

Department's goal to reduce resource damage

There was a time when a logger could do just about anything he wanted in the forest, including logging an area and not bothering to replant it; leaving slash in a stream; building a road without worrying about whether it would wash out with the next rainfall and destroy a stream.

But that was a long time ago. Few loggers were ever that irresponsible, but those who were caused a public outcry to protect Oregon's forest environment.

To put an end to cut-and-run logging, the Oregon Conservation Act was passed in 1941 to require lands to be reforested after logging. The act was considered very progressive for its time.

In 1971, the Conservation Act was replaced by an even stronger act to protect Oregon's forest environment, the Oregon Forest

Practices Act. Not only does this act require reforestation after logging, it requires reforestation to be successful. The act also contains rules on harvesting practices, slash disposal, application of chemicals, and road building and maintenance. The rules affect all forest lands in Oregon. The Oregon State Forestry enforces the rules on all state and privately owned lands, and the federal government has agreed to meet or exceed the rules on federal lands.

If an operator violates a rule, the operator can be required to repair the damages and may face criminal penalties of up to \$1,000 or one year in jail, or both.

Instead of taking a regulatory approach after the damage has been done, the Oregon State Department of Forestry prefers to work with operators to prevent damage.

"Overall, loggers are doing a good job of protecting Oregon's forest environment during the course of their operations," says Jim Brown, director of the Oregon Department of Forestry's Forest Practices Program.

"Since the Forest Practices Act went into effect in 1972," Brown said, "there has been an improvement in the forests."

Brown directs the activities of 49 Forest Practices foresters and a \$2.7 million dollar budget. Sixty percent of the money comes from the state general fund and the other 40 percent comes from the forest products harvest tax, a tax on the volume of timber harvested annually.

Though there are penalties for violating the Forest Practices Act, the department prefers to place the emphasis on helping operators prevent

damage, rather than waiting until violations have occurred, and then citing the violators.

"Our goal is to work with operators and help them avoid problems," Brown said. "Most of the department's efforts go into preventing resource damage."

One of the forest practices rules requires loggers and other forest operators to notify the local state department of forestry office at least 15 days before beginning any operation. The department uses this time to determine if the operation is potentially environmentally sensitive, and if so, to go out on-site with the operator to discuss ways to avoid damage.

"For most high and some medium priority operations, Forest Practices foresters look at the site with the operator before the operation begins," Brown said.

The Forest Practices recommendations to operators on how to minimize or prevent resource damage. The requirements of the Forest Practices Act are also explained.

"Once the operation begins," Brown said, "the forester usually visits the operator to see how the operation is progressing. Frequently, the forester will make additional recommendations for minimizing resource damage."

Brown said, "All recommendations are 'results oriented.' They do not deal with the 'how to.'"

Brown listed some of the problem areas that require special care by loggers. Streams need to be carefully protected. If a stream must be crossed a temporary crossing must be constructed and later removed. Buffer strips

must be left where necessary to protect stream temperature and water quality.

Correct location of logging roads can play an important role in protecting the environment. Steep V canyons should be avoided because they can result in washout of the road and damage to streams below. Unless there is good drainage on roads, landings operating during bad weather should be avoided.

Running heavy equipment on saturated soils can cause heavy compaction and a high potential for soil erosion. Loggers should take special care to avoid damaging young conifers that will be part of the next stand of timber. Sensitive areas like bogs, areas along stream banks and under productive areas, should be given a wide margin. These areas are important to wildlife.

Culverts must be placed

correctly so runoff is discharged onto the surface of the forest floor where it can filter out silt from erosion. Once logging is completed water bars (soil mounded across road) should be constructed to slow and deflect water runoff on skid trails and roads. Exposed soil should be grass seeded to reduce soil erosion. Grass species should be selected that are favored by wildlife.

Rules in the Forest Practices Act are set by the State Board of Forestry. Different rules may be set for the three areas of the state—eastern, southwestern and northwestern Oregon regions—to recognize varying forest conditions.

Three Regional Forest Practices Committees are established to recommend rules to the Board of Forestry. Members of these advisory committees are representatives of the

forest industry and the public-at-large.

All meetings of the Regional Forest Practices Committees and all meetings of the Board of Forestry are open to the public.

The Board of Forestry is directed to work with other agencies concerned with the forest environment to achieve coordination. In Oregon, there are about 50 public agencies and organizations which have regulatory responsibilities or a direct involvement in policy development and administration impacting forest resources. The Department of Forestry works with all of these groups so the logger only has to contact one agency—the Department of Forestry.

Brown reiterated that the department's efforts are directed at helping loggers comply with the rules of the Forest Practices Act.

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