

Branching Out: Maryland's Forest Stewardship Educator

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Published quarterly and distributed to more than 8,300 woodland owners, resource professionals, and others interested in forest stewardship. For a free subscription or to send news items, dates, and comments, phone 301-432-2767 x310; fax 301-432-4089; e-mail vs12@umail.umd.edu; or mail to *Branching Out*, c/o Maryland Cooperative Extension, 18330 Keedysville Road, Keedysville, MD 21756. Deadlines are the 10th of January, April, July, and October. The sponsoring agencies' programs are open to all citizens without regard to race, color, sex, or physical ability.

Supported by the Maryland Tree Farm System

Are Forestry BMP's Really Being Used?

Forest harvest operations by their very nature have the potential for causing non-point source (NPS) runoff that allows sediment and nutrients to reach streams and rivers. In an average year, over 27,500 acres of Maryland forests are impacted by forestry operations, many of which can cause NPS pollution. Compared to other land uses, forestry actually is responsible for only a small amount of NPS pollution - 5.2 percent of the total sediment and smaller percentages of nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus.

Efforts to protect water quality from NPS have resulted in forest practice guidelines known as Best Management Practices (BMP's). These BMP's have helped reduce sediment and nutrient loading of our waterways.

The use of forestry BMP's are required in forest harvest operations. But what are they and how do we know they are really being used on private woodlands?

What are Forestry BMP'S?

Forestry BMP's can be grouped into five main categories: 1) *haul roads and skid trails* - the location, construction, and use of haul roads and skid trails; maintenance of surface water drainage; and soil rutting caused by tires; 2) *stream crossings* - the number of stream crossings the amount of streambank disturbance, and maintenance of surface water drainage; 3) *streamside management zones* - the retention of required forest buffers, the amount of disturbance in these areas, and the amount of logging debris in the stream channels; 4) *landings and log decks* - the location of landings and log decks relative to stream channels, maintenance of surface water drainage, and the amount of litter left on the site; and 5) *soil stabilization* - surface erosion control on cut and fill slopes, landings and skid trails.

Compliance Study

To determine how well BMP's are being implemented, a statewide BMP compliance study was initiated by the Maryland Forest Service in the summer and fall of 1994. Three to six survey sites per county were randomly selected from sediment and erosion control plans that had been approved between

January 1993 to March 1994. A total of 99 sites were selected from a pool of about 800 from across the state, which comprise 12 percent of all the plans that had been submitted in the 15-month period. Sites selected for the study had a harvest of at least 10 acres and less than 350 acres, and contained streams, ponds, lakes or other wetlands.

Field survey teams were organized to assess the level of compliance on each site. The teams were composed of those responsible for protecting soil and water resources: the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of the Environment, the local Soil Conservation District, and a forest products operator.

Results

The results of the study found that the overall compliance was good at 82 percent. The results for each of the five BMP categories, ranged from a high of 90 percent for landings/log decks to a low of 68 percent for soil stabilization. BMP compliance was evaluated for each of the four physiographic regions of the state: the upper and lower coastal plains, piedmont, and the western mountains. In general, the results indicate it is easier to comply with forestry BMP's on the flatter ground of the coastal plain than on areas with more rugged terrain.

The areas needing the greatest improvement were stream crossings and soil stabilization. While the number of stream crossings was kept to a minimum, the high level of streambank disturbance indicated operators had trouble constructing the crossings. Controlling water on haul roads and skid trails was a problem since waterbars and road turnouts, which slow surface runoff, were seldom installed or maintained properly.

To assure the proper use of BMP's on your property, use a professional forester to help with your sale. After the sale, maintain your roads and stream crossings to control possible erosion. To receive a copy of the report, "*An Assessment and Analysis Report of Forestry BMP Implementation in Maryland*," call the Maryland Forest Service at (410) 974-3776.

The American Chestnut

The American Chestnut used to make up one of every four trees in the eastern hardwood forest before the chestnut blight began its relentless assault. Efforts continue to distribute nuts and locate trees that show some resistance to the blight. If you are interested in this effort contact the: American Chestnut Cooperator's Foundation, 2667 Forest Service Road 708, Newport, VA 24128.

Affordable Liability Insurance

The increase in deer and turkey populations and fewer areas available for hunting has created a good income opportunity for many landowners willing to lease their land for hunting. Many landowners go to great lengths to keep uninvited hunters off their property. A better strategy to consider is to lease the land to a group of responsible hunters who will keep out other hunters and provide some income. With hunting leases ranging from \$3 to \$10 per acre, this can amount to real money.

However, the question of liability is always a concern. The Maryland Annotated Code limits the liability of landowners when they allow recreationalists to use their property for no charge. However, if

you lease your land to a hunt club or group for a fee, your liability is higher and special insurance is suggested.

Reasonably-priced hunting lease liability insurance can now be purchased from the Forest Farmers Association, a non-profit forest landowner organization. The landowner and the hunt club representative must join Forest Farmer's, which is \$40 per year. After that, the annual insurance premium is only \$0.22 per acre plus a \$26 administrative fee. The insurance agency, Davis-Garvin Agency, Inc., provides insurance certificates to the landowner and hunt club. To receive a brochure on the insurance program contact: Forest Farmers Association, Inc., P.O. Box 95385, Atlanta, GA 30347 (404) 325-2954.

Whether you charge a fee or not for hunting, developing a lease is important. A good publication that provides information on hunting leases is: *Developing a Hunting Lease Enterprise in Ohio (Bulletin 798)*, \$2.85. Order from: Publications Office, Ohio Cooperative Extension Service, 258 Kottman Hall, 2021 Coffey Rd., Columbus, OH 43210-1044.

