



UNIVERSITY of NEW HAMPSHIRE COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

NUTE'S NOTES ON TIMBER HARVESTS

A timber harvest is a major disturbance in the forest landscape, and even a “good” harvest may not look very appealing. However, there are 5 things to look for during a harvest that are indicators of a “good” operation.

- 1. MINIMUM RESIDUAL DAMAGE.** The worst thing that can happen during careless logging is to damage the younger mid-size trees that will be the crop for the next harvest. A wound to the trunk of a tree is a serious injury that dramatically lowers the timber value of that tree forever. A few “bumper trees” on the corners of the skid trails are acceptable, but widespread trunk damage to many trees scattered throughout the property should not be tolerated.
- 2. NO SOIL RUTS.** If the logging equipment is causing deep ruts in the soil, the property is being logged at the wrong time of the year. Sensitive sites need a high degree of pre-harvest planning and should be logged in mid-winter, when the ground is frozen, or during mid-summer, when the ground is dry. Rutting creates excessive tree root damage and soil erosion on steep slopes, both of which are long term negative impacts on the productivity of the forest.



- 3. LOW STUMPS** More than half the lumber value of each tree is in the first log, so it makes sense to cut the stumps as low as possible. Even during winter harvests with deep snow, the logger is expected to shovel or plow out around each tree so that it can be cut low to the ground. The stump pictured is much too high, and should have been cut lower, near the root swell.
- 4. LOW SLASH.** The limbs, tree tops and unmerchantable small wood remaining after a harvest is called “slash”. If this is run over by the skidder or cut close to the ground by the chain saw operator, it is less offensive visually, and will rot faster, returning nutrients to the forest floor. Also, if trails are to be used for recreation, care should be taken to clear these of logging debris by the end of the harvest. NOTE: There are a few instances when “high slash” is specifically warranted. For example, in areas with high deer populations, high slash will protect the tree seedlings from excessive feeding by the deer.
- 5. NO WASTE.** Full utilization of all the products harvested is the optimum goal, even though it may take innovative marketing on the part of the harvester. Anyone can sell the good quality, high value logs. It is the large volume of low value logs that is the challenge to move from the property.

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