

# Alternative Harvesting for Aesthetics:

## Suggestions to Minimize the Visual Disturbance from Harvesting Timber

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**W**hen woodland owners are asked to rank the reasons why they own their land, the non-consumptive reason of “to enjoy the scenery” often ranks above the consumptive reason of “timber production.” This is not to say that landowners do not wish to derive income from logging, but it does suggest that logging should maintain the forest scenery as best as possible.

An array of practices can be incorporated into a logging operation to minimize loss of aesthetics. Here’s what this entails:

- ◆ **Ensure that all forest structures are present** – Provide for a variety of tree and plant species, in a variety of heights, diameters, and crown layers; included should be herbaceous understory, shrubs, snags, downed woody debris, and both “newer growth” and “older growth” trees.

- ◆ **Combine harvesting methods** – Try to emulate natural disturbances when harvesting. This can include the creation of group selection openings (of various sizes) coupled with intermediate harvesting practices such as thinning, crop tree release, sanitation cutting, and/or single tree selection. Group selections mimic natural disturbances to the forest, while intermediate harvesting emulates normal tree mortality.
- ◆ **Leave visual buffers** – especially near dwellings, roads and trails, ponds, creeks, and other areas of high recreational use or aesthetic enjoyment. Harvest these areas lightly or not at all.
- ◆ **When selecting a tree (or groups of trees) for harvest, ask the question, “Will this tree improve** in quality,

value, and vigor by leaving it for future harvests?” If not, harvest it. In so doing, this may release better quality, younger trees nearby.

- ◆ **Leave some look-em-at-em’ trees** – Commonly called culls, wolf trees, or trees of unusual species or form, look-em-at-em’ trees are those that make the forest experience special. Their monetary value may be low, but their scenic or wildlife value can be immeasurable.

This approach to forest management is a viable alternative for those forest landowners who appreciate forest aesthetics. It is also a method that is less likely to attract attention and resulting complaints. Many of the developing forest certification systems have standards that address aesthetics, so the subject is likely to continue gaining in importance. ☞

