



Training notes from the woods & the classroom

June 2007

Timber Sale Design

In May, MLEP conducted a Timber Sale Design workshop that was facilitated by Charlie Blinn (University of MN) and Dave Chura (MLEP). The primary objective was to create an atmosphere where loggers and natural resource managers who are involved with timber sale design and administration activities can learn about each other's perspectives on timber sale design. The purpose of the workshop was to help facilitate better working relationships in the area of timber sales between loggers and natural resource managers. Additionally, loggers gained a better understanding of silvicultural prescriptions and their associated rationale. Natural resource managers also learned more about logging factors that sometimes limit silvicultural prescriptions.

The workshop was conducted in three modules. During Module 1 all participants were together indoors to discuss sale design. Module 2 was conducted in the woods where participants, in small groups, walked over an upcoming timber sale that had been fully set-up. Following the site visit, participants headed back to the classroom for Module 3 where each group created and discussed their own sale design for the site.



Participants at the workshop included 15 loggers, 8 foresters and 1 wildlife manager. During the discussions on sale design, some key issues were noted which you may want to keep in mind when designing a timber sale. It is important for both loggers and foresters to be aware of how the various responsibilities of their jobs may impact sale design and each other.

Loggers Perspectives on Timber Sale Design

- **Access** – issues included the cost to build roads and unsecured access. Sale design should minimize the incline of roads and curves as these features can create a hazard for log trucks in the winter. If access is not secured, including contact information for adjacent landowners whenever possible would be appreciated.

- **Length of skid trail** – as a general rule of thumb, skid trails should be no longer than 1/4 mile long. Longer skid trails increase the cost of operating on the sale considerably.
- **Quality of timber** – when designing a sale, keep in mind the need to make it marketable.

Other logger perspectives of note:

- Number of blocks on a sale should be limited – too many small blocks significantly increases the cost of operating on the site.
- Agency field staff should have the flexibility or exercise existing flexibility to adjust appraised price based on the quality of the wood on the sale.
- Cords per acre – some sales do not provide enough cords per acre to make the sale profitable.
- Marked sales – These sales are frequently poorly marked for operation type/equipment. When marking sales, keep in mind the size of the machines that may be operating on the site and the maneuvering requirements. It is best to mark trees on all sides or at least all from the same direction.
- Maximize the benefits of various guidelines when possible (e.g., Leave trees in and around a seasonal pond or reserved species clumped to achieve leave tree patch needs).
- Season of operation (dates vs. conditions) – When sales are opened based on a pre-determined date on the sale, this can needlessly tie up dollars in opened sales that are then shut-down for extended periods of time due to wet conditions.

Forester Perspectives on Timber Sales Design

- Budgetary and investor expectations can drive the amount of timber that is offered for sale.
- Sales may be designed to achieve a balance in the age class and species in a particular landscape.
- Management plans must balance all users.
- Public land sale design needs to consider the lowest common denominator in operator performance.
- Market conditions – Public agencies have a limited ability to respond quickly to market swings when offering sales.

Evaluation

Comments during the workshop and on the evaluations identified the need and value of having more public agency (specifically state and USFS) involved in this type of training. Participants asked specific questions about agency policies and perspectives that were difficult to answer. The eight foresters that participated in the workshop included: 3 county foresters, 1 tribal forester and 4 industry foresters.

MLEP is especially interested in putting together more of these workshops in partnership with natural resource professionals involved with timber sale design to foster better working relationships in this area.

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