

# Why Are Some Forests Clearcut?



Different forest landowners have different objectives ranging from wood production and wildlife habitat to scenic beauty and recreation. They have several harvest options to choose from to reach their goals. Their choice is influenced by tree species as well as climate, landscape, economics and conditions that affect how the forest will regenerate and grow after harvest. Clearcutting, one of several harvest options, is a method in which most of the trees are removed and the forest is regenerated by planting new trees or where seeds from healthy trees are allowed to naturally regenerate the area. Not every location is suitable for clearcutting.

## Management Decisions

While many people think of clearcutting as a harvest decision, forest landowners often choose to clearcut because of the regeneration needs of the tree species that will be grown in the future. Some tree species such as western larch, lodgepole pine, ponderosa pine and western white pine grow

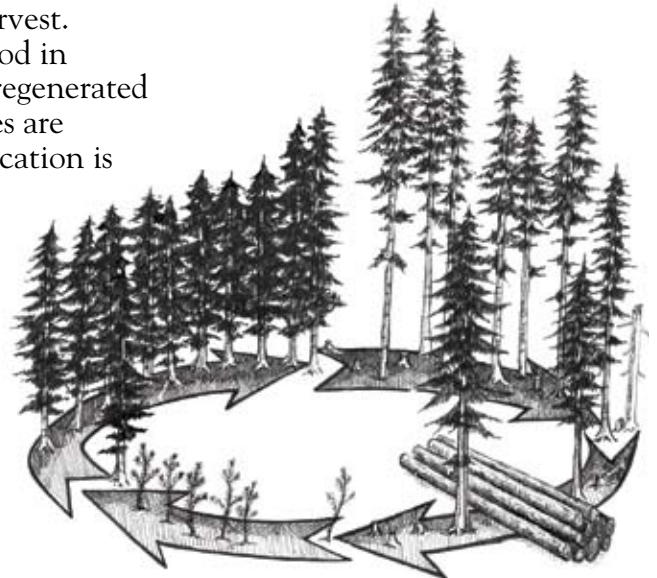


Illustration by C. Bruce Morser

**Clearcutting is used to renew areas with tree species that grow best in full sunlight and where there is damage by insects, disease, wind-storms or fire.**



poorly in shade and need full sunlight as seedlings to successfully compete with other vegetation. Clearcutting is also used to renew areas damaged by insects,

disease, windstorms or fire or to create wildlife habitat for specific species. To grow healthier forests, areas with tree species such as grand fir which are prone to insect and disease problems are sometimes replanted with more resistant species of trees.

**Idaho law requires that new trees be growing within five years after harvest, and that trees be left as buffers around streams and retained for wildlife habitat.**

## Diversity

A variety of harvest methods creates a mosaic of forest ages and habitat characteristics. This pattern is similar to landscapes created by natural disturbances such as wind and fire. Scientists say the worst possible approach would be to manage all forestlands in the same way.



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