



General Bulletin

Number 19

December 8, 1998

The Use Of Temporary Access Structures To Reduce Logging Costs

Introduction

This bulletin provides information on provisions in the Forest Practices Code supporting the use of temporary access structures. These provisions should be considered by forestry staff and statutory decision makers when preparing or reviewing and approving silviculture prescriptions.

The Code includes provisions that allow flexibility in the construction and rehabilitation of temporary access structures. The intent was to support cost-effective harvest methods that also ensure soil conservation objectives are met. This bulletin reviews these provisions and encourages their use on appropriate sites (i.e. where they don't conflict with known management objectives, where they don't create unacceptable risks to forest resources and where the soils are suitable for carrying out rehabilitation to restore site productivity).

Background

With the introduction of the Code, there has been a trend toward using high cost harvesting systems and methods to meet soil disturbance limits. Specifically, to achieve the maximum allowable soil disturbance limits for sites with moderate or high soil disturbance hazards, the trend is for operators to:

- construct fewer trails and use a less efficient network of skid trails,
- restrict operations to narrow seasonal windows to avoid creating dispersed soil disturbance between trails, or
- use more costly ground skidding or cable systems.

This bulletin reminds licensees and staff of a provision in the Code that was established to allow a person to temporarily exceed soil disturbance limits to construct temporary access structures which can later be rehabilitated to restore site productivity and to encourage the use of this provision to ensure logging operations are both economically efficient and environmentally acceptable.

Code Provision Allowing Maximum Soil Disturbance to be Temporarily Exceeded

Section 47 (2) of the *Forest Practice Code of British Columbia Act* allows a person carrying out timber harvesting operations to temporarily exceed the maximum amount of soil disturbance within the net area to be reforested (NAR) to construct temporary access structures, as long as:

- the maximum extent of this additional disturbance is specified in the silviculture prescription (as per OPR39(3)(j));
- the temporary access structures are approved in the prescription; and
- the prescription provides for their rehabilitation, i.e., the maximum time required to complete the rehabilitation must be specified (as per OPR39(3)(l)).

The amount of temporary disturbance resulting from these additional structures must be within the limit specified in a silviculture prescription. Allowing soil disturbance limits to temporarily be exceeded, by an amount up to 5% of the NAR for the standards unit, should be adequate to provide for economically efficient harvesting operations.

Temporary access structures must be constructed and rehabilitated in a manner that prevents soil from being deposited in streams, minimizes erosion, maintains surface drainage patterns and restores soil productivity. Approving silviculture prescriptions that allow maximum soil disturbance limits to be exceeded temporarily by up to 5% and ensuring that these structures are constructed and rehabilitated in accordance with Code requirements should provide:

- reasonable opportunities to carry out economically efficient timber harvesting,
- adequate conservation of soil resources, and
- adequate protection of environmental values.

To ensure that the appropriate balance is achieved with respect to the attainment of the economic, social and environmental objectives for forest resources, it is essential that licensees and government staff utilize the provisions in the Code that provide opportunities to manage risk, such as the one described in this bulletin.

Contact

For any questions regarding this bulletin, please contact:

Marty Osberg,
Forest Practices at Marty.Osberg@gems9.gov.bc.ca

