Sustainable Timber Tasmania

FACT SHEET N0.6

Cable Harvesting

Key points

- Harvested trees are lifted, rather than pulled, out of the forest, which minimises soil erosion on steeper slopes.
- It is more complex and expensive than ground-based harvesting methods, so is only used where there are no other viable alternatives for extracting timber.

What is cable harvesting?

Cable harvesting is a way to extract timber from forests on steeper slopes by using a winch and one or more cables that run from a tower at the top of the harvested area to a movable anchor at the bottom of the slope.

This enables harvested logs to be winched to the landing instead of being dragged across the ground by heavy machinery.

It is a widely used and well-accepted harvesting method in Europe and North America, and has been less commonly used in Tasmania.

Cable harvesting operation showing segregated logs and log truck loaded ready for transport to wood processing centres.

Why is it used?

Cable harvesting, especially when used on steeper slopes, causes less impact to soils and water catchments than ground-based harvesting methods. This is because the harvested trees are lifted, rather than pulled, out of the forest, which reduces the risk of erosion or landslide.

For these reasons, Sustainable Timber Tasmania uses cable harvesting as the preferred harvesting method on highly erodible soils and steep slopes.

However, cable harvesting is more complex and expensive than ground-based harvesting methods; therefore, it is only used where there are no other viable alternatives.

On stable, flat or gently sloping land, cable harvesting is considered unnecessary. Concerns about soil damage and erosion with more conventional harvesting operations are managed through Forest Practices Plans having additional prescriptions and requirements.

Log ends being sealed with grease to reduce chances of splitting from rapid moisture loss.

Cable harvesting tower showing guy ropes.

Cable harvesting operation at forest coupe ARO34E in the Arve Valley, Southern Forests, Tasmania.

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