

# STANDARD 4

## Air, Water and Soil Protection

Forest management practices maintain or enhance the **ecosystems** and **ecosystem services** provided by the forest, including air, water, soil and site quality.

### PERFORMANCE MEASURE 4.1

**Landowner** shall meet or exceed practices prescribed by **state forestry best management practices** (BMPs) that are applicable to the property.

#### GUIDANCE

Compliance with all **state forestry BMPs** that apply to elements such as air, water, soil and site quality are required on all ATFS certified properties, even if voluntary in the state of practice. **Landowners** and **designated representatives** are urged to secure a copy of the **state forestry BMP** guide from their state forestry agency and to familiarize themselves with the guidelines in it for harvesting, road building, reforestation, habitat management and other forest activities. For many states, this information is available free online and in printed format.

For states with forest practice acts, the statutes, administrative rules and guidance for the acts is considered the equivalent of **BMPs**. Where the Standards note state forestry BMP, the **inspector** or **third-party assessor** should reference the forest practice act in states where present.

### Indicator 4.1.1

**Landowner** shall implement specific **state forestry BMPs** that are applicable to the property.

#### GUIDANCE

When planning management activities that will cause any soil disturbance or require chemical application, the **BMP** manual for the state in which the property is located should be consulted and applicable **BMP** methods employed.

Examples of activities requiring BMP application:

- Harvest planning – including block design, haul roads, skidder trails, stream crossings and truck-loading areas
- Reforestation design – mechanical or chemical site preparation, machine or hand planting
- Construction and maintenance of new and existing roads and recreation trails
- Prescribed burning plans – fire lane construction, smoke management, agency notification

No field evidence of BMP implementation is expected where no management activity has occurred. However, if the property shows evidence of water quality impairment originating on the property that is not caused by the **landowner's** or **designated representative's** actions, the **landowner** is strongly encouraged to have plans for remediation.



Examples:

- **Landowner** purchases a tract with a forest road that is eroding soil into a water body.
- ATV riders are trespassing on the property and are crossing a stream causing the banks to erode.
- Garbage is being dumped on the property near a stream crossing and some of it is getting into the stream during high-water conditions.
- Storm damage has impaired the performance of road culverts.

### **Indicator 4.1.2**

**Landowner shall minimize road construction and other soil disturbances within riparian zones and wetlands.**

#### **GUIDANCE**

Activities in riparian zones and wetlands shall comply with applicable **BMPs**. **BMP** manuals are generally quite detailed on recommended practices for road construction and other disturbances of riparian zones. If there is a point of confusion, the **landowner** or **designated representative** is advised to consult with **a qualified natural resource professional** who is experienced in forest road design and installation. In some states, permits may be required for forest roads or other disturbances that intersect a riparian zone. **Landowners** should specify with **qualified contractors** that **BMPs** must be adhered to. In all cases, the primary concern is to avoid contaminating watercourses that are adjacent to the forest activity.

## **PERFORMANCE MEASURE 4.2**

**Landowner shall consider a range of forest management activities to control pests, pathogens and unwanted vegetation.**

### **Indicator 4.2.1**

**Landowner should evaluate alternatives to pesticides for the prevention or control of pests, pathogens and unwanted vegetation to achieve specific management objectives.**

#### **GUIDANCE**

**Landowners** or **designated representatives** should consult with their state forestry agency or **qualified natural resource professional** to learn about the range of recommended management techniques for any particular disease, **invasive species** or pest outbreak on their property. Links to these resources are available at the [ATFS website](#).

**Integrated pest management** (IPM) is an excellent approach to controlling, suppressing or preventing pests and can take many forms. Preventative measures, efforts to improve **forest health** or, in some other way, protect the property from injurious organisms are often the most practical and effective approaches. **Pesticide** applications may be used when other control measures are ineffective or impractical.



While **landowners** and **designated representatives** are urged to take feasible actions to address pests, pathogens and unwanted vegetation, **third-party assessors** are advised that, in some cases, there may be no feasible options for controlling a pest or outbreak due to severity, **scale** and timing of onset.

### **Indicator 4.2.2**

**Pesticides used shall be approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and applied, stored and disposed of in accordance with EPA-approved labels and by persons appropriately trained, licensed and supervised.**

#### **GUIDANCE**

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approves the use of **pesticides** for specific situations and on specific plants or animals, at specified application rates. The **landowner** is responsible for ensuring that the planned use of a **pesticide** is in compliance with the EPA label requirements. Use of pesticides should be documented by the landowner or designated representative.

Please consult the ATFS resource page for links to the EPA and other relevant resources for additional information on EPA-approved **pesticides**.

In most states, forestry chemicals must be applied by a licensed applicator. The **landowner** is responsible for ensuring that anyone applying forestry use chemicals is in compliance with state and federal regulations. In some states, **landowners** or **designated representatives** can apply certain **pesticides** on their land without any special permits or licenses. In others, they can apply for and receive a license or permit to apply forestry chemicals on their own lands according to the EPA label limitations. In any event, the requirements for safe use, storage and disposal must be met by **landowners**.

## **PERFORMANCE MEASURE 4.3**

**When used, prescribed burns shall conform with landowner's objectives and all applicable rules, laws, and regulations.**

#### **GUIDANCE**

In many states, the state forestry agency employs a permit system for prescribed burning. Many of these agencies provide training for prescribed burning that is available to **landowners** and **designated representatives**. Successful completion of a prescribed burning course is often required before the state forestry agency will issue a burning permit. Many states regulate the amount of open burning that can be conducted on a given day in a county or multi-county zone.

Prescribed burning includes controlled burning of piles, windrows and broadcast fire applications.

A prescribed burning plan is highly recommended, which will include reconnaissance of the burning block, estimates of fuel condition, required weather conditions and adequate means of controlling the fire after it is set. Oral discussion of a burning plan with all of the parties involved, before the burn is started on the property, is acceptable. A written burning plan record is not required by the Standards but may be required by the state agency that regulates open burning in the state.

**Qualified ATFS inspectors** and **third-party assessors** may verify compliance through interviews with **landowners** or **designated representatives** and observing the property. The **landowner** or **designated representatives** may have written records to support conformance claims but is not required to do so.





### **Indicator 4.3.1**

**Prescribed burns** shall conform with the **landowner's objectives** and state and local laws and regulations.

#### **GUIDANCE**

The **landowner's** plans and good-faith actions in using **prescribed burns** should conform to the management objectives and the relevant laws and regulations.

Even the best-laid plans may go awry. **Qualified Tree Farm inspectors** or assessors are advised to look for a pattern of responsible use of **prescribed burns** where it is used.