

Using This Manual

A Message From the Good Forestry in the Granite State Steering Committee

The purpose of this guide is to provide landowners and the professionals who work with them practical recommendations and information on a wide variety of forest resources to help them make informed decisions that sustain the forest for today and the future.

Though we give the background needed to support decision-making, this manual doesn't attempt to give a full treatment of all topics. Its focus is operational: What you need to know to harvest trees, build a recreational trail or access road, protect water quality, improve wildlife habitat, or create a plan to guide your activities.

This isn't a regulatory document. It's a voluntary guide, not intended for conversion into town ordinances or state regulations. The recommendations are too intertwined with the notion that on-the-ground implementation is site-specific, requiring professional judgment and landowner input. Conservation commissioners and other town officials can help protect natural resources by disseminating this book, or parts of it, to landowners. It is available free at www.goodforestry.org or for a fee as a cd or book.

As you use this manual, keep the following in mind, especially regarding the recommendations:

- The manual is objective-driven. If you know your objectives, going to the relevant chapters will help you learn more. If you aren't sure of your objectives, we hope this manual helps you develop them. Crafting a vision for your land will help guide what happens on the ground.
- Where recommendations are based on state law, we note the relevant statute. Except for those based on state law, recommendations aren't mandatory, but rather options to consider, suggestions for moving towards a desired outcome as stated in each chapter's objectives. The specifics of what to do, when, where, and how are best based on site conditions, landowner objectives, and many other factors. We give guidance in the form of recommendations, considerations, and background information to help landowners and natural resource professionals use their judgment.
- Best management practices (BMPs) are practices determined by the State as the most effective and practicable means of controlling point and non-point pollution at acceptable levels. These guidelines, some of which have been codified into law, are found in *Best Management Practices for Erosion Control on Timber Harvesting Operations in New Hampshire*, published by the N.H. Dept. of Resources and Economic Development, Division of Forests and Lands. We advise readers to seek the latest version of this publication before harvesting timber. In many cases, following a combination of BMPs and the recommended practices in *Good Forestry in the Granite State* will result in the best outcome.
- It will be impossible to follow all the recommendations in this manual. No woodlot has all the natural resources covered in this book, and even if a resource is present, managing for it may not align with the landowner objectives or be practical to implement, especially on small properties.
- Because recommendations are made to achieve an objective as stated in a given chapter, a recommendation in one chapter may conflict with that in another. A clear understanding by landowners of their own objectives, knowledge of the property, and assistance from a natural resource professional will help resolve conflicts and develop a course of action. Managing even small properties requires balancing competing uses and making trade-offs and compromises.
- This guide doesn't replace the expertise of professionals.

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- To make them as clear as possible, most recommendations are devoid of qualifying language such as “when possible,” “as appropriate,” “if practical.” Read all recommendations as if these words were there. A given recommendation may not always be possible, practical, or appropriate. Consider the recommendations in light of landowner objectives and site conditions.
- Recommendations and other considerations are based on professional consensus and the best available science. In certain areas, differences of opinion and scientific uncertainty remain.
- Unless otherwise noted, information in this manual is about New Hampshire forests, wildlife, plants, and other natural resources.
- Some towns have regulations pertaining to forest management; we advise readers to check before harvesting.

Conservation Easements and Good Forestry in the Granite State

Many conservation easements refer to *Good Forestry in the Granite State*. For easement holders, the manual establishes a framework to evaluate forest management practices for consistency with the easement purposes and terms. For landowners, it is a guide to acceptable forest management goals, objectives and practices.

Although forestry easement language is variable, the following are variations of two commonly used approaches:

- (1) “forestry shall be carried out, to the extent practicable, in accordance with the recommended practices contained in *Good Forestry*. ...”
- (2) “forestry shall be carried out, to the extent reasonably practicable, in accordance with then-current, generally accepted best management practices for the sites, soils, and terrain of the property,” and then lists *Good Forestry* as one of several reference publications.

In some cases, easements also include language that provides for future versions of *Good Forestry* (and other documents) as substitutions in place of the version current at the time the easement was executed. For example, in referencing *Good Forestry*, an easement may state: “or similar successor or other publications.”

What do these references mean to an easement holder, and what do they mean for a landowner? The Good Forestry Steering Committee and the N.H. Division of Forests and Lands suggests the following guidelines:

- (1) Landowners and foresters design and conduct practices in a manner consistent with the background, objectives, considerations, and recommendations presented in *Good Forestry*. To the extent reasonable and practicable, follow the recommendations.
- (2) The easement holder should reasonably expect the easement landowner and forester will reflect *Good Forestry* in management planning and practices.
- (3) The easement holder shouldn’t expect that it will be appropriate or possible for a landowner to adhere to every recommendation. This publication explicitly recognizes that forest management practices on the ground are influenced by landowner goals, local site conditions, and other considerations. It further recognizes that it may not be possible to follow all recommendations, and that some recommendations are based on specific objectives that may conflict with other recommendations based on a different and equally valid objective.
- (4) Where forest management practices substantially deviate from, or conflict with, practices recommended in *Good Forestry*, the landowner should provide a rationale for why the management action is a sensible and appropriate practice that accomplishes the general objectives in *Good Forestry*.

- (5) In cases where the easement explicitly states that specific recommendations in *Good Forestry* must be followed, the landowner must adhere to the explicitly stated recommendations.

If the easement includes conservation purposes potentially influenced by forestry activities, or specific conservation goals for forest management, then *Good Forestry in the Granite State* may provide helpful guidance in achieving those purposes or goals.

The forest management plan is an important part of the easement compliance process, because it allows landowners to carefully think through and present their intended forest management activities. The management plan allows the easement holder to review the proposed management for consistency with the easement terms, including references to *Good Forestry*. Proposed management that substantially adheres to or differs from *Good Forestry* recommendations can be addressed and reviewed in the plan. Thoughtful discussion between the easement holder and landowner will result in shared goals, objectives and strategies for forest management activities on the property that meet the purposes of the easement.

The actual on-the-ground management rather than the plan determines compliance with the easement terms.

Organization of the Manual

Chapters are grouped in sections by broad topic categories. Each section begins with an **ADDITIONAL READING** that includes the most important documents broadly applicable to multiple chapters in the section.

Each chapter contains background, an objective, considerations, recommended practices, cross references to other chapters, and in most cases, additional information specific to that chapter.

BACKGROUND

The background explains why a certain activity or natural feature is important to forest sustainability.

OBJECTIVE

The objective describes the desired outcome of specific forest management activities.

CONSIDERATIONS

Considerations are factors that can affect implementation of recommended practices. The considerations, along with site conditions and landowner objectives, can help determine if the recommended practices are appropriate. They may describe legal issues that influence how practices are applied, or highlight areas where there isn't complete agreement by professionals.

RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

These are on-the-ground steps landowners and professionals who work with them can take to achieve the chapter objectives. They are designed to meet the chapter objective while factoring in the considerations. When site conditions make it difficult or impractical to implement the practices, managers should take actions consistent with the objective.

CROSS REFERENCES

Cross references lead the reader to additional relevant information within *Good Forestry*.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A short list of documents and websites specific to the chapter topic for those interested in learning more.

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In the back of the book you will find the following:

GLOSSARY

A glossary defining technical terms appears at the conclusion of the manual.

APPENDICES

Several appendices provide additional detailed information.

REFERENCES

Organized by chapter, these are the sources from which information for the chapter is drawn. If a reference is listed in the **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION** part of the chapter it isn't repeated in this listing.