



**Assessing Your Woodlot or Plantation**

How am I ever going to get to the rear of my country property, the inaccessible "back 40" that contains the best fuelwood and sawlogs. That was one of my first thoughts as I tramped through my woodlot for the first time. Sound familiar? It should, since there are a lot of us out there with the same dilemma. Every property owner, whether the property is used as a weekend retreat, rural residence, or farm, would benefit by planning ahead when considering access roads. A well designed and maintained road not only aids in the development of your property, but also provides access for fire protection vehicles. To plan your roads, produce a map of your property. On the map, mark all topographic features (hills, gullies, streams, rock outcroppings) and the location of natural forest stands and plantations. Lay out your road or road network to take advantage of high ground, natural openings and exposed bedrock. Avoid areas with steep hills and abrupt slopes. Go around wet areas. Remember that a slope or low spot that can be driven up or through in July may be impassible in October or November. Route your road along the edge of plantations and natural stands and through plantations at regular intervals. Roads laid out in this manner will not only provide access, but create effective firebreaks as well. A rule of thumb in tree farm operations is to have every twentieth row left as a road where row spacing is less than six feet. On more mechanized tree farms, row spacing of seven to eight feet eliminates this need since vehicles can travel between the rows. The overall size of your plantation will dictate the need to break it up with access roads.

Walk the proposed route to make sure the location is okay. Make adjustments as needed, then check with the municipality for their requirements. Most require an entrance permit when a new road joins or intersects a municipal road allowance. Generally, the municipalities road department will install the entrance (complete with culvert, where required) for you at a reasonable fee. Should a stream crossing be contemplated, a check with your local office of the Ministry of Natural Resources will help to determine if the crossing requires compliance under the Lakes and Rivers Improvement Act. You are now ready to start construction. Whether you decide to construct a simple, non-gravelled road, or a more elaborate one for year round access, the following are some points that should be kept in mind:

- when clearing (removal of trees and low-lying vegetation) fell trees towards the road centre line, thereby avoiding unnecessary damage to remaining trees;
- clear a wide enough right-of-way by felling and pruning to ensure the road receives abundant sunlight. This will help to dry out the road and prevent unnecessary rutting;
- if a bridge or culvert is required, use existing structures both upstream and down as a guide. Ensure that existing structures are adequately sized to begin with;
- if ditching is required, minimum vertical gradient should be 2 to 1. Less steep slopes should be used on erodible slopes or where fast water may be encountered;
- when gravelling, use large aggregate to form a solid base. Fine material (i.e. Granular A) may be spread on top to form a smooth running surface.

By keeping these points in mind, your new road can become one of the best tools you have in the development of your property. This article has been presented by the Ministry of Natural Resources, Brockville. For more information on this or any forestry topic, contact the Private Land Forestry Staff at the district office nearest you.



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