

ATFS Program and AFF Standards of Sustainability Interpretations and Guidance

Interpretation: Contiguous Tracks

Date: Issued by the AFF Certification & National Standards Interpretation Committee electronically October 17, 2011

Question:

What are the implications for the contiguity of a forested track when it is split by a significant state or federal highway? This issue arises because the state and federal governments actually own the highway and its adjacent buffers.

Interpretation Language:

"Significant roads, under ownership of other entities, represent breaks in contiguous forest parcels. Significant roads are defined as roads at least 84 feet wide, inclusive of lanes and cleared zones."

Justification:

The American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHO) serves as a liaison between state departments of transportation and the federal government and issues technical standards for all phases of highway system development. Review of AASHO guidelines and discussion with AASHTO policy staff suggests that standards relative to widths of rights of way do not exist at the national level. Right of way widths and related ownerships vary by State and municipality and reflect site-specific environmental, social and physical conditions. Few state or local agencies have policy standards guiding right of way or road widths. Nationally, there is prevalent use of "context sensitive design," a right of way design and development approach that encourages state and local road management agencies to consider a range of locally significant issues. However, in practice, allowing for safety, a typical federal highway lane is 12 feet wide. For such roads, the "clear zone," an area cleared of significant objects for safety purposes, generally constitutes 30 feet beyond the travel lane. Thus, a typical two-lane roadway would be 84 feet wide, comprising two 12-foot lanes and 30 feet of cleared space on each side of the road. Research into state level department of transportation practices is consistent with this estimate.

Guidance: Natural Disaster Recovery

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Question:

How can conformance with the AFF 2010-2015 Standard and related ATFS certification be maintained following natural disaster, such as a fire, flood or storm, which results in significant effects to forests? For example, Tree Farms in Texas were significantly affected by the wildland fires in 2011.

Guidance Language:

"Forestry involves dealing with dynamic natural systems and some allowance may be necessary to accommodate natural events, such as fire, flooding or wind damage. To respond to such events, management plans must be active and adaptive in nature, as indicated in Standard 1.1.1."