

## BCTS Supplement Guide to Minimizing Soil Disturbance

This supplement has been developed in support of the BCTS Stuart-Nechako Environmental Management System. It is to be used solely as a reference guide and is not intended to replace BCTS site level plans. BCTS staff, employees, contractors and licensees are asked to ensure that a Prewrite has been completed prior to the commencement of work and to ensure that they are familiar with both the Plan and the applicable Environmental Field Procedures.

### What is Soil Disturbance?

- Includes compaction, rutting, gouging, scalping and the construction of trails, roads, landings, pits and quarries.
- It is caused mainly by moving machinery and logs over sensitive terrain, working in poor soil conditions, or by heavily concentrated activity such as in road side work areas.

Compaction	Rutting
<p>Keys to identification:</p> <p>Compacted mineral soil, puddled mineral soil (soil that has liquefied then hardens), and compacted deposits of slash and organic debris.</p> <p><i>Compacted soils reduce drainage, aeration and reduce root growth and forest productivity.</i></p>	<p>Keys to identification:</p> <p>Significant ruts are longer than 2 m and over 15 cm deep. Often flood with water.</p> <p><i>Rutting causes compaction which decreases drainage, aeration and damages shallow feeder roots.</i></p>
Gouging, Scalping and Scraping	Trails (Bladed or Excavated)
<p>Keys to identification:</p> <p>Forest floor (surface organic layer) has been removed, exposing the mineral soil, or where organics are absent, top soil has been excavated 5 cm or more.</p> <p><i>Gouging and Scalping displaces nutrients and increases erosion potential as the topsoil contains large reserves of nutrients and contains the majority of roots.</i></p>	<p>Keys to identification:</p> <p>Caused by felling, skidding and forwarding routes with repeat traffic. Trails excavated along the contour of the slope or at steep grade breaks.</p> <p><i>Soils under trails become very compacted. Excavated cuts and fills expose subsoils with few nutrients and steep, exposed surfaces that can erode.</i></p>

### General Soil Disturbance Guidelines

- **PREWORKS:** Identify sensitive or difficult harvesting areas during Prewrite.
- **PLAN:** Identify and plan felling and skidding routes ahead of time. A herring bone pattern may reduce overall trafficked area. Consider manual treatments such as hand felling, especially in ecologically sensitive areas.
- **WEIGHT:** Reduce loads carried by logging equipment
- **DEPRESSIONS:** Avoid traveling through depressions.
- **ORGANIC SOILS:** Avoid disturbing predominantly organic wet soils. Utilize slash for traction and padding (punchion). Maintain soil organic matter, litter, and slash in place when harvesting.
- **TURNING:** Avoid sharp turns with loaded equipment, especially at the base of hills. Use road surfaces to turn where possible.
- **SOIL MOISTURE:** Monitor soil moisture and frost. Dry or frozen soils do not compact as easily. Soils lose strength as the moisture level increases
- **GROUND PRESSURE:** Use low ground pressure equipment
- **SLASH PLACEMENT:** Avoid piling slash on good high spots and other good growing sites. Use mucky depressions where tree roots cannot grow to accumulate slash.
- **MONITOR WEATHER:** Shift harvest operations to upland areas of a timber sale if weather conditions deteriorate. Shut down when soil disturbance objectives are threatened.

Contact your Supervisor  
Should you feel excessive Soil Disturbance has occurred

## Operating Techniques

### Excavated or Bladed Trails

Where bladed or excavated trails are planned:

- Keep the excavated area as small as necessary
- Avoid excavating the cut slope into the subsoil layers. Maintain organic debris and productive soil for re-contouring and rehabilitation later. Scatter slash and organic debris onto exposed mineral soil.
- Use excavators to build trails, where possible
- Maintain the natural drainage pattern for all identifiable watercourses
- Where conditions change over the length of the trail, be prepared to modify techniques
- Control drainage and erosion on excavated trails to reduce the likelihood of landslides, mass wasting events or stream sedimentation
- Where the forest floor is sufficiently thick, remove it separately from the topsoil and stockpile in mounds. Avoid mixing this material with unproductive soils
- Where forest floors are too thin to be easily separated, keep these materials with salvaged topsoil
- When building trail sections with deeper cuts and fills, place the excavated material down in the fill bank in the following order: topsoil, intermediate soils, then subsoils on top. The outer track of the running surface will run on the excavated subsoil, preserving the topsoil at the bottom of the fill.
- To minimize the amount of side cast required and for rehabilitation, use stumps and logs to create a crib to fill.
- Long machine trails on steep slopes should be placed so there are grade breaks and run-offs to prevent water channeling.

### Winter Harvesting

When harvesting in Winter:

- Use compacted snow trails from harvesting equipment to skid or forward. Skid one or two turns in sensitive areas and then allow frost to penetrate compacted snow. Soil frozen to a depth of 15 cm offers maximum strength and protection.
- Soil frost begins to disappear after night temperatures stay above freezing for three or four days.
- When building excavated trails in the snow, avoid piling topsoil on top of snow or mixing the two.
- When building excavated trails in snow, excavate the snow on the inside, compact it on top of the snow on the fill side, cut out the soil on the inside and lay it on top of the snow and compact it. Cover this with snow and compact it to form the running surface. Operators rehabilitating the trail will recognize the bottom of the stockpile is at the lower layer of snow.

### Rehabilitation (Debuilding)

When building and rehabilitating bladed trails along a hill slope:

- Rehabilitation and mitigation should be conducted under the best soil and weather conditions possible.
- Outslope the trail surfaces to avoid collecting water. Decompact the running surface to a greater depth on the outer portion of the trail to avoid creating a subsurface water trap next to the cut.
- Restore slopes to natural contours. Place slash on exposed soils.
- Deconstruct all corduroyed trails (puncheon).
- Ruts may be rehabilitated by restoring natural drainage, loosening the soil at the bottom of the rut and gently distributing berm material into the depression. Create an even soil layer for rooting while not exposing poor soils. If the rut is deep use woody debris in the bottom of the rut before covering with soil.
- Avoid mixing woody debris with top soil. Avoid handling top soil under wet conditions. When stockpiling top soil, develop standard methods to aid in finding and re-using the material. Avoid burying top soil with slash and protect it from water runoff and traffic. Avoid stockpiling top soil in wet areas. When respreading top soil avoid creating a smooth surface yet do not leave large clods.
- Cover exposed subsoils with scattered slash to provide protection from erosion as well as organic matter.

**Contact your Supervisor**  
**Should you feel excessive Soil Disturbance has occurred**