

North Carolina Forest Service  
**SOUTHERN PINE BEETLE PREVENTION PROGRAM HANDBOOK**  
Revised February 2020

# 2020



## N.C. Forest Service SPBPP Handbook

The Southern Pine Beetle (SPB) (*Dendroctonus frontalis*) is the most destructive insect pest to in the southeastern US. Shortleaf pine (*Pinus echinata*) and loblolly pine (*Pinus taeda*) are the most susceptible species. The most susceptible stands are usually unmanaged, and stressed from the environment, competition, age, or a combination of factors. During periodic outbreaks, SPB populations can rise, attack and quickly kill multiple acres of trees within these stands. Because of increasing length and severity of SPB outbreaks, the USDA Forest Service and the Southern Group of State Foresters initiated a more proactive approach for mitigating the severity of outbreaks by creating the Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Cost Share Program. This is a federally funded cost share program that is implemented at the state level.

In 2005, the N.C. Forest Service Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program (SPBPP) was created for non-industrial private forest landowners of North Carolina. The SPB Prevention Program provides these landowners cost share funds for approved forest management practices that minimize future SPB outbreaks and restore productive stands with healthy, managed forests.

Practice currently available:

**Prevention** practices will include **pre-commercial thinning** to reduce the number of stems or basal area per acre of over-stocked, young pine stands, and **understory prescribed burning** or **mid-rotation herbicide applications** to promote/maintain open understory conditions in pine stands.

### **Eligibility and Limitations**

#### General

Any private individual, group, association or corporation owning a minimum of five (5) acres of non-industrial private forestland located in North Carolina is eligible. Where forest land is owned jointly by more than one individual, group, or association, as tenants in common, tenants by the entirety, or otherwise, the joint owners shall be considered as one eligible landowner and entitled to receive cost share. Individual landowners that share in a joint ownership are also eligible. State government owned lands are also eligible for assistance for SPB prevention practices. Other government owned lands, forest industry ownership, and lands owned by primary processors of forest products are not eligible for cost share.

Cost share assistance is limited to \$10,000 per ownership per state fiscal year (July 1 – June 30). Approval of the application for funds requires verification by a N.C. Forest Services (NCFS) forester that potential exists for a Southern pine beetle attack on eligible forestlands and an approved forest management plan for the lands on which funds are requested. This plan must contain a description of the present conditions, future courses of action and approved practices that will be followed to reduce the potential for SPB infestation, while assuring forest productivity and environmental protection. A designated forester of the NCFS must approve this forest management plan.

SPBPP funds cannot be used on the same acres on which other cost share funds are being received for forestry practices during the same fiscal year. Funds cannot be used on CRP, CREP or other Federal cost share stands with an active contract.

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Landowners who accept Program funding are required to maintain those acres in forestland for a period of ten (10) years and to comply with the provisions in the approved forest management plan. Landowners will be required to repay all or part of the funds paid to them if they, (a) destroy the installed practice(s) during the maintenance period, (b) fail to maintain the practice(s) as stated in the approved forest management plan, or (c) voluntarily relinquish control or title to the land on which the installed practice has been established and the new owner or operator of the land does not agree, in writing, to properly maintain the practice(s) for the remainder of the maintenance period. Recapture of program funds will not be pursued when the practice(s) is destroyed due to an “act of God” or to actions beyond the landowner’s control (such as condemnation). In addition, if a landowner should harvest residual timber within the ten-year period, the installed practice will not be considered destroyed if the property remains as a managed forest (not converted to non-forestry use).

All Forest Practices Guidelines will be followed and necessary Best Management Practices to protect water will be implemented.

The area must be protected from destructive grazing and destructive fire.

Chemicals used in performing this practice must be:

- Federal and State registered
- applied according to authorized uses, directions on the label, and other Federal or State policies and requirements.

