

FACT SHEET

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Timber & Timber Harvesting in West Virginia

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How Logging Helps Recreation

Harvesting timber can have a positive impact on recreational activities in West Virginia. Hunting, scenic viewing, forest health, access, hiking, cross country-skiing, educational demonstrations, fire protection, wildlife viewing, and habitat diversity can all be positively impacted by logging.

West Virginia logging truck and skid roads are built using state-of-the-art Best Management Practices (BMP's). Loggers follow WV Division of Forestry BMP guidelines on road planning, location, gradient, construction, water control, stream protection, stabilization, use, maintenance and compliance. These well constructed roads and trails can provide excellent access for hunting, fishing, camping, fire control, wildlife and scenic viewing, firewood cutting and wild berry harvesting. Some old skid roads have been used as horse trails. Access by well-built roads into remote forested areas has had the added benefit of providing use to handicapped persons.

Logging, to some degree, occurs on over 130,000 acres each year. The forests on these acres are usually thinned, partially cut, or clear-cut. Timber harvesting will create open areas that can add to the diversity of the forest and create viewing areas. These open areas enhance wildlife habitat for species preferring early successional vegetation. Following harvest, sites can favor grass, shrub, and herb growth. Openings attract wildlife such as deer, ground hog, ruffed grouse, bluebirds, warblers, and turkeys. Thinning can also encourage mast and acorn production. Wildlife that consume acorns include: deer, bear, grouse, fox, and squirrel. Bears sometimes use piles of slash or logging debris as a den.

Forest health can be improved by timber harvesting. Logging can remove dead, diseased, weakened, or hazardous trees freeing up growing space for healthier or more vigorous trees. Proper thinning can remove gypsy moth susceptible species and promote the growth of more resistant species. This thinning practice can produce a more diverse, vigorous, gypsy moth resistant forest over time. Harvesting can promote forest recovery after catastrophic events such as fire, ice storms, high winds and hurricanes. Logging after these destructive events will remove damaged trees and hasten the restoration of forest health and recreational values. Many of these damaged trees would typically die and rot or become a poor quality stunted tree over time. In heavily used recreational

areas the removal of unhealthy, poorly growing, or dead trees is critical if this high-value use is to be maintained.

Revenue generated from timber harvests is used in some cases to promote income producing recreational development. Landowners often invest their timber income into activities such as campgrounds, trail riding areas, wildlife habitat improvement, bed and breakfast lodges, and hunting leases.

Logging can be an integral part of forest demonstration and educational areas. The Cass Scenic Railroad State Park receives thousands of visitors each year. In the park, visitors see the restored lumber town of Cass and ride on the old logging railroad up to Bald Knob. Visitors marvel at the resilient and regenerated forest. There are other demonstration forests open to the public across West Virginia that integrate logging into forest management programs illustrating the compatibility of multiple-uses including recreation.

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