Restoring Old Memories

Malcolm Morris remembers the old farm house in St. Mary's County where childhood vacation memories were nurtured. After working as a machinist at an electric company for 30 years and operating an organic truck farm, Morris, now 78 years young, is working to manage and restore the same 205-acre farm of his childhood memories.

Morris has taken advantage of the many opportunities made available through the state to make the farm, much of which is still owned by his aunt and uncle, a shining example of wise stewardship. He has planted cover and food crops for wildlife with help from the Maryland Wildlife Division, reforested old field areas with help from the Maryland Forest Service, and built a pond and modified farming practices with help from the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Morris has taken the farm's tillable acreage out of corn. According to Morris, "the previous farm manager had allowed the field to erode so much there were gulleys running through them." Instead, he plants alfalfa, Ladino clover and an orchard grass blend, which he bales for hay. Morris has also installed waterways along the side of the fields to stop erosion. "It makes a world of difference," he says.

Working with the Forest Service, Morris has harvested almost 60 acres of pine, reforesting the land with loblolly pines. He has divided the harvesting into phases to defer income from the timber sales and take advantage of capital gains benefits, as well as to divide the costs of reforestation and site preparation. This staggered approach will also provide early successional habitat for wildlife over a longer period of time.

Last year Morris hired six laborers who planted 24,000 trees in a day and a half. Impressed with their speed, he hopes to hire them again next spring to plant an additional 18 acres of loblollies. He plans to selectively cut the rest of the forest, leaving 8 trees per acre to provide seed.

Morris leases his land to some hunters who deter poachers and help him get the hay in. They planted five acres of food crops, which have been appreciated by the deer, although they still seem to prefer his alfalfa.

Morris plans to keep it in the family. He now owns 36 acres of the farm he manages and plans to keep involved by sprucing up the facilities and giving nature a helping hand.

Gypsy Moth Outlook

The gypsy moth has been the most serious pest of Maryland forests since it arrived in 1981. A total of 93,864 acres of oak-dominated forests were defoliated in 1995; 94 percent of them on the Eastern Shore.

Gypsy moth populations in western and central Maryland remain low. In southern Maryland, populations are low except for hot spots in Prince George's and Charles Counties. Gypsy moth populations on the Eastern Shore are high but stabilized.

Coverts Volunteers Welcomed

The sixth group of Coverts Volunteers recently completed 32 hours of training at a workshop held September 28 through October 1. A "covert" refers to a thicket that provides sheltering habitat for wildlife. Therefore, the Coverts Project appropriately names a special educational effort of the Maryland Cooperative Extension Service, with generous support from the Ruffed Grouse Society. Since 1990, 162 volunteers have been taught how sound forest management can make wildlife healthier, more diverse and abundant.

Coverts volunteers have shared information on forest and wildlife management with friends and neighbors in their communities and it is working. Volunteers have provided information to more than 8,000 persons and many have sought professional management assistance. If you are interested in becoming a Coverts Volunteer, contact Jonathan Kays (301) 432-2767 ext. 323.

MD Woodland Owners Association (MWOA)

Private non-industrial woodland owners own 90 percent of Maryland's forestland and need an organization that represents their interests directly. An effort is being made to organize woodland owners interested in economically and environmentally sound forest and wildlife management, regulations, taxes, private property rights, fair timber prices, and locating experienced loggers and consultants. Your participation is welcomed and needed. The MWOA is not associated with any government or industry organizations but will work with these organizations and other woodland owners associations. For more information contact: Diane Warfield, 9825 Hawkins Creamery Rd., Damascus, MD 20872, (301) 253-5820.

Take Note . . .

The following publications are available from your local Cooperative Extension Service office:

- **New! How to Determine Your Property Boundaries (FS619):** Information on using simple survey techniques and your deed description to locate and mark your property boundaries. Free.
- **New! Measuring Your Forests (FS 629):** Information on the use and accuracy of common

forest measurement tools and where to buy them. Free.

- **New! Reducing Vole Damage to Plants (FS 654):** Use of integrated pest management practices to control voles in all landscapes. Free.
- **Updated! Maryland Consultant and Industrial Foresters List:** This publication lists all the registered professional consultant and industrial foresters in Maryland. If you are contemplating a timber sale or developing a forest management plan, contact a professional forester. Also available from the Maryland DNR Forest Service. Free.
- **Tree-of-Heaven or Tree-from-Hell!** A recent workshop on this topic dealt with the various ways to control tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) in forests, fields, and landscapes. The publication "*Tree-of-Heaven Control*" summarizes this information and is available from Phil Pannill, Maryland Forest Service, 1260 Maryland Ave., Suite 103, Hagerstown, MD 21740 (301) 791-4010.
- **Managing Openings for Wild Turkeys & Other Wildlife: A Planting Guide.** This full-color publication is part of the National Wild Turkey Federation's Project HELP (Habitat Enhancement Land Program). The cost is \$4 plus \$1.50 postage. A free catalog is also available that provides a list of seed and seedling species, prices and details on ordering. To order either of these publications call (800) 843-6983.
- **State Tree Nursery Catalog:** The Maryland Forest Service state nursery offers tree and shrub seedlings, and wildlife packets at reasonable prices. For a nursery catalog call (800) 873-3763.

Posting Law Eases Burden on Landowners

The process of posting private lands against trespassing can be an expensive and time-consuming under-taking using conventional signs. A law passed a few years ago makes posting much easier and cheaper by allowing the use of vertical strips of oil-based blue paint as an alternative to signs.

Article 27, Section 576-576A states that paint marks must be at least 2 inches in width and 8 inches in length, and centered from 3 to 6 feet from the ground or water surface. Although the distance between marks is not stated, mark them close enough that a person standing in front of one mark, would be able to see the paint marks off to each side.