### Pre-commercial Thinning

Eligible stands:

- Must have more than 700 pine stems per acre (if the stand is mixed pine and hardwood, then >70% of stems must be pine).
- Will be reduced to 300-450 stems per acre after completion of approved pre-commercial thinning practices.
- **White pine** stands can also qualify if the basal area is 150 square feet or more. These stands will be reduced to 90 square feet of basal area or less.

### Understory Prescribed Burning

To receive funding:

- The objective for the burn must be to promote the growth and health of remaining trees and to decrease the likelihood of SPB infestation. This includes burning to reduce hardwood and other woody competition and to create an open understory.
- Stand and site conditions must support an adequate burn to meet these objectives. In addition, pre-burn stand and site conditions must be evaluated to protect overstory pines from crown scorch, cambial kill, damage to root systems, and other injury to living tissues leading to tree stress. This includes evaluating soil conditions, days since last rainfall, fuel loading, and other factors commonly used when making prescriptions for burning.
- All burning must be conducted in accordance with the North Carolina Prescribed Burning Act (N.C. General Statutes Chapter 106, Article 80, G.S. 106-965 through 106-970).
- To effectively reduce and control hardwood understory, multiple understory burns leading to growing season burns are desirable. This program necessarily funds a single burn to begin or continue an

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effective multiyear burning regime. Future “re-burns” may be cost shared through this program if adequate funds are available.

### Mid-Rotation Herbicide Application

To receive funding:

- The objective of the herbicide application must be to promote the growth and health of remaining trees and to decrease the likelihood of SPB infestation by controlling understory woody plants in pine stands, creating an open condition.
- These applications will be done by ground application conducted by a spray system mounted on a tracked or wheeled vehicle or by manual means (backpack, hack and squirt, etc.). In addition, aerial herbicide application may also be utilized. Mechanized applications will often take place following thinning, to allow access by equipment. Manual applications can be done in either thinned or unthinned stands.
- While this type of application is often done in conjunction with a prescribed burn to consume herbicide killed material and is preferable, it is not necessary for funding under this program. This practice may be used as a substitute where prescribed burning is not feasible or allowable.
- All herbicide applications must adhere to NCFS Policy and Procedure 4211 and all applicable state and federal laws.

An eligible landowner may receive cost-shared funds to complete needed pre-commercial thinning practices, understory prescribed burning, or mid-rotation herbicide application at the fixed rates per acre listed in Appendix 1.

### Application for Cost Sharing

An approved forest management plan must be on file with the N.C. Forest Service before the landowner may apply for cost-sharing funds on practices as prescribed in the plan. Such plan shall include forest management practices to insure both forest productivity and environmental protection of the lands to be treated. The District Forester will designate in writing those NCFS foresters who may approve these plans. Each plan approved will be signed and dated.

Application must be made on Form 4500-20 (see Appendix 2) and submitted through a District Office. **Each practice requires a separate application.** Required items on the application form are 1, 2, 3 (Lat/Long), 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and/or 12, 13, preferably typed but must be legible if handwritten. The appropriate copy will be sent to the Central Office (C.O.) for funding. The district office will maintain a system to record and track the status of all active SPBPP applications.

Districts will submit applications to the Central Office when projects can be started without delay.

If the property is sold before the work is started or completed and the new owner wishes to follow through with the project, a new application must be submitted by the new owner. The original application will be canceled. If the new owner does not wish to continue a project that has been started, no cost share will be made for any work completed.

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Applicants wishing to obtain funding through the services of an agent (consulting forester, farm manager, trustee, or other) must complete Form 4225-4910, "Power of Attorney for N.C. Forest Service Assistance". To use this form with SPBPP, complete item #7, "Other (specify)", by filling in the wording "actions pertaining to SPBPP, Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program". Once completed the original is sent to the C.O., one copy is given to the "principal" (the landowner), one copy to the "attorney-in-fact" and one copy is placed in the landowner's project folder at the District Office.

### **Allocation of SPB Prevention Program Funds**

Allocations will normally be made "first come, first served", based upon the date of receipt of the application in the Central Office. Allocations will be equally available across the three NCFS regions.

