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Groundwater and Wetlands Research Study
Earlier this year, the N.C. Division of Water Quality (NC-DWQ) released its final results from a multi-year research study to investigate how groundwater moves in the coastal plain region. Several study sites were located on Bladen Lakes State Forest and Turnbull Creek Educational State Forest.

Overall, the findings showed that isolated wetland areas examined in the study were, in fact, hydrologically connected with streams and groundwater, even though the isolated wetlands had no obvious inlet or outlet upon the ground surface. The full 283-page report, entitled “Hydrologic Connectivity, Water Quality Function, and Biocriteria of Coastal Plain Geographically Isolated Wetlands” is available from the NC-DWQ Aquifer Protection Section, Groundwater Publications website.

BMP Focus: Using Slash on Skid Trails

What do you call the limbs, tops, needles, leaves, and other small pieces of trees that are leftover when bucking and de-limbing a tree during logging?

Slash?.... Laps?..... Logging debris?.... Woody trash?....

Whatever you call it, that leftover material is a low-cost, effective, versatile, and valuable BMP tool.

Don’t let it go to waste! Apply, mat-down, and pack-in that leftover debris atop of skid trails, log decks, landings, and approachways to stream crossings.

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**BMP Focus: Using Slash on Skid Trails**

**If you are a logger, think about this:**  *It’s all about risk management.*

Every time your log skidder makes a turn at the deck, have the operator grab a grapple full of slash and spread it out across bare soil, and work it in with each pass of the tractor, on skid trails, decks, and stream crossing approachways.

If done right, and used correctly, you will save time and money by not having to buy and install silt fence….. straw bales….. waterbars….. turnouts…… grass seed….. lime….. fertilizer…..

*Don’t just plop down a couple piles of slash on a skid trail – that won’t work.*

Using slash will help you:
- Prevent compacting and rutting, especially on soft ground. This can reduce time spinning wheels in slick mud or getting stuck.

- Create a cushioning layer atop of the bare soil to catch rainfall, slow down runoff, and help trap sediment that might wash down the slope.

- Improve your job’s efficiency by actively rehabilitating the skid trails while the job is ongoing.

*BMPs are a logger’s best friend to manage risk: Low Risk, Low Cost, High Reward.*

**If you are a forest owner, think about this:**  *It’s all about sustainability.*

- Having the logger spread out leftover slash will avoid unsightly debris piles.

- Matting down slash will protect your soil, keep sediment from washing into your stream, and add natural nutrients back across your land for the next forest.

- Using slash may hinder access for a few years along the skid trail, but this can also prevent trespassers and un-authorized users.

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Compare these photos of two different logging jobs, taken a few months ago, during BMP survey site assessments being conducted by the N.C. Forest Service:

Which logging job is effectively using leftover slash as a BMP on skid trails?
Which logging job is more at-risk of environmental compliance concerns?

The rutting seen on the left will be a permanent scar on the land, long after the logging is complete. If slash had been matted down from the beginning of the logging, as done on the right, then perhaps the rutting could have been prevented or reduced in severity.

About those BMP Surveys.....

As highlighted in the previous issue, the N.C. Forest Service is conducting a statewide random assessment of logging sites to evaluate the usage of voluntary BMPs. Through the end of June we have completed 30 surveys.

And the results so far confirm our belief that there is still plenty of room for improvement when it comes to using BMPs at the right time, the right way, for the right reason.

If your organization would like to have one-on-one BMP training, or pre-harvest planning assistance, contact the N.C. Forest Service forester in your area, listed on the back page.
Let’s Play A Game: What’s Wrong With This Picture?

How many potential BMP problems can you identify in this photo? Possible answers are on page 3.

Hint: This is not a logging job… it is a plowed fire line for a future prescribed burn.

Photo taken March 7, 2013