

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Montana State Office

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In Reply To:

5400(923)P

April 13, 2004

EMAIL TRANSMISSION - 04/13/04

Instruction Memorandum No. MT-2004-055

Expires: 9/30/05

To: Field Managers

From: Deputy State Director, Division of Resources

Subject: Policy Change for Timber and Special Forest Products Volume Measurements

Washington Office (WO) Instruction Memorandum No. 2004-154 rescinded the requirement to offer and sell all timber sales under the National Cubic Foot Rule volume determination methodology.

This rescission allows the States to set local protocols for volume determination and units of measure. For Montana and the Dakotas, the requirement to offer and sell timber sales in Hundred Cubic Feet (Ccf) and to simultaneously show the volume of those offers in Thousand Board Feet (Mbf) is also rescinded. Field offices are directed to use the volume determination method by tree cruise, log scale, weight or other form of measurement that best meets your local public needs while ensuring that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) receives the fair market value for the product being offered. The volume determination method selected may change as local markets change or as quality and quantity of the materials being offered changes. Regardless of the volume determination method selected, all field offices will maintain the capacity to report timber sales and convertible product volumes in board feet. This will meet Performance Measure reporting requirements and provide for a common base for planning efforts.

The reporting requirements in the Timber Sale Information System (TSIS) are not affected by this policy change. Volumes for timber sales may still be entered in Ccf or Mbf. Sales offered and sold by weight or other measurement will still need their local conversion factor back to Mbf in order to be entered into TSIS.

If you have any questions pertaining to this policy change, contact Bill Hensley at 406-896-5042.

Signed by: Howard A. Lemm

Authenticated by: Merry Prestridge (MT923)

1 Attachment

1-WO Instruction Memorandum No. 2004-154 (3 pp)

Distribution

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

April 2, 2004

In Reply Refer To:
5400 (WO-270) P

EMS TRANSMISSION 04/06/2004
Instruction Memorandum No. 2004-154
Expires: 09/30/2005

To: All State Directors
From: Assistant Director, Renewable Resources and Planning
Subject: Forests and Woodlands Management

Program Area: Sales of forest products

Purpose: Policy change for timber volume measurement.

Policy/Action: In an effort to enhance efficiency and address customer concerns, the policy to measure and sell all timber sales following the National Cubic Rules is rescinded. This is consistent with regulatory direction that does not prescribe a specific volume standard as long as board foot figures are available from the measurement technique employed. Each State Director has the authority to determine the form of timber measurement to be used for timber sales and other forms of disposal, such as stewardship contracts. Said determination must be based primarily upon cost and efficiency, and include consideration of local industry standards. Consistency should be maintained for similar types of products to avoid confusion with the customers. The measurement standard selected must meet the Bureau standards in order to ensure an accurate estimation of fair market value.

Cases where Cubic measure might still be most appropriate are fiber or biomass disposal involving very small diameter trees or where under a Service First scenario, cubic volume can most expeditiously be obtained. All field offices will maintain the capacity to report volumes in board feet or cubic feet. In most cases, measurement will be accomplished with Scribner Decimal C Rules (Scribner) or National Cubic Rules (Cubic). The Oregon/Washington Office will employ Eastside Scribner Decimal C Rules when selling based upon Scribner.

States are reminded that regardless of Scribner or Cubic Measurements, by regulation the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is directed to use lump sum sales as a "general practice" (CFR 5422.1). Scaled sales may be used for administrative reasons such as highly defective timber where it is impossible to determine the tree cruise volume within a reasonable degree of

accuracy. In addition, scaled sales may be appropriate for very small diameter trees. Weight scale may be appropriate with biomass disposal as an option.

Time Frame: This policy is effective immediately for all BLM timber sales, and other forms of forests products disposal, such as stewardship contracts.

Budget Impact: There should be no short-term budget impact. Cruising and scaling under Scribner Rules can be accomplished efficiently because of past training and experience. Most BLM foresters and forest technicians are already sufficiently skilled in Scribner Rules. In western Oregon, minimal training of BLM personnel will be necessary due to the similarity of Eastside Scribner to National Cubic Rules. The existing cruise volume software already accommodates both methods.

Background: 43 CFR § 5420.0-6 states that timber will be measured by tree cruise, log scale, weight, or such other form of measurement as may be determined to be in the public interest. The regulations do not establish which log rule will be used to define the volume of timber sold in BLM contracts. In 1998, the BLM began to measure and sell timber sale based upon the National Cubic Rules.

Cubic measure is accepted as a more accurate measure of wood fiber volume; however, it does not accurately predict board foot recovery. Sawtimber (logs which are milled into boards, plywood, etc.) is the primary product from a majority of BLM timber sales. Mill studies and personnel expertise supports the concept that Scribner is more accurate than Cubic as a measure of board foot recovery.

The forest industry has not been supportive of using the Cubic measure. From the onset, industry has expressed that they: (1) are forced to maintain two log volume accounting systems on federal timber sales; (2) do not use the information from Cubic reports; (3) are unable to use historic harvest data and mill production studies; and (4) inventory, appraise, buy, and sell non-federal timber measured with Scribner. Some past purchasers of BLM timber have not bid on BLM timber sales since they neither understand nor trust Cubic.

Since Cubic measurement was established, managers and program personnel have questioned the efficiency of the Cubic measure. Cubic measurements can take 1.5 to 2 times longer than Scribner measurements. In those cases, the government spends more resources to accomplish the same objective. In addition, certain timber measurement situations, such as access road easements and right-of-way agreements continued to be measured in Scribner. Only in western Oregon does the BLM have the staff and funding to fully implement cruising and scaling using Cubic Rules.

External information requests and formal performance reporting have never employed Cubic as the reportable form of log volume measurement or accomplishment. The BLM was reporting both Cubic and Scribner figures; when this ceased approximately two-years ago, no concerns were voiced.

Manual/Handbook Sections Affected: None

Coordination: Oregon State Office (OR-931), AD, Renewable Resources and Planning (WO-200), BLM Forestry State Program Leads, Forest Service.

Contact: Laura Ceperley, Group Manager, Forest and Woodlands Group (WO-270) at (202) 452-5029; or Kenny McDaniel, Senior Forester, WO-270 at (202) 452-5097.

States with Unions are reminded to notify their unions of this Instruction Memorandum and satisfy any bargaining obligations before implementation. Your Human Resources Office or Labor Relations Specialist can provide assistance in this matter.

Signed by:
Thomas H. Dyer
Acting Assistant Director
Renewable Resources and Planning

Authenticated by:
Barbara J. Brown
Policy & Records Group, WO-560