

Moving logs through your forest

Forest owners can move larger logs through the forest while minimizing soil erosion and damage to standing trees.

Many forest owners find themselves moving large or small logs around their forests as they cut firewood or clear brush. Tractors and ATVs make this work less laborious, but erosion problems can occur.

Best management practices for moving logs

Cut logs to manageable size.

After a tree is felled, it is ready to be cut up into pieces appropriate for the final use. If it will be sawn into lumber, each piece may be 9 feet long or greater. Firewood cutters can cut the logs into stove length at the stump. You should decide what length of log will best fit your plans AND capacity. Minimize the size of the log before moving it. A shorter log will be less likely to rut the soil, bump and damage other trees, or start rolling downslope.

Minimize dragging over soft forest soils.

If you are dragging the logs behind your machinery, as most do-it-yourselfers do, traverse forest soils when they will support the combined weight of the machine and log. Refrain from moving large logs until the soil is dry or frozen.

Soft soil, damp soil, or mounds from wind throws are particularly sensitive to erosion. Build a segment of corduroy trail where straight limbs are laid perpendicular to the road, tightly packed together. This kind of structure will spread out the weight and reduce rutting.

Consider new ATV and tractor-based equipment to reduce impacts on forest soils.

Logging arches and other devices lift one end of a log (or a bunch of small logs) off the forest soil, reducing the weight that would cause ruts. These devices are inexpensive to purchase or can be welded up by handy forest owners.

Use low value trees and stumps as bumpers.

Designate some low-value trees as "bumper trees." These are used to intentionally pivot long logs around a bend without harming more valuable trees. The inevitable bark damage will not jeopardize a quality tree.

Use chains on tires.

Chain-covered tires are less likely to slip through forest soils. They tend to prevent wheels from spinning and forming ruts that damage tree roots.

