

Vernal Pools

Best Management Practices
for water quality while
harvesting forest products

Vernal Pools

A VERNAL POOL IS A SMALL DEPRESSION THAT CONTAINS WATER FOR APPROXIMATELY TWO MONTHS DURING THE SPRING, LACKS A PERMANENT OUTLET, LACKS FISH, AND USUALLY DRIES OUT BY LATE SUMMER.

Vernal pools provide critical habitat for a number of amphibians and invertebrates, some of which breed only in these unique ecosystems. It is important to walk the property in the beginning of the planning stage to identify vernal pools because they may not be apparent on any wetland maps. Vernal pools may be difficult to identify when



they are dry, but some identifying physical characteristics include: black or gray stained leaf litter from being under water; and trees with water stains on their trunks are a result of the seasonal flooding. Changes to the surrounding vegetation, topography, and the timing and intensity of surface water drainage may destroy the pool or prevent amphibians and invertebrates from effectively re-colonizing an area. To preserve the integrity of the vernal pools the following steps may be taken:

- Prohibit logging equipment from entering vernal pool depressions or operating on the pools perimeter walls at all times of the year.
- Keep tree tops and slash out of the pool depression. If an occasional top does land in the pool depression leave it because removal could cause further disruption.
- Maintain an undisturbed 50 foot vegetated buffer around the vernal pool. If the buffer area must be operated in, schedule operations when the ground is frozen and snow covered to minimize disturbance of leaf litter and mineral soils and maintain a minimum of 50 percent crown cover.

- Locate landings and heavily used skid roads outside the buffer area. Be sure that any water diversion structures associated with skid trails and roads keeps sediment from entering the buffer zone and the vernal pool.
- Smooth out ruts and implement proper BMP practices for road and trail closure.