



FOREST PRACTICES and BUILDING CONSTRUCTION

Will trees be cut down to clear a building site on your property?

A forest practices (logging) permit may be required to cut trees down on your property when associated with clearing a site for future building construction. Forest practices, which include logging and associated logging road construction, are regulated in Pierce County by both the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR), which is responsible for administering the State Forest Practices Rules, WAC 222, and by the Pierce County Planning and Land Services Department, which is responsible for administering Title 18H, Pierce County Development Regulations – Forest Practices and Tree Conservation.

According to the State of Washington, a **Forest Practice** is defined as “any activity conducted on or directly pertaining to forest land and relating to growing, harvesting or processing timber.” (See Chapter 222-16, WAC) Forest practices activities are not limited to large-scale commercial forestry operations, and also include cutting down trees/timber in association with the construction of a home or business. The DNR is primarily responsible for regulating logging activities associated with commercial forestry operations through Class II and Class III Forest Practices permits. Pierce County is solely responsible for regulating logging activities associated with clearing and development of land into residential, agricultural, commercial, or industrial uses through Class IV – General Forest Practices permits.

A Class IV-General Forest Practices permit is required for the harvest of ***merchantable timber** when associated with site development activities, including clearing a site for future building construction, **except if either one of the following scenarios apply:**

Scenario #1

The forest practices involve a single landowner where ***the parcel is less than two acres in size or where a single landowner owns contiguous parcels that together are less than two acres in size, provided the operation:***

- *does not take place within the 200-foot Shoreline Management Zone; and*
- *does not take place within a stream/stream buffer; and*
- *does not take place within a wetland/wetland buffer; and*
- *does not involve use of ground equipment on side slopes greater than 40 percent; and*
- *will not impact any threatened or endangered species.*

OR

Scenario #2

The forest practices involve cutting **less than 5,000 board feet of merchantable timber** (approximately 1 ½ log trucks) for personal use (material will not be sold) in any consecutive 12-month period, **provided** the forest practices do not take place within any of the areas listed under scenario #1 above.

Forest practices meeting **either** one of these scenarios are defined as Class I forest practices. These activities do not require a forest practices permit. Class I forest practices must comply with Title 18H and Title 18E, Critical Areas.

* **Merchantable timber** means trees that will yield logs and/or fiber suitable in size and quality for the production of lumber, plywood, pulp or other forest products. A variety of trees may be considered merchantable including, but not limited to, Douglas fir, western red cedar, western hemlock, big-leaf maple, alder, and black cottonwood.

If you have determined that merchantable timber will be cut in association with clearing activities and that the proposed forest practices do not qualify as a Class I forest practice, an approved Class IV General Forest Practices permit application is required.

APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS:

A Class IV-General Forest Practices permit is issued by Pierce County (\$500 permit application fee). However, before a Class IV-General permit application may be approved the following items must be completed:

SEPA

- The proposed forest practices activities must undergo an environmental review by Pierce County, in accordance with the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), including Critical Area Review under Title 18E, Critical Areas;

MAILING

- Notice of Application (NOA) must be provided to surrounding landowners. This is prepared and distributed by Pierce County once application is made;

POSTING

- The property must be posted with a Pierce County Public Notice sign (Purchased at Pierce County Planning and Land Services Development Center for \$4.35) within 14 days of the application filing date and must remain posted until the Notice of Application comment period has expired;

TREE CONSERVATION AFFIDAVIT

- A Tree Conservation Affidavit must be submitted for property which is subject to a previously approved Tree Conservation Plan;

SITE DEVELOPMENT PERMIT

- Either a Site Development permit addressing clearing must be issued, or written documentation must be received from Pierce County that a Site Development permit is not required; and

PENDING DEVELOPMENT PERMIT APPLICATIONS

- Any pending development permit applications associated with the project must be approved. Examples include: preliminary plats, conditional use permits and building permits.

FOREST PRACTICES 6-YEAR DEVELOPMENT MORATORIUM:

A six-year development moratorium is required to be imposed on the entire parcel when activity meeting the definition of a Class II, III, or IV-General forest practice has occurred without an approved forest practices permit, per RCW 76.09.060 and Subsection 18H.30.020.C.3 of Title 18H. A development moratorium prohibits Pierce County from accepting permit applications for the development of land, including septic, well, building and subdivision. The development moratorium lasts for a period of six years or until a request to remove the moratorium is approved by Pierce County. (See Chapter 18H.30 of Title 18H for additional information)

Title 18H contains information on forest practices and may be viewed on the Pierce County website at www.piercecountywa.org/pals, under Regulations.

You may also be required to pay taxes on any timber harvested. Contact the Washington State Department of Revenue at 1-800-548-8829 or <http://dor.wa.gov/> (Search under Timber) for further information.

For more information contact Diane Marcus-Jones, Associate Planner, at 253-798-2616, e-mail at dmarcus@co.pierce.wa.us) or Adonais Clark, Senior Planner, at 253-798-7165, e-mail at aclark@co.pierce.wa.us.

*Please note that while every effort is made to assure accuracy of the information contained in this brochure it is not warranted for accuracy. This document is not intended to address all aspects or regulatory requirements for a project and should serve as a starting point for your investigation.