

How to Write the BMP for Water Quality Prescription

We will start with a few examples of narratives that would be considered unacceptable, which include statements such as:

- “N/A”
- “No BMP Issues”
- “No concerns”

Why are these considered unacceptable? This level of information doesn’t tell the reviewer anything about the site.

Are there water resources present? If there are, then why are there no “issues” or “concerns”?

Bottom line, if there are no BMP issues or concerns, you must explain WHY!

In your explanation of why there are no BMP concerns, include information such as:

- Slope percentages
- Soil types
- Soil drainage
- Etc.

Another example of an unacceptable narrative is “All BMPs will be followed”. This is unacceptable for a couple of reasons.

First, it’s expected that all applicable BMPs for Water Quality will be followed on all MFL timber sales. BMPs are a requirement on all MFL lands. Watershed protection is referenced in the purpose statement of s.77.80, Wis. Stats., and BMPs for Water Quality are considered to be part of sound forestry which is required on all MFL lands. Proper implementation of BMPs for water quality is also a requirement for lands in the MFL Certified Group.

Second, the narrative doesn’t provide the reviewer any specific information about the site to be harvested. A statement indicating that “All BMPs will be followed” has already been made in the landowner’s MFL management plan.

It’s the purpose of the Cutting Notice to describe in MORE DETAIL what specific types of practices will occur to mitigate impacts to water quality when a specific timber harvest is to be implemented.

A few more examples of narratives considered unacceptable include:

- All main skid trails should be graded, water bars installed where needed and seeded following the logging.
- Water bars installed where needed. No logging if rutting occurs.
- Prevention of rutting and soil compaction.

Similar to previous examples, these don’t tell the reviewer anything specific about the site. Further, these BMPs could apply to ALL timber sales, so they don’t provide any additional information to help a reviewer approve a cutting notice.

Now let’s move on to a few examples that are a good start but could use improvement.

Consider these narratives: “Avoid equipment operation in spring area. The harvest will take place during non-frozen ground conditions. Avoid areas that are wet. Do not drop trees from upland areas into wetlands.”

While it’s positive that these examples explain the presence of water resources, it’s an underlying expectation that they will be avoided or protected, so stating this doesn’t provide helpful information. These narratives should be enhanced by documenting HOW the springs or wetlands will be avoided and HOW dropping trees from upland areas into wetlands will be avoided. For example, are the springs/wetlands marked with paint or flagging in the field? Or on the map?

Here’s another example of a narrative that could be improved.

“The existing woods road extending southwest from Maple Lane to an approximate center of the 40 will be resurfaced and crowned, the culvert crossing of the only intermittent stream on the 40 will be replaced and/or extended as needed, the road will be ditched to carry water to culvert(s) not flowing into the intermittent stream, and the road will be gated at its origin. Other roads or trails will be constructed using a variety of construction techniques including grade dips, cross drain culverts, diversion ditches, and surfacing on out-sloped or crowned roads or trails.”

This narrative explains in detail how the roads will be re-constructed to support the planned timber harvest. It also details the water resources present and that there is an existing crossing that will be replaced. These are great pieces of information and give the reviewer some understanding of how water resources will be protected through the maintenance of roads, crossings and ditches. However, it doesn’t reference a Riparian Management Zone (RMZ) and how an RMZ is identified in the field so that the applicable RMZ BMPs could be implemented.

Finally, let’s share a few examples of acceptable narratives for the BMPs for Water Quality section.

“The area is high ground with sandy soil. The landowner is hand cutting and using light equipment that should prevent erosion.”

This narrative explains that because of the condition of the site and the equipment that will be used to harvest the site, impacts to water quality will be unlikely. In other words, it explains WHY BMPs are not a significant concern.

Here’s another example:

“No water quality issues were identified in the proposed cutting area. No wetlands or waterways are present in the northern hardwood stand.”

This narrative explains that there are no water quality concerns because no wetlands are present in the proposed cutting area.

As mentioned earlier, though, a note of caution: Think about any impacts the harvest might have to any areas outside of the harvest area.

Keep in mind these points when completing this section of the Cutting Notice form:

- Describe the site conditions in detail.
- Document whether or not water resources are present.
- Write a detailed description of how water quality will be protected during timber harvesting activities.

Providing these necessary details will help ensure that your water quality section narratives are thorough and acceptable.