

FORESTRY IN THE BROAD RIVER BASIN



FORESTLAND OWNERSHIP*

Approximately 91 percent of the forestland in the basin is privately-owned by individuals.

* The ownership estimates come from the most recent data published by the USDA-Forest Service (“Forest Statistics for North Carolina, 2002.” Brown, Mark J. Southern Research Station Resource Bulletin SRS-88. January 2004).

FOREST PRACTICES GUIDELINES RELATED TO WATER QUALITY (FPGS)

Forestry operations in North Carolina are subject to regulation under the Sedimentation Pollution Control Act of 1973 (GS Ch.113A Art.4 referred to as “SPCA”). However, forestry operations may be exempted from the permit and plan requirements of the SPCA, if the operations meet the compliance standards outlined in the *Forest Practices Guidelines Related to Water Quality* (15A NCAC 11 .0100 - .0209, referred to as “FPGs”) and General Statutes regarding stream and ditch obstructions (GS 77-13 and GS 77-14).

The North Carolina Division of Forest Resources (DFR) is delegated the authority to monitor and evaluate forestry operations for compliance with these aforementioned laws and/or rules. In addition, the DFR works to resolve identified FPG compliance questions brought to its attention through citizen complaints. Violations of the FPG performance standards that cannot be resolved by the DFR are referred to the appropriate State agency for enforcement action.

During the period January 1, 2001 through December 31, 2006 the DFR conducted 994 FPG inspections of forestry-related activities in the basin; 92 percent of the sites inspected were in compliance.

OTHER WATER QUALITY REGULATIONS

In addition to the State regulations noted above, DFR monitors the implementation of the following Federal rules relating to water quality and forestry operations:

- The Section 404 silviculture exemption under the Clean Water Act;
- The federally-mandated 15 best management practices (BMPs) related to road construction in wetlands; and
- The federally-mandated BMPs for mechanical site preparation activities for the establishment of pine plantations in wetlands of the southeastern U.S

WATER QUALITY FORESTERS

The DFR has complete coverage of the Broad River basin with Water Quality Foresters. Statewide, there is a Water Quality Forester position in ten of DFRs thirteen Districts. Water Quality Foresters conduct FPG inspections, survey BMP implementation, develop pre-harvest plans, and provide training opportunities for landowners, loggers and the public regarding water quality issues related to forestry. These foresters also assist County Rangers on follow-up site inspections and provide enhanced technical assistance to local DFR staff.

FORESTRY BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Implementing forestry Best Management Practices (BMPs) is strongly encouraged to efficiently and effectively protect the water resources of North Carolina. In 2006, the first ever revision to the North Carolina forestry Best Management Practices (BMP) manual was completed. This comprehensive update to the forestry BMP manual is the result of nearly four years of effort by the DFR and a DENR-appointed Technical Advisory Committee consisting of multiple sector stakeholders, supported by two technical peer-reviews. The forestry BMP manual describes recommended techniques that may be used to help comply with the forestry regulations while protecting water quality. Copies of the new forestry BMP manual can be obtained at DFRs County Ranger or District Forester offices statewide. The new manual is also available at the DFR website (<http://www.dfr.state.nc.us/>) within the ‘Water Quality’ portion.

n the basin during this reporting period, the DFR assisted or observed over 1,200 forestry activities in which BMPs were either implemented or recommended over an area amounting to nearly 41,000 acres.

From March 2000 through March 2003, the DFR conducted a statewide BMP Implementation Survey on 565 active forest harvest operations to evaluate the usage of forestry BMPs. This survey evaluated 22 sites in the basin, with a resulting BMP implementation rate of 71 percent. The problems most often cited in this survey across the state relate to stream crossings, skid trails and site rehabilitation. This survey, and subsequent surveys to be conducted, will serve as a basis for focused efforts in the forestry community to address water quality concerns through better and more effective BMP implementation and training.

CHRISTMAS TREE PRODUCTION & VINEYARDS

It should be noted that the DFR does not oversee regulations or activities relating to timber and land clearing for Christmas tree production or winery vineyards. These activities are not recognized as forestry (“silviculture”) activities. Generally, these types of land-use practices are deemed to be an agricultural or horticultural activity. County Soil & Water Conservation District or USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff can provide BMP assistance for these activities. Significant sedimentation problems can be reported to the N.C. Division of Land Resources’ Comments Hotline: 1-866-STOPMUD.

PROTECTING STREAM CROSSING WITH BRIDGEMATS

The DFR provides bridgemats on loan to loggers for establishing temporary stream crossings during harvest activities in an effort to educate loggers about the benefits of installing crossings in this manner. Temporary bridges can be a very effective solution for stream crossings, since the equipment and logs stay completely clear of the water channel. Starting in 1996, the DFRs District Offices across the entire river basin have had bridgemats available for loan-out. Statewide, there have been over 200 loan-events between 2000 and 2006, which have protected 261 stream crossings.

FOREST MANAGEMENT

Almost 10,000 acres of land were established or regenerated with forest trees across the basin from January 1, 2001 through December 31, 2006. Of these acres, approximately 87 percent were Loblolly Pine. During this same time period the DFR provided over 1,400 individual forest plans for landowners that encompassed almost 52,600 acres in the basin.

FOREST PRODUCTS INDUSTRY

Forest industry manufacturing is a significant economic driver across North Carolina, contributing nearly \$18 billion annually to the state’s gross economic product. Nine (9) different businesses in the basin are directly related to the manufacture of forest products. Some examples include mills that produce lumber, wood chips, veneer, structural panels, posts or pallets. In addition to the direct and in-direct economic benefits of employment from these facilities, these manufacturers pay an assessment to the state based upon the volume of timber they utilize. The payments from these assessments are combined with annual legislative budget appropriations to fund the “Forest Development Program” (FDP), which provides cost-shared forest management and regeneration assistance to forest landowners in North Carolina.

WILDFIRE PREVENTION & MITIGATION

The “Firewise Communities” program is a national, multi-agency effort designed to educate homeowners, civic leaders, community planners, developers and others in the effort to protect people, property and natural resources from the risk of wildfires before a fire starts. The Firewise Communities program offers a series of practical steps that individuals and communities can take to minimize wildfire risks. Firewise emphasizes community responsibility for planning a safe community as well as providing effective emergency response, and individual responsibility for safer home construction and design, landscaping and maintenance. In North Carolina, the most susceptible areas for wildfires in which homes and woodlands co-exist are in the mountains and areas of the coast. More information is available at ncfirewise.org and firewise.org.

Some examples of Firewise practices include:

- Maintaining a ‘defensible perimeter’ around homes and structures by controlling vegetation growth;
- Removing so-called ‘ladder fuels’ from around structures that may allow a small fire on the ground to move upwards, and into the structure; and
- Constructing access roads and driveways in a way that will allow access by fire trucks and other heavy-duty emergency response equipment.