancement consistent with other public benefits, including long term forest management. As a general guideline, large group selection cuts or clearcuts should not exceed 600 feet in width. The edge of these clearings may not exceed 1,000 feet without meandering. Cutting unit size will generally be 40 to 50 acres. No cutting unit resulting in a forest

clearing shall exceed 160 acres unless it can be demonstrated that the larger clearing will not have a significant adverse effect on wildlife. In making that determination, the Department of Natural Resources will consult with the Department of Fish and Game. In determining the shape of the clearcut, the prevailing wind direction will be considered. Topography, elevation, seed dispersion, sufficient area to ensure sun-warmed areas adequate to permit seed sprouting, and other on-site factors will be considered in determining forest clearing size.

- (2) **Reforestation of Cuts** All harvested units shall be reforested.
 - (a) **Seed trees** The Division of Forestry shall identify the amount and location of birch seed trees that shall be left standing in timber cuts to produce seeds for birch reproduction.
 - (b) **Scarification** Scarification may be used to encourage regeneration. Scarification, the mechanical removal of the surface organic layer or the mixing of this layer with mineral soil, removes competitive plant species and allows seedlings to establish themselves.
- (3) **Escape Cover** Wildlife require vegetated areas for escape cover. Escape cover shall be left on appropriate locations within each harvest unit. ADF&G, in consultation with DOF, will determine the necessary vegetation width for escape cover; however, no more than 300 feet shall be required.
- d. **Erosion Control** Silvicultural operations and access development will be designed to minimize erosion.
- e. **Burning** Controlled burning may be used as a means of manipulating vegetation as a method of site preparation and/or as a means of slash disposal.
 - (1) **Burning Prescription** All broadcast burning operations shall require preparation of a site-specific burning prescription and a burn plan. No broadcast burning will be conducted outside the area described in the burning prescription. Members of the public who will be affected by the burn will be contacted by DOF. The public and local community councils will receive written notice of burning activities when the Division of Forestry (DOF) prepares the burn plan. Signs will be posted on major roadways to notify the public of any ongoing controlled burning in process.
 - (2) **Burning Near Private Land** No broadcast burning operation will be conducted within 1,320 feet (¼ mile) of privately owned buildings or improvements and 1/8 mile of undeveloped private land.

- (3) **Slash Disposal Burns** Slash disposal burns utilizing the pile and burn method will not require a burn plan except where the Area Forester determines this to be in the best interest of the State.
 - (4) **Heliotorch** A heliotorch may be used in roadless areas for controlled burning for regeneration or other silvicultural purposes. Use of a heliotorch requires a burn plan that is subject to review as described in (1) above.
- f. **Pesticides and Herbicides** Pesticides and herbicides may be used when the Area Forester determines the use will benefit forest management efforts and meet the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) requirements. ADF&G and DEC will be consulted prior to the use of pesticides or herbicides.
- (1) **Plan of Operations** Any use of pesticides and/or herbicides shall require a written plan of operations; that describes in detail the pesticides or herbicides to be used, the reasons for use, potential effect on humans, wildlife and vegetation types, the expected results, (the area the chemicals will be used in,) the method of application, and the application rates. In addition to this the plan shall describe how and when an evaluation of the effectiveness of the pesticide application will be prepared after the application.
 - (2) **Notice** Public notice must be given prior to the use of pesticides/herbicides and signs must be posted in areas where pesticides/herbicides have been used.
 - (3) **Application** Generally, pesticide/herbicide application will be done through ground application to remove grass. It is unlikely aerial application will be used. Aerial application may be used to prevent a large disease or insect outbreak. Pesticides and/or herbicides will not be applied within one-quarter mile of private dwellings, anadromous streams, and lakes with fishing or other recreational potential.
 - (4) **Evaluation** After pesticide/herbicide application, an evaluation of the effectiveness will be prepared.
- g. **Mechanical Crushing/Hydro-axing** Mechanical crushing, hydro-axing, or chain-saw thinning may be used independently or in conjunction with other methods to manipulate vegetation changes as a method of pre-commercial stand management. These methods will be used only where salvage of forest products is not feasible.