

Specifications for Landowner Forest Stewardship Plan- Damage Assessments For Natural Disaster

Qualifying landowners can have natural disaster assessments completed by a licensed forester or other recognized experts in related natural resource fields. Assessments are a component of the Stewardship Plan practice and require that landowners either have an active qualifying stewardship plan for their property or be in the process of having one completed. Assessments must have as a minimum sufficient documentation and provide recommendations for landowners to make informed management decisions. They must include property maps, approved damage assessment forms or procedures established for a given natural disaster. Assessments must also outline actions and cost share program applications that will be used to restore damaged forests. A report of no action needed due to the disaster is valid. Assessors are urged to consider the potential beneficial impacts that no action may have on wildlife habitat.

Introduction

These instructions detail the minimum requirements needed to qualify as a natural disaster assessment.

A qualified forest stewardship plan must be in place before a natural disaster assessment will be approved. Assessments of the entire property are not required, but are encouraged. If a forest stewardship plan isn't in place, a forest stewardship plan can be developed that includes damage assessment information. Forest stewardship plans must cover the entire existing tree cover within a contiguous tract (land without existing tree cover may be included).

In order for the assessment to qualify the property for additional cost share practices, the practices must be needed to mitigate the effects of the disaster and help the property recover. List cost share programs that may be used to accomplish needs addressed in the assessments. Use the map to identify where the practices will be used. If possible, provide cost estimates, options, and any other information.

Instructions

Visual estimates of the damage are acceptable, however, forest health experts have found that walking land without a system results in high estimates of damage. Foresters are encouraged to use standard inventory procedures to estimate damage.

For less intense evaluations, thoroughly walk the property. If it is unclear how to rate the damaged areas, do some point sampling and rate the crown damage of the "in" trees and/or randomly "run a transect line" looking at ten dominant and codominant trees and rating their crown damage.

The intensity of the field inventory should be determined by landowner objectives.

Stratify the property according to forest type and general damage categories using aerial photos, forest type maps, elevation, or personal or landowner knowledge. Refine the stratification in the field. Include these ratings in maps and stand descriptions and prescriptions:

Relative Average Rating of Damage Categories			
% of trees with damage	Average of % of crown damage		
	<50	50-75	>75
0	NONE	NONE	NONE
<50	LOW	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
>50	LOW	MEDIUM-HIGH	HIGH

Landowner Objectives:

Include general management objectives and those that relate to the natural disaster. (Refer to the “Landowner Goals and Objectives” form”).

Property Map:

Attach a property map showing the approximate location of the damage with a relative average rating- light, medium, or heavy. Provide acreage estimates. Show existing and potential access.

Locus Map:

Show the approximate location of the property on a USGS topo, a NH Gazateer, or some equivalent map. Forester drawn locus maps are acceptable.

Access:

Provide a statement about the road and trail access condition, indicating actions needed and cost share programs that will help restore access. Show approximate location on the map. “No action needed” is an acceptable recommendation.

Safety:

Provide a statement about safety hazards resulting from the natural disaster with special notice made to areas, roads, or trails that might be frequented by the landowner and/or the public. Indicate actions needed and cost share programs that will mitigate safety hazards. If possible, show the approximate location on the map. “No action needed” is an acceptable recommendation.

The following hazard ratings are suggested:

- None No hanging limbs.
- Low 10-25% of the trees have hanging limbs.
- Moderate 25-50% of the trees have hanging limbs.
- High 50-75% of the trees have hanging limbs.
- Extreme More than 75% of the trees have hanging limbs.

Timber:

Use the rating system described above. Show the approximate damage and stand locations on the map. Consider the understory and advanced regeneration and the likely regeneration outcome with the treatment prescribed. Indicate most appropriate harvest system, logging chance, and equipment recommended. Include analysis of the casualty loss as needed by the landowner. Indicate actions needed and cost share programs that will mitigate damage to the timber resource. “No action needed” is an acceptable recommendation.

Wildlife:

Provide a statement about the positive and negative impacts to wildlife. During the field cruise look for the following attributes: large woody debris, standing live or dead snags, and increased crown openings. (Refer to “Good Forestry in the Granite State: Recommended Voluntary Best Management Practices” for suggested levels of these characteristics and for management recommendations). Indicate actions needed and cost share programs that will restore, maintain, or enhance wildlife habitat. “No action needed” is an acceptable recommendation.

Water Resources:

Provide a statement about the positive and negative impacts to streams, wetlands, and other bodies of water. Map the approximate location of these water resources. Indicate actions needed and cost share programs that will be used to remove woody debris in streams to the extent necessary to restore the function of erosion control structures. “No action needed” is an acceptable recommendation.

Fire Hazard:

Provide a general assessment of the fire hazard considering the amount of fuel and the continuity of the fuel cover on the ground; the potential for damage; and the frequency of use by people. When evaluating the fuel, compare it to acceptable levels in a traditional logging job. When considering the potential for damage, look at how close slash is to an occupied dwelling. Indicate actions needed and cost share programs that will mitigate fire hazard. “No action needed” is an acceptable recommendation.

Aesthetic and Cultural Resources:

Address aesthetic and cultural resources indicating actions needed and cost share programs that will mitigate the effects. Show approximate location on the map. “No action needed” is an acceptable recommendation.

Threatened and Endangered Species:

Address the effect that the disaster had on threatened and endangered species on the property. Indicate actions needed and cost share programs that will mitigate the effect. “No action needed” is an acceptable recommendation. Contact the NH Natural Heritage if additional information is needed.