



Policy on Timber Harvesting

Preamble:

The North Country National Scenic Trail (NST) passes through a wide variety of ownerships including both public and private working forests. We are privileged and pleased that the trail is allowed to cross these properties and in general are supportive of sustainable timber management.

In an effort to work more closely with the various landowners and to further enhance cooperation, this policy statement provides guidance and documentation to both forest managers and association members as they work together to mitigate potential impacts to the trail.

The primary purpose of this policy is to protect the scenery along the trail and to help preserve the recreation component in areas that are managed for timber. A secondary purpose is to educate North Country Trail Association (NCTA) members about acceptable timber harvesting procedures and allow them to interact with forest managers in an informed manner that is consistent with NCTA policy.

Benefits:

- Increased support for active forest management.
- Better public relations for the logging companies and forest managers.
- A quality trail experience is maintained for trail users and a new respect for forest management is nurtured. It shows that logging operations can also be good neighbors.
- Trail maintaining volunteers will not be surprised by management and will be more likely to assist the land manager temporarily reroute or restore the trail.
- If notified in advance, NCTA and the National Park Service (NPS) can take steps to make hikers aware of the planned management activities by publishing the information on the association's website and the quarterly North Star magazine.
- If notified in advance, NCTA and NPS may be able to provide a Geographic Information System (GIS) map of the trail route to assist in sale unit planning. They may also be able to assist in keeping the trail route intact by suggesting alternatives or even providing posts, wooden stakes, or temporary signs to be placed along the designated trail route during the logging process so that hikers don't get lost.

Policy Guidelines:

We suggest that if any timber harvesting is done near the North Country NST that the following guidelines be followed:

- Please contact the North Country Trail Association's national headquarters located at 229 East Main St., Lowell, MI 49331 (616-897-5987). If you have a working relationship with the nearest

local NCTA chapter or Affiliate, feel free to also contact them. Otherwise, the association will contact the local chapter/Affiliate.

Also please contact the National Park Service's Ice Age and North Country Trail Office, located at 700 Rayovac Drive-Suite 100, Madison, WI 53711 (608-441-5610). This initial action about a proposed timber management activity will alert both parties and provide them with an opportunity for input.

- Cutting that is adjacent to or in the foreground view¹ of the trail should be accomplished with scenic quality foremost in mind and include the design assistance of a landscape architect whenever feasible. Most National Forests, for instance, already have a landscape architect on board who automatically reviews sensitive areas.
- Cutting units should be designed to protect the trail by approaching it on only one side.
- Partial cutting or selective cutting is encouraged.
- In areas where clear cutting is done, the cutting unit should be designed to create a temporary vista that appears as natural as possible. Through shaping design the “apparent” size of the clear cut should be less than five acres
- An uncut strip separating a clearcut unit from the trail is an option. But, we do not advocate a narrow uncut strip along both sides of the trail—unless it is of sufficient width to withstand windthrow. Narrow “peek-a-boo” strips are often blown down across the trail and prove to be of no value.
- If large equipment must cross the trail it should do so at only one point or at points no closer than one quarter mile apart. When large equipment does cross the trail, the trail tread should be restored, after the harvest, by the logging company and some native vegetation restored at the crossing points to visually de-emphasize the travelway.
- All markers (including blazes and other signs) should be protected during the logging operation. Any that are destroyed or removed should be replaced by the logging company.
- Informational signs (sample attached) should be posted on the trail (on both sides of the harvest area) informing hikers of the work being done and the potential benefits to the forest.
- When possible, alternate temporary routes around the harvest area should be established for trail users. Or, the existing route through the harvest area should be kept passable via prompt almost daily slash management.
- Ideally, upon completion of the harvest activity slash should be removed from within 25 ' of the trail and lopped and scattered to within two feet of the ground for the next 100 feet. At a minimum, the slash should be removed from the 4-foot wide trail corridor so that maintainers can use mowers or weed whackers to set back the new sun-loving growth.
- Following the harvest, placement of an interpretive sign explaining what was done along the trail and its benefits to the forest is an optional item for a logging company or forest manager to consider. Such signs educate the public and foster better relationships between trail users and forest operators.

¹ USDA Forest Service Landscape Management Handbook (Ag 434), Vol. 1: The viewable area immediately adjacent to the trail—generally less than ¼ mile.