

AGENCIES USUALLY MONITOR ADIRONDACK WATERCOURSES
June 17, 2003

Dear Mike and Fred,

Thank you both for your support and for the opportunity to answer some of the questions you posed about recent comments on a forestry program in disarray. I will deal with logging practices to begin with since they were the crux of the problems I referred to.

Trees grown for renewable sources of wood products are necessarily located in trackless locations. They are extremely cumbersome and excessively heavy in their natural state. The harvesting therefore requires large powerful pieces of equipment, which in themselves are very heavy. Some impact on the forest floor is necessary. The object is to minimize the disturbance as much as is reasonably possible. A general rule of thumb is to allow no off-site dispersal of soils or debris.

Watercourses are the prime movers of such. Transfer is expedited by the proximity of the harvest area to the stream and the method used to cross it. The various state and federal laws regulating all operations where there is any possibility of disturbed soils leaving the site where the operations are carried out reflect the importance of this.

No other watercourses are as well regulated as those classified wild and scenic in the Adirondack Forest Preserve. Two State agencies have to be involved when there is any possibility of their being fouled environmentally or aesthetically. They are the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the Adirondack Park Agency (APA).

There are two methods of crossing streams with logs - bridges and fords. Both are acceptable when certain conditions are met. Bridges are generally better than fords since all debris is precluded from entering the water.

For logging purposes, there are two types of bridges - truck and skidder. They are simply what the names imply. Both should cross the stream at its narrowest points and both entry and exit points should be on gentle grade approaches and solid ground.

Truck crossings are acceptable for both bridges and fords if they both meet the above criteria. Only the truck tires come in contact with the roadway in both instances. Due to a truck's nature, it necessarily operates on more solid ground than a skidder.

In my humble opinion, no skidder fords should be allowed for obvious reasons. There are always some areas of skid trail or forwarder trails that transfer excessive amounts of soil to the oversize tires and chains on both. It washes off in the stream. A skidder drags several tree length stems behind it on the ground and the soil they have imbedded in and on the bark is also transferred to the stream.

Timing is of the essence for both types of stream crossings. Ideally, winter when the ground is frozen, firm and protected by snow is in my opinion the only season to cross large streams with temporary crossings.

The problems I refer to in my articles, which you both have expressed an interest in, came about as a direct result of ignoring all of the standards enumerated above.

Both entities involved have tried to sweep their transgressions under the table. They are relying on the remoteness of the area and the posted private property designation to keep it from the public scrutiny.

Mike, I am aware of the site you refer to in your letter. It is in the public eye and,

as far as I am able to ascertain, is acceptable and by no means in the same category as the one in question. I will point out, however, a permit from the DEC and the APA is required before the landowner can use it for timber harvesting operations.

One local lady had it right when she exclaimed, "That's criminal" upon viewing the scenes on the website www.martallen.com. Again, I thank you for your interest and I am open to comments pro or con from any quarter.