



General Bulletin

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Soil rehabilitation requirements for temporary access structures, compacted areas, and corduroyed trails

Introduction

This bulletin provides advice to district managers on Forest Practices Code of BC Act requirements related to the rehabilitation of temporary roads and pits, as well as compacted areas and corduroyed trails. It is intended to address compliance and enforcement issues that may arise from the elimination of soil rehabilitation plans for these areas.

Background

On July 1, 2000 the requirement for soil rehabilitation plans under section 31 of the Silviculture Practices Regulation (SPR) was amended. This amendment eliminated the requirement to have an approved soil rehabilitation plan in place before carrying out required rehabilitation of any temporary access structure road, borrow pit or gravel pit (as per section 47(6) of the Forest Practices Code of British Columbia Act (Act)), as well as any corduroyed trail or compacted area (under section 47 (7)). Soil rehabilitation plans are still required for excessively disturbed areas covered under sections 46(4) or 47(5) of the Act.

Issues

Consequential to the elimination of soil rehabilitation plans, amendments to the Timber Harvesting Practices Regulation (THPR) are under development to address rehabilitation requirements for roads and pits that are temporary access structures, and corduroyed trails or compacted areas. However, until these changes have been put into effect there are no specific regulation requirements on how rehabilitation under section 47(6) and (7) of the Act must be carried out on these type of areas. Note that rehabilitation treatments required for temporary access structure landings and excavated or bladed trails are currently provided in the THPR.

Recommendations

For purposes of assessing compliance with s. 47(6) and s. 47(7) of the Act, district managers should consider the following:

- According to *The Canadian Senior Dictionary*, rehabilitate means to “restore to good condition” or “restore to former standing”. This definition does not indicate that it is necessary to restore exactly to the original condition. However, a reasonable effort should be made to restore the hydrologic and biological function of the soil in question. For example, a reasonable objective may be to ensure that drainage is controlled, a reasonable amount of

topsoil and surface organic matter is restored and that the specifications of the SP can be satisfied with respect to stocking and free growing requirements.

- It would be appropriate to convey to licensees what is expected to satisfy sections 47(6) and (7) of the Act when rehabilitation operations are carried out. This could be communicated in the form of a policy explaining what criteria the district manager will use when assessing whether to accept a rehabilitation operation as being in compliance. The following contains a list of rehabilitation treatments that should normally be completed for the situations noted:
 - For road rehabilitation:
 - a) carry out measures to ensure that the area occupied by the road is stable and sediment delivery to streams is minimized;
 - b) decompact the soil below the road surface;
 - c) spread retrievable soil material that was displaced to construct the road over the surface of the road;
 - d) re-establish natural surface drainage;
 - e) revegetate exposed mineral soil where necessary to minimize soil erosion.
 - For rehabilitation of corduroyed trails, compacted areas, and borrow pits or gravel pits:
 - (a) rehabilitate the trail, area or pit to the extent necessary to enable the area to be reforested,
 - (b) decompact areas compacted by machine traffic,
 - (c) respread retrievable topsoil,
 - (d) re-establish natural surface drainage, and
 - (e) minimize sediment delivery to streams.
 - Alternatively, each rehabilitation project could be assessed against criteria or treatments that were included in previously approved soil rehabilitation plans that the licensee prepared for similar operations on similar sites.

Previously approved soil rehabilitation plan

Failure to follow a rehabilitation plan under section 31 of the SPR may only apply to contravention's that occurred before July 1, 2000. For contraventions of section 47 (6) and (7) after July 1, 2000 there is no authority to require previously approved plans to be followed. However, these previously approved plans do establish a standard that government expects to be achieved and should be considered in any applicable determination.

Time period for completing rehabilitation

Rehabilitation must be completed within the time period following harvesting that is specified in the SP. If this is not achieved there may be a non-compliance with section 67 of the Act.

Road rehabilitation and road deactivation

Roads that are temporary access structures must be both rehabilitated and deactivated (i.e. the latter in accordance with the Forest Road Regulation). These may involve similar activities, such that there is overlap between treatments proposed in a deactivation prescription and those measures that will be carried out to achieve rehabilitation. However, the overall objectives of

rehabilitation and deactivation are different, and operators must ensure that the requirements of both are met.

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