



FOREST PRACTICES and CLEARING

Will trees be cut down in association with clearing activities on your property?

A forest practices (logging) permit may be required to cut down trees on your property in association with clearing activities. Forest practices, which include logging and associated logging road construction, are regulated in Pierce County by both the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR), which is responsible for administering the State Forest Practices Rules, WAC 222, and by the Pierce County Planning and Land Services Department, which is responsible for administering Title 18H, Development Regulations – Forest Practices.

According to the State of Washington, a **Forest Practice** is defined as “any activity conducted on or directly pertaining to forest land and relating to growing, harvesting or processing timber.” (See Chapter 222-16, WAC) Forest practices permits are primarily required for the harvest of **merchantable timber**, which means trees that will yield logs and/or fiber suitable in size and quality for the production of lumber, plywood, pulp or other forest products. A variety of trees may be considered merchantable including, but not limited to, Douglas fir, Western red cedar, Western hemlock, big-leaf maple and red alder.

The DNR is primarily responsible for regulating logging activities associated with commercial forestry operations (stumps are left) through Class II and Class III Forest Practices permits. Pierce County is solely responsible for regulating logging activities associated with clearing and development (conversion) of land (stumps are removed) through Class IV-General Forest Practices permits. Examples include clearing associated with testing for, and/or the installation of, a septic system and/or well and clearing to create pasture land.

A Class IV-General Forest Practices permit is required for the harvest of **merchantable timber** when associated with clearing activities, except when either one of the following scenarios apply:

Scenario #1

The forest practices will take place on a **parcel less than 2 acres in size where the same landowner has no contiguous ownership or on a parcel or on contiguous parcels where the same landowner has contiguous ownership of parcels that together are less than two acres in size, provided**:

1. none of the logging takes place within:
 - *The 200-foot shoreline area of “shorelines of the state” (See Chapter 90.82 RCW and Pierce County Code Title 20, Shoreline Management Use Regulations);*
 - *a stream or stream buffer; or*
 - *a wetland or wetland buffer; and*
2. the operation does not involve use of ground equipment on sideslopes greater than 40 percent; and
3. the operation will not impact any threatened or endangered species.

OR

Scenario #2

The forest practices involve cutting **less than 5,000 board feet of merchantable timber** (approximately 1 ½ log trucks) for personal use (material will not be sold) in any consecutive 12-month period, **provided** the forest practices do not impact any of the areas listed under Scenario #1 above.

- **Stop here** when proposed activity is considered to be a Class I forest practice – A forest practices permit is not required; **or**
- **Proceed to Step 3** when proposed activity is not considered to be a Class I forest practice – A forest practices permit is required.

Forest practices meeting either one of these scenarios are defined as Class I forest practices. These activities do not require a forest practices permit. Class I forest practices must comply with Title 18H, Forest Practices and Title 18E, Critical Areas.

When you have determined that merchantable timber will be cut in association with clearing activities and that the proposed forest practices do not qualify as a Class I forest practice. An approved Class IV-General Forest Practices permit application is required from Pierce County.

CLASS IV-GENERAL FOREST PRACTICES PERMIT APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A **Class IV-General** Forest Practices permit is issued by Pierce County (\$685 permit application fee). However, before a **Class IV-General** permit application may be approved the following items must be completed (See a [Forest Practices Submittal Standard](#) for details on application submittal requirements):

SEPA REVIEW

- The proposed forest practices activities must undergo an environmental review by Pierce County in accordance with the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). In many instances, however, environmental review of the overall development/project has already taken place, or is underway. In these instances, additional environmental review for the proposed logging is not required;

SITE DEVELOPMENT PERMIT

- A Site Development permit addressing clearing or written documentation that a Site Development permit is not required must be issued by Pierce County. *No more than 35% of the volume of merchantable timber may be harvested when the proposed clearing and forest practices are: 1) conducted on vacant land; and 2) are not associated with an application for land division or subdivision, use permit, commercial building permit, or single- or two-family residential building permit. The 35% cap no longer applies when the appropriate development permit application(s) has been submitted; and

PENDING DEVELOPMENT PERMIT APPLICATIONS

- Any pending development permit application(s), such as a preliminary plat, short plat, use permit, commercial building permit, or single or two-family residential building permit that is associated with the project must be approved/issued.

FOREST PRACTICES 6-YEAR DEVELOPMENT MORATORIUM:

Pierce County must impose a six-year development moratorium on the entire parcel when logging has occurred on the parcel without an approved Class IV-General forest practices permit, per Subsection 18H.30.020.C.3 of Title 18H. A development moratorium prohibits Pierce County from accepting permit applications for the development of land, including septic, well, building and subdivision. The development moratorium lasts for a period of six years or until a request to remove the moratorium is approved by Pierce County. (See Chapter 18H.30 of Title 18H for additional information)

Title 18H contains information on forest practices and may be viewed on the Pierce County website at www.co.pierce.wa.us/pc/abtus/ourorg/pals/regs/codes.htm, under Title 18H-Forest Practices.

You may also be required to pay taxes on any timber harvested. Contact the Washington State Department of Revenue at 1-800-548-8829 or <http://dor.wa.gov/> (Search under Timber) for further information.

For more information contact Adonais Clark, Senior Planner, at 253-798-7165, or by e-mail at aclark@co.pierce.wa.us or Ray Hoffmann, Associate Planner, at 253-798-2788, or by e-mail at rhoffm3@co.pierce.wa.us.

*Please note that while every effort is made to assure accuracy of the information contained in this brochure it is not warranted for accuracy. This document is not intended to address all aspects or regulatory requirements for a project and should serve as a starting point for your investigation.