Upon certification of the availability of funds and allotment to the project, the District Office and the applicant will be notified. If allotment cannot be made due to insufficient funds, the District Office will be notified as to the status of the application. The District is responsible for notifying the counties on project status.

Work will not be authorized for cost sharing until written notice has been received of allotment of funds to the project.

An exception to the written notice requirement may be made to facilitate timely thinning by available contractors. Verbal approval may be given if a SPBPP application is on file in the Central Office awaiting written notice. Verbal approvals will be followed by a FAX to the district, within 24 hours, verifying the verbal approval.

Projects completed without either verbal or written approval will not be cost shared. Payments will not be processed until the landowner and District Office has received written approval.

### **Revision of Approved Projects**

Changes in recommended practices may be made after an application has been submitted or approved. This should only be necessary when unforeseen circumstances have occurred. In such cases, an amendment to the management plan must be made and approval received from the Central Office prior to starting work.

Should changes in completed practices occur without the knowledge of NCFS personnel, requested revisions must show need, be justified, and receive approval of the ARF-FM. The practices must be a satisfactory alternative to those originally approved and performed satisfactorily. The revisions must be made and approved by the C.O. prior to any request for payment. Note: This should be treated as an exception rather than accepted procedure.

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The authorizing forester will notify the Central Office by memo of the requested changes to the original application. If additional cost share is required, and funds are available, revisions will be allowed to increase the acres and/or allotted amount.

If additional cost share is required and funds are not available, the acres will have to be reduced to coincide with the original amount of cost share approved. Should this not be acceptable to the landowner, the application should be canceled and a new one submitted for approval.

If approved and funded, the district and landowner will receive a revised allocation letter reflecting the change in practice(s) and funds. Work may start on the revised project, or payment may be requested as soon as this notification is received. The district is responsible for notifying the counties on project status.

### **Cancellation of Projects**

If the project has not been funded, a telephone call or note from the district office to the C.O. will be sufficient to remove the request from the files. A note to the district and county file is needed to document the reason for cancellation.

If cancellation is necessary after the project is funded, the original application sheet (pink) should be marked “cancel” by the forester and sent to the C.O. The canceled form should include the canceled date and forester's initial(s)/signature. The reason for cancellation should also be noted on the canceled form. This information will be included in the letter sent to the landowner by the C.O. Prior to canceling a funded project, the landowner or his/her agent will be notified by the forester either in person or by phone to alert them of the cancellation.

### **Completion of Projects**

The District Forester will designate, in writing, those foresters, county rangers, and management technicians who may certify satisfactory completion. For certification of completion, the landowner must notify the NCFS that the practices have been completed, including those practices recommended in the FM plan to insure environmental protection. By signing item # 18 of Form 4500-20, the NCFS representative certifies performance and acreage; and accepts full responsibility for the measurements and that NCFS silvicultural and environmental standards have been met.

Full payment will be made following certification of all approved work.

A N.C. Forest Service representative must complete the performance section of Form 4500-20. Required items are 14, 15, 16, and 18 (See Appendix 2 for Form 4500-20). This form, along with the private contractor's invoice, or if the landowner did the work, a dated and signed statement of costs must be sent to the Central Office for payment.

When NCFS has contracted work in total or in combination with private contractors, Form 4500-20 and all invoices and related documentation will be sent to the appropriate Regional Offices. These offices will then forward the material to the Central Office for payment.

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Payment will be made by applying the fixed rate per acre, or actual cost, whichever is less (see Appendix 1). Payment will not exceed the total amount eligible (see page 1 Eligibility and Limitations).

Invoices and acres certified as completed must correspond. Acres should be certified to the nearest acre or as outlined in Procedure 4225.61. However, invoices do not have to include acres - only cost. The acres certified by NCFS personnel as completed will suffice when no conflicting acreage figures are shown elsewhere.

Should it be necessary to hold payment requests or invoices to settle disputes, or other problems, it is the forester's responsibility to notify the landowner or agent that payment will be held up until the problem is resolved. The landowner will be notified, in writing, what specific actions are needed to correct the problem or resolve the disputed issue.

