

Acceptable Management Practices For Maintaining Water Quality On Logging Jobs In Vermont

The Law As Stated: Acceptable Management Practices, (AMPs), for logging are Vermont's approach to meeting the requirements of both Section 208 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act and Vermont's Water Quality Statutes (Title 10 VSA, Chapter 47, Section 1259).

<http://www.leg.state.vt.us/statutes/fullsection.cfm?Title=10&Chapter=047&Section=01259>

Vermont law requires permits for discharges of “any waste, substance or material into the waters of the state.” However, individual permits are not required for any discharges that inadvertently result from logging operations if responsible management practices are followed to protect water quality. “Acceptable Management Practices (AMPs) For Maintaining Water Quality On Logging Jobs In Vermont” were developed and adopted as rules to Vermont's water quality statutes and became effective on August 15, 1987. The AMPs are intended to prevent “discharges”; that is mud, petroleum products and woody debris from entering waters of the state.

Positive Outcomes: The AMP program has had a positive impact and has been effective with maintaining water quality on logging operations in Vermont. Representatives from both the public and private sectors collaborated in the development of the AMPs. This program fosters a private/public partnership unique to state government. This partnership has proven to be a successful approach to work with loggers, to helping them maintain water quality on logging operations. Members from the Vermont forest industry volunteer their time by working with Vermont Agency of Natural Resources staff to work with loggers to help them remediate water quality problems associated with logging operations. This approach has proven to be very successful as most water quality cases are resolved through voluntary compliance.

AMP workshops for loggers have been offered on a regular basis since this program went into effect in 1987. This workshop is popular and well attended by loggers. Personnel from the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation provide technical assistance for loggers and landowners as part of this program. This demonstrates a pro-active approach with the administration of this program.

Negative Outcomes: Perhaps the only negative affect as seen by some, is that this program does not require forested buffers be retained along streams. Legally, a logger can clear-cut up to a stream as long as this practice does not cause a discharge; that is logging slash, sediment or petroleum products entering public waters. Riparian values and functions are jeopardized when this occurs.

Effectiveness: The AMP program continues to keep water quality violations from logging activity to a level that has been manageable given the number of harvesting operations statewide. There has been no significant trend either upwards or downwards in the number of water quality cases investigated statewide since 1987 when the AMPs became effective. However, water quality violations have become less severe as observed and documented in case reports. This can be attributed to sustained educational efforts along with the fact that severe penalties could result making the cost of pollution substantial. Attaining voluntary compliance has been a focus of this program. This has proven to be a successful approach.

Sustainable Forest Management: The AMPs do not, nor were they designed or intended to address aesthetics, sustainable forestry, wildlife or other legitimate issues related to timber harvesting.

Private Land Ownership: This regulatory program poses no obvious negative impacts to private land ownership.