

 UI Extension Forestry Information Series

## Salvaging Dead Timber

*Chris Schnepf*

It is hard to watch large pockets of trees on your property fall victim to insects or disease. These trees can be an eyesore and a loss of present and future income for the woodland owner. But all is not necessarily lost. Salvage sales are a way to secure income from timber killed or damaged by insects, disease, ice, fire, or high winds.

**Inventory.** To set up a salvage sale, you need specific information on the volume and quality of timber being removed. The longer trees are dead, the more their wood may be discolored by blue stain fungi. Blue stain doesn't physically damage the wood, but often results in lower prices for logs. There may also be slight deductions for charred wood, or extensive insect galleries. Check with different mills to see how much is deducted for different flaws.

You also need data on the site from which trees will be harvested. Information on the topography and accessibility to roads helps determine logging methods and where to place new roads, if needed.

**Silvicultural Needs.** When salvaging beetle killed timber, many of the trees at the margin of the "pocket" are probably infested as well and should be removed. Do you have enough usable, accessible board-foot volume to make an economical harvest? If not, a salvage operation might be an opportune time to commercially thin adjacent stands to provide enough timber volume for a sale and make better use of the base sale costs, such as trucks, sawyers and new roads. This thinning can also be used to favor superior trees and increase stands' resistance to further bark beetle attack.

Plan for regeneration. Prompt site preparation and tree planting helps prevent brush from reclaiming the site. If

you have had problems with root rot in the area, plant species more resistant to the fungi.

Also think about non-timber objectives, such as wildlife. Perhaps you *want* brush to move in to small areas with dead timber, to provide grouse habitat. Also consider leaving a few large dead snags for hawks, owls or woodpeckers.

**Forest Management Plan/Timber Sale Contracts.**

Be sure to carry out the salvage in concert with a forest management plan, so that roads and harvests are consistent with your long range goals. Design new roads and skid trails to be useful for future harvests and other continuing access needs.

After making harvest decisions, get a signed contract that specifies the method of logging, payment, liability, time limits, road and improvement responsibilities and slash disposal. For more details on sale contracts, see EB 0961, *Timber Sale Agreements*, a Washington State University publication available through your local Extension Office.

Your forest management plan and sale contract help you communicate what you want the stand to look like after harvest to loggers and professional foresters who work on you property.

**Assistance.** To help you plan and contract a salvage sale, it is wise to obtain assistance from a professional forester with Idaho Department of Lands. For more comprehensive assistance, consulting foresters offer timber inventory, contract supervision, and many other services for a fee. As your representative, the consultant's success depends on keeping you satisfied by getting top prices for your logs while meeting your

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land management goals. Make sure you confirm the consulting fee before agreeing to the work, ask about landowner references, and confirm that the consultant is a forestry graduate of an accredited college program.

For more information on setting up a salvage sale, stop into your local Extension office and ask for PNW 119, *Salvage: It's Role in Forest Management*. Extension

offices also have many other publications on topics related to salvage sales, from forest management plans to woodland road construction.

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