### **Forest Practices Guidelines and Best Management Practices Problems**

All necessary BMP's will be implemented.

A landowner may submit an application for cost share assistance and be funded when a potential or actual Forest Practice Guidelines (FPG) violation or a Best Management Practices (BMP) problem is present on a tract. Landowners will be notified by the forester, in writing, that final payments will not be approved or made until FPG violations(s) have been corrected. This shall apply to the entire tract for which cost share assistance has been requested.

Professional judgment should be utilized when dealing with BMP problems that do not violate Forest Practice Guidelines standards.

On tracts where BMP problems occur after the NCFS has prepared or approved the plan, payments will not be made until the BMP problems(s) have been corrected.

When BMP problems exist prior to NCFS involvement, professional judgment will be used to correct the problem area(s). Other BMP costs, such as those for waterbars and seeding of roads will be at the expense of the landowner.

### **Time Limits on Use of Funds**

Pre-commercial thinning, prescribed burning, and mid-rotation herbicide application projects **must be completed within one calendar year of the date funded** (date on acceptance letter). Applications failing to meet these requirements will have funds withdrawn. A cancellation letter is sent to the landowner with a copy to the district office (see "Cancellation of Projects" above).

To make sure available funding is directed towards landowners who complete their projects in a timely manner, **NCFS will not grant time extensions for thinning and herbicide application, except in extreme circumstances, beyond the control of the landowner and NCFS. An extension of one calendar year may be granted upon request if burning cannot be completed in one year due to weather factors.** If a project is not completed in the time stated on the cost share award letter (or extension letter in the case of prescribed burning), their award will be cancelled as outlined on page 4 and previously approved funds will be used to

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fund additional projects. If a landowner whose project has been cancelled still wants to complete his or her thinning, burning, or herbicide application practice with SPBPP cost-share funds, he or she will have to re-apply for any available funds. If a waiting list is in place at that time, the new application will be added to the end of the waiting list.

### **Prevailing Rate Establishment**

The rates for the coming fiscal year will be reviewed and recommended jointly by the Pest Control, Forest Management and the Regional Staff.

### **Appeal of Disagreements by Landowners**

Landowners may appeal disagreements, disapproval of applications, or decisions on unsatisfactory completion of silvicultural or environmental practices in the manner established in the North Carolina Administrative Code, Title 15, Sub-Chapter 1B, Section .0200.

### **Recordkeeping**

Accomplishment records will be compiled in the Central Office for those practices completed in each county. However, districts should report accomplishments along with all other forest management activities through the regular reporting system. Documentation of projects will be done as outlined in Procedure 4220.

### **Handling Activities That are Inconsistent with the Forest Management Plan**

The NCFS needs to be aware of SPBPP project areas that are destroyed or not maintained according to the management plan. When a Program stand is destroyed or not maintained according to the management plan, the District should initiate recapture procedures as follows:

- (1) Notify the Central Office - FM Section Chief, in writing, and provide project information.
  - landowner's name, current mailing address, and phone number
  - SPBPP application number
  - present condition of the project, and number of acres destroyed or affected
- (2) CO will contact the landowner and handle the collection process, with assistance from LE as needed.

### **Approved Practices**

**Pre-Commercial Thinning:** Felling or deadening, made in an immature stand, to reduce stand density and improve the growth and form of the remaining trees. Eligible stands must have more than 700 pine stems per acre (if the stand is mixed pine and hardwood, then >70% of stems must be pine). Stands will be reduced to 300-450 stems per acre after completion of these practices. White pine stands can also qualify if the basal area is 150 square feet or more. Stands will be reduced to 90 square feet of basal area or less.



