

Protecting Sensitive Areas

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A sensitive area is any area on a property that must be more carefully managed to protect unique features or water quality. These areas may be non-productive for timber and may be historical in nature. Left undisturbed, these areas can provide a home for non-game wildlife and also can be unusual and interesting areas for landowners and guests to visit and enjoy. These special areas may need to be protected from logging and other silvicultural operations.



Sensitive areas can include rivers, creeks, swamps, sloughs, beaver ponds, bogs, springs, upland coves, caves, rock outcrop areas, old home sites, Native American mounds or sites, cemeteries, and roadways. These areas often support unusual plant and animal species and an assortment of non-game wildlife.

FOREST MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS: Forest management can effectively increase the aesthetics with little additional effort. For example, by simply identifying wildlife corridors and Streamside Management Zones (a strip of vegetation along waterways) before harvesting timber will protect water quality and provide riparian habitat for wildlife species.

Establish buffer zones around sensitive areas such as cemeteries or old home sites before any silvicultural operations begin. A buffer zone of timber and vegetation can also hide a sensitive area from unwelcome visitors. Identify threatened and endangered species habitat. Clearly mark all sensitive areas.

Set aside buffer zones and timber screens to reduce logging slash from highly traveled areas. Have the logger drag debris from a logging deck back into the woods and use prescribed burns to reduce it further. In a year or two, the tract will green up and evidence of the harvest will be gone. Harvest with irregular boundary lines or natural landscapes and keep clearcuts to a minimum. Consider using a selective (leave-tree) method of harvesting as opposed to clearcuts, or at least leave groups of trees within a clearcut. Leave several rows of trees along ridge tops so that the hillsides don't look "scalped". Finally, consider the surrounding landscapes when planning a harvest. For example, is there already a clearcut next to what you wish to harvest? If so, then leave a buffer zone between the two areas.

Photo Credit: Alabama Forestry Commission



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