Best Management Practices (BMPs)

Best Management Practices (BMPs) are scientific tools and methods designed to help forest landowner, foresters and other natural resource professionals and timber harvesters practice sustainable forest management. They were established under the assumption that voluntary compliance with BMPs reinforced with education, will serve the community better in the long run, both economically and socially. In practical terms, voluntary compliance in implementing BMPS can help avoid the establishment of additional regulatory statues many of which can be burdensome, time consuming, costly and not necessarily conducive to long-term forest health and productivity.

BMPs represent the minimum acceptable forest management guidelines for three areas of forest resource management – planning, forest operations and forest values They represent state-of-the-art knowledge concerning the management of Pennsylvania's forests – how trees should be harvested for timber production while enhancing wildlife. preserving aesthetics, ensuring future forest regeneration and protection soil and water quality, wetlands and area of special concern.

Many of the BMPs focus on wetlands and water quality, Streamside forests (riparian buffer zones) are especially important for maintaining the chemical physical and biological integrity of Pennsylvania's waters and serve as important wildlife habitat. BMPs help to prevent or reduce water pollution caused by runoff from road construction and other activities associated with timber harvesting. When BMPs are used, wetlands are protected and maintained and many of the requirements of federal and state permit processes are met.

A task force of forestry and natural resource professional from industry, academia, state government, conservation organizations and forest landowners under the direction of the Forest Issues Working Group formulated Pennsylvania's BMPs.

Some examples of BMPs include:

- Creating a written management plan based on a resource inventory and landowner objectives.
- Focus on protection of the residual stand rather than on the trees being removed. Retaining seed sources of species needed to achieve long-term management objectives.
- Promoting regeneration by controlling competing ferns and grasses and protecting seeds, seedlings and sprouts from deer and other wildlife.
- Minimizing soil compaction and rutting by matching operating techniques, season of operation and equipment to soil types and moisture levels.
- Provide adequate riparian buffers between disturbed areas, such as roads or landings, and streams or wetlands.
- Protect cavity trees, snags and food-producing shrubs and vines for wildlife.