

Harming Water Quality and Aquatic Resources

Excerpts from "A Review of the American Forest & Paper Association's Sustainable Forestry Initiative," American Lands Alliance, November, 2003.

The SFI still fails to provide clear threshold (or "bottom line") performance measures for on-the-ground protections for streams, water quality, and aquatic resources where state rules and BMPs are inadequate. Oregon's BMPs, for example, are simply the state's forestry rules, which do not adequately protect and restore imperiled salmon and steelhead, water quality, springs, forested wetlands, and smaller and seasonal streams.ⁱ Several studies have also indicated that BMPs in some Southern states are inadequate for water quality and aquatic community conservation.ⁱⁱ The reliance of some BMPs on US Geological Survey maps may also lead to some streams not being properly identified and protected. The SFI standards also fail to require companies to conduct watershed analyses.

There is little reason to believe that most SFI companies are exceeding minimum local regulatory requirements and/or BMPs for the protection of water quality and aquatic resources. As discussed above, these measures are often inadequate for the restoration of water quality and imperiled aquatic species.

Examples of increased, outright harm to water quality and aquatic resources also exist. In the Upper Trinity River Watershed of California, many of the subwatersheds' streams are highly degraded from debris flows originating from Sierra Pacific Industry's roads and clearcuts on steep, unstable slopes.ⁱⁱⁱ Operations on Timber Products' lands in the Beaver Creek watershed in the Klamath region have resulted in over 5 miles of road per square mile, and have contributed to sedimentation that destroyed fisheries restoration projects downstream.^{iv}

ⁱ For additional discussion and documentation, see: American Lands. 2002. Perspectives on Industrial Forestry, Certification, and the AF&PA 'Sustainable Forestry Initiative.' American Lands Alliance, Washington, DC. Available at: www.americanlands.org/sfi_report.htm.

ⁱⁱ A study of aquatic conservation needs in North Carolina found that the State's BMPs may be inadequate for protecting riparian ecosystems, ephemeral streams, and aquatic communities. Similarly, a review of aquatic conservation needs in Georgia identified measures significantly beyond the State's BMPs. In 1993, the Tennessee Valley Authority also concluded that the BMPs relevant to the Tennessee River at that time were inadequate to address cumulative effects. (Schaberg, R. 2002. Effects of Wood Chip Mills on North Carolina's Aquatic Communities. Duke University, Durham, NC. Wenger, S. 1999. A Review of the Scientific Literature on Riparian Buffer Width, Extent, and Vegetation. Institute of Ecology, University of Georgia, Athens. TVA et al. 1993. Final EIS Chip Mill Terminals on the Tennessee River. Tennessee Valley Authority, US Army Corps of Engineers, and US Fish & Wildlife Service, Knoxville, TN.)

ⁱⁱⁱ Pace, F., Klamath Forest Alliance, Etna, CA. Personal communication, June, 2003.

^{iv} Felice Pace, Klamath Forest Alliance, Etna, CA, personal communication, January, 2002.