



Invasive Tree Clearing Guidelines

Greater Stutterheim Fire Protection Association



SUMMARY

Objective

Currently a vast amount of the GSFPA area is covered by invasive alien tree species, specifically Black Wattle. The overgrowth and rate of spread directly results in various environmental issues. Because of this, numerous landowners have taken up clearing invasive trees from their properties and some have found financial gain in the process. Though the GSFPA supports the process of clearing, badly managed and executed operations are pose a completely different environmental issue in themselves. An unattended Wattle forest, for example, acts as a natural fire break whereas clearing and harvesting projects generating unmanaged fuels often resulting in extreme fire hazards taking the place of the former fire breaks.

Resultantly, this document sets out Standard Operating Guidelines for the clearing and/or harvesting of invasive trees. The goal is to encourage the clearing of invasive trees whilst maintaining standards that ensure the principles of fire safety are prioritised and adhered to.

Outline

Definitions and Interpretations

- Clearing
- Harvesting
- Boundary
- Stacking
- Slash
- Slash / Stack Burning Season
- Cherry Picking

Standard Operating Guidelines

- Clearing
 - Felling
 - Stacking
 - Disposal
 - Burning
 - Timber Removal
 - Mulching
 - Composting
- General

DEFINITIONS & INTERPRETATION

1. CLEARING

Clearing is the process of complete eradication of invasive tree species for the purpose of grazing regeneration reforestation, building or general land rehabilitation.

2. HARVESTING

Harvesting is the process of felling and selling invasive trees for profitable gain OR permitting an outsourced contractor to harvest trees for his/her own financial gain, whether the landowner is compensated for the harvesting process or not.

3. SLASH

Slash refers to all woody materials and fuels generated by the clearing or harvesting process.

4. STACKING

Stacking is the process of piling the slash for burning, transporting or mulching.

5. BOUNDARY

In the context of this document “boundary” refers to boundaries specifically separating landowners.

6. CHERRY PICKING

Cherry picking is the process of selecting and harvest only specific trees in a compartment or forrest. This process is not considered ethical as it almost always involves heavy fuels being left behind. The result being a fire break changed into a fire hazard.

7. SLASH BURNING SEASON

This is the period in which the burning of heavy materials is permitted. It spans from the first good spring rains up until the 30th of May, or the first frosts.

8. FIRE PROHIBITION PERIOD

This is the period where absolutely no open air fires that are not in a designated area built for that purpose are allowed.

STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES

CLEARING & HARVESTING

A. FELLING

- Only fell as much as you are able to swiftly and safely transport and/or dispose of.
- If the method of disposal is burning, felling should cease after the 15th of May to avoid large fuel loads remaining during the fire season.
- Felling on boundaries must cease after the 15th of May.
- Process felled trees into manageable sizes.
- Cherry picking is NOT considered ethical practice and is therefore NOT condoned or permitted by the Greater Stutterheim FPA.

B. STACKING

- All trees that are felled for the purpose of burning and harvesting must be piled into stacks.
- Although mulching does not require stacking, leaving the slash on the ground for longer than necessary is not considered ideal practice as mulching prefers freshly felled wood over dried out wood which is also considered a fire hazard.
- Stacks should be large and dense enough in order to generate enough heat to burn the stack completely, but not be piled so big that the fire cannot be controlled.
- Stacks should be placed far enough apart to avoid any spotting into neighbouring stacks. Stacks smaller than 1 meter in height should be placed a minimum of 3 meters from one another. Stacks larger than 1 meter in height should be placed a minimum of 3 times the height of the stacks from one another.
- Stacks must be placed at a minimum of 30 meters from a boundary.
- Stacks should never be placed underneath trees or any other combustible fuels.
- Stacks should never be placed underneath power or telephone lines.
- Stacks should be placed far enough away from dwellings, houses and buildings to not endanger them during burning.
- Stacks should not be placed in riverbeds, marshlands or wetlands.

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- Keep fuel sizes in mind when stacking. Heavy fuels do not burn as easily and will require greater effort and expense to ignite. However, once ignited, heavy fuels generate more heat and will burn for longer than lighter fuels. When burning heavy fuels it is good practice to stack it with lighter fuels for easier ignition.
 - Timber that is to be transported must be stacked next to roads or areas easily accessed.
 - In case of harvesting; all waste material left on site after the timber has been selected must be stacked and disposed of.

C. DISPOSAL

BURNING

- Burning of stacks may only commence during the slash burning season.
- ALL stacks should be burned prior to the end of the slash burning season.
- Only burn stacks on a day that it is safe to do so. Weather conditions preferable to stack burning include low temperatures, little to no wind, high humidity or even a slight drizzle.
- Heavy fuels are prone to spotting. It is a good practice to, where possible, clear or burn in between and around the stacks.
- Be extremely thorough when mopping up a stack burn. Heavy fuels can smoulder for many days and may flare up in strong winds.
- Stack burns that are still smouldering, or are at risk of flaring up should be guarded until completely extinguished.
- Obtain a burning permit from the GSFPA prior to lighting a fire. NO burning is permitted without a burning permit.
- Notify the GSFPA on days that burning takes place.
- Never light a fire that you are not willing to be held liable for.

TIMBER REMOVAL

- Timber must not remain on site longer than necessary. Any timber on site is considered a fire hazard.
- No Timber should be on site at the start of the fire prohibition period.

MULCHING

- Slash intended for mulching should not be left on the ground for longer than necessary. Dried heavy fuels pose a fire risk and mulching machines prefer wet or freshly felled wood.
- If the intention of mulching is to burn the remainder mulch, the same guidelines of stack burning apply.
- Mulch should be spread out or contained within the confines of a well managed compost heap.

COMPOSTING

- Fire risk management always takes priority over composting practices. Should any composting practice pose a fire risk it should be ceased and the compost disposed of accordingly.
- Heavy fuels take much longer to compost than light organic substances and should be processed prior to composting.

D. GENERAL

- At no point during clearing, harvesting, stacking or disposal may any cooking, warming or other open fires be used on site.
- On any days where the Fire Danger Index exceeds 60 Orange all work must cease until the Fire Danger Index thereafter drops below 55 Yellow.