

State Forester Forum

Forest Practices
Number 2
Updated Feb 2026



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Slash Removal from Streams

The Idaho Forest Practices Act administrative rules ([Forest Practices Rules](#)) stress harvesting, road-work, and site-preparation practices that prevent slash blockage instreams. Slash and debris deposits in or over streams can block the channel, causing diversion of the flow and washout of adjacent and downstream banks, side slopes, roads, skid trails and culverts. In the most severe cases, the release of stream- blocking slash and debris jams may cause debris torrents and downstream obliteration of stream banks, resulting in miles of damaged streambeds and ruined fish habitat.

There are several requirements in the Forest Practices Rules for Class I and Class II streams:

1. On Class I streams, any slash or debris deposited in the stream must be continuously removed during the entire operation.
2. On Class II streams, any slash or debris deposited in the stream must be removed when there is a potential for stream blockage or stream transport of the deposited material.
3. Slash and debris that has the potential to block a culvert must be cleaned out of the channel above the culvert inlet to ensure the culvert will not be plugged or blocked during high-stream flows. Channel cleaning of slash should be done for at least 25 feet upstream on small streams and up to 100 feet on larger streams.
4. Large Organic Debris (LOD) is defined as snags or tree stems over 20 feet long, or stumps and root wads of sawlog-sized trees that may fall, or have fallen, naturally into or along the stream. Natural LOD should not be removed from the stream or bank unless it appears unstable or presents a potential blockage problem. Care should be taken not to destabilize LOD while removing slash that has been deposited during a harvesting operation.

Prevention of slash accumulation in streams is always the least costly choice for Operators. Cleanout work is time consuming and labor intensive. Operators must look at natural or operation-caused slash above culvert- installation sites to see if potential for blockage exists. Plugged culverts and washed-out roads are costly, in terms of both money and regulatory issuances.

The Idaho Department of Lands ([IDL](#)) Private Forestry Specialists are available to help Operators plan their operations to minimize slash delivery to streams.

Excessive Slash within the Stream



No Slash in the Stream



This guidance document is not a new law. This is an interpretation of existing law, except as authorized by Idaho Code or incorporated into a contract.