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Eligible Age Practice	Pre-Treatment Crop Trees	Post-Treatment Condition	Condition
Pre-commercial thinning of <b>southern yellow pine</b>	12 Years maximum	700+ pine stems/acre	300 – 450 stems/acre, depending upon age; 450@ age 3, down to 300 @ age 10
Pre-commercial thinning of <b>white pine</b>	30 Years maximum	700+ pine stems/acre or 150+ square feet of basal area	300 – 450 stems per/acre or 90 sq. feet of basal area or less

## Sub-practices:

- 1) Chemical Control -- Ground: The use of herbicides applied from the ground to reduce pine stocking and improve stand vigor
- 2) Mechanical Control: The use of hand tools or machines to reduce pine stocking and improve stand vigor.

**Prescribed Burning:** Using prescribed burning in pine stands to promote the growth and health of remaining trees and to decrease the likelihood of SPB infestation. This includes burning to reduce hardwood and other woody competition and to create an open understory. Stand and site conditions must support an adequate burn to meet these objectives while minimizing stress to residual trees caused by damage to live tissue such as cambium, foliage, or root systems. All burning must be conducted in accordance the North Carolina Prescribed Burning Act (N.C. General Statutes Chapter 106, Article 80, G.S. 106-965 through 106-970).

Practice	Eligible Age Crop Trees	Pre-Burn Condition	Post-Burn Condition
Understory prescribed burning of most <b>pine</b> stands	10 years or older	Natural or planted pine stand with pine basal area 120 sq. ft./ acre or less and competing woody under/mid-story.	Reduced understory competition. Post burn evaluation indicates progression towards open understory conditions.
Understory prescribed burning of <b>white pine</b> stands	10 years or older	Natural or planted white pine stand with pine basal area 150 sq. ft./ acre or less and competing woody under/mid-story.	Reduced understory competition. Post burn evaluation indicates progression towards open understory conditions.
Understory prescribed burning of <b>young longleaf pine</b> stands	Under 10 years old	Young natural or planted longleaf pine stand with pine and/or hardwood stocking average >700 tpa	Reduced competition. Post burn evaluation indicates progression towards open conditions.

**NOTE:** A single Rx burn does not usually provide adequate SPB prevention and protection. Prevention benefits come from a regime of regular burns over the life of a stand. Higher incentives are provided to encourage re-burns in previously burned stands for continued forest health benefits.

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**Mid-rotation Herbicide Application:** Herbicide application in pine stands to promote the growth and health of remaining trees and to decrease the likelihood of SPB infestation. Mechanized applications will often take place following thinning, to allow access by equipment. These applications will be done by ground application conducted by a spray system mounted on a tracked or wheeled vehicle or by manual means (backpack, hack and squirt, etc.), or by aerial application. Manual applications can be done in either thinned or unthinned stands. While this type of application is often done in conjunction with a prescribed burn to consume herbicide killed material and is preferable; it is not necessary for funding under this program. All herbicide applications must adhere to NCFS Policy and Procedure 4211 and all applicable state and federal laws.

Practice	Eligible Age Crop Trees	Pre-Treatment Condition	Post-Treatment Condition
Understory Control- Herbicide Application	10 years or older	Natural or planted pine stand with pine basal area 120 sq.ft./ acre (or less) and competing under/mid-story.	Reduced understory competition. Post application evaluation indicates progression towards open understory conditions.

**Appendix - 1**

<b>SPB PREVENTION PROGRAM 2020 RATES FOR SUB-PRACTICES</b>		
<b>Practices are paid either actual cost or listed flat rate, whichever is lesser (Dollar cost per acre)</b>		
	<i>Coastal Plain and Piedmont (NCFS Regions 1&amp;2)</i>	<i>Mountains (NCFS Region 3)</i>
<b><u>Pre-Commercial Thinning</u></b>		
• Chemical Control (ground)	\$100	\$100
• Mechanical Control	\$100	\$100
<b><u>Prescribed Burning</u></b>		
• Understory	\$15	\$15
• Understory Re-burn (previously burned stand) *	\$20	\$20
<b><u>Herbicide Understory Hardwood Control</u></b>		
• Ground Application	\$30	\$40
• Aerial Application	\$30	\$40

**\* Incentive for re-burning stands burned within the last 5 years. This includes stands previously burned regardless of funding source within 5 years of application date.**

**Appendix – 2**

Form 4500-20  
(2/2005)

**SOUTHERN PINE BEETLE PREVENTION PROGRAM**

Application No. \_\_\_\_\_

1) Name and Address of Applicant  	2) Type Applicant Individual <input type="checkbox"/> *Joint Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Corporation <input type="checkbox"/> Association <input type="checkbox"/>	3) Tract Name  Lat. _____ Long. _____	4) District  6) Program Year	5) County  7) Soc. Sec./Tax No.	Distribution  Pink: Final Payment - CO Blue: District Office Green: CO for funding Yellow: Landowner
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PRACTICES NEEDED				PERFORMANCE REPORT				
8) Description of Practices	9) Acres Needed	10) Prevailing Rate / Acre	14) Acres Completed	15) Date Completed	16) Total Cost of Work Completed		17) Actual Total Cost / Acre	18) I certify that work has been performed satisfactorily and meets requirements of the approved Forest Management Plan
					By NCFS	By Others		
<b>TOTAL ACRES</b>								

11. This certifies that I (1) am an eligible landowner and understand that this means a private individual, group, association or corporation owning non-industrial land suitable for forestry purposes, and where forest land is owned jointly by tenants in common or other type of joint ownership, the joint owners shall be considered as one eligible landowner; (2) intend to carry out and maintain for 10 years the forestry practice(s) described above and those environmental protection measures related to the practice(s) on land owned by me as outlined in the Forest Management Plan approved by \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_; (3) understand the cost share assistance received by me will represent the percentage, in effect at time of sign up, of the prevailing rate in Column 10 or of actual invoice cost, whichever is less; (4) understand that funds originally allotted to me will be reduced to reflect the actual acres involved if fewer acres are actually treated; (5) agree to reimburse any funds received as partial payment if the practice(s) required to finish the project are not completed; (6) agree to refund all or part of the funds paid to me if before the expiration of the 10 year maintenance period I (a) destroy the installed practice(s); (b) fail to maintain the practice(s) as stated in the Forest Management Plan, or (c) voluntarily relinquish control or title to the land on which the installed practice(s) has been established and the new owner and/or operator of the land does not agree in writing to properly maintain the practice(s) for the remainder of the maintenance period; (7) agree that if the N.C. Division of Forest Resources serves as contractor for any of these practice(s) that cost share payments will be transferred directly to the said contractor; and (8) understand that I am entitled to only one maximum project for this ownership during any one fiscal year (July 1 - June 30). **I have not yet started this practice(s) and, I understand that if I begin the practice(s) before receiving written approval to do so, I will be denied funding.** I further understand that any statement certified by me or my Agent with Power-of-Authority in this application and later found to be false will result in forfeiture of all funds to which I am entitled and repayment of any funds received under terms of this contract.

12) As Agent with Power-of-Authority for the owner shown in 1), I certify that this is an eligible landowner described above and said landowner agrees to the conditions of this program as stated in item 11.

Signature of Landowner or Company Representative and Title	Date	Signature of Agent	Date
13) I certify that the practice(s) and acres shown above are needed and practical on this tract as outlined in the approved FM Plan.		*If joint ownership, identify other owners:	
Signature of NCFS Representative	Date		

**Individual Ownership:** A single and clearly identifiable person.  
**Joint Ownership:** Two or more persons to carry on as co-owners. Joint owners are treated as one landowner and entitled to receive cost sharing as one owner, only once during a fiscal year. Joint ownership must be clearly identifiable as a distinct entity and may consist of relatives owning property in common, or a partnership in a business for profit.  
**Corporation:** Non-profit corporation intended to have no income; or a corporation for profit or having capital stock which may have been or may be created and organized under the N.C. Business Corporation Act.  
**Association:** The act of a number of persons in uniting together for some special purpose of business.

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