

The Effectiveness of Forestry Best Management Practices

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The effectiveness of Best Management Practices and forest practice rules in protecting water quality has been extensively researched. However, some people have a distorted image of forest management impacts on water quality because of a focus on historic practices and immediate responses. The Watersheds Research Cooperative addresses the impacts of contemporary forest management and has produced both expected findings and some surprises. Key management implications arising from these findings include:

- Forest Practice Act rules and contemporary forest management practices are effective, reducing water quality impact to small changes;
- these small water quality changes recover rapidly downstream and over time;
- water quality criteria used to assess forest stream conditions can be unattainable and in some cases unproductive;
- technology allows measurements of small changes that may be statistically but not ecologically significant; and
- there is a law of diminishing returns for forest practice rules.