



Georgia Forestry BMPs for –

Forest Firefighting Dip Sites and Associated Spoils Material¹

In some instances, forest fire fighting activities dictate the need for adequate sources of water for use in forest fire suppression. Such water can be taken, through the use of helicopter dip buckets, from ponds, lakes, rivers, or other existing sources. However, forest fires often take place in remote locations, far from human improvements such as ponds or lakes. In such instances, and where natural water sources are not available, so called “dip sites” can be constructed on properties adjacent to the fire’s location, or these dip sites could be constructed beforehand in strategically located areas of historic fire occurrence. Such dip sites are constructed by digging an isolated pit deep enough to access ground water. Typically these dip sites are located on properties that are otherwise completely utilized for the production of forest products.

The land disturbance associated with these helicopter dip sites itself is considered a forestry practice and not subject to regulation under the Georgia Erosion and Sedimentation Act (GESA) or the NPDES General Storm Water Construction Permits, with no limits on size (acreage), including adjacent areas used for dewatering spoils from the dip site. If the spoils from the pond are used entirely on the landowner’s property for forest road maintenance, then the forestry exemption applies to the spoils as well.

All of the following requirements must be met for the exemption to apply:

1. The Dip Site must not be constructed within Waters of the State of Georgia, and not within Waters of the U. S.
2. The Dip Site must be constructed outside any Streamside Management Zones
3. The Dip Site must not connect to any ditches

However, the placement of the spoils from the dip site construction may be subject to permitting under GESA if the disturbance is less than one acre, and (the spoils) used for other than forest road maintenance within 200 feet of a perennial stream, or if the spoils placement doesn't meet any of the other exemptions under 12-7-17 in GESA. If the spoils placement project disturbs more than an acre (not for forest roads) then it may be regulated under one of the storm water permits if it doesn't meet any of the exemptions in the permits.

If the spoils are removed from the property for any reason, it is recommended to contact EPD to make sure any necessary permits are secured.

¹Approved by Georgia Environmental Protection Div. by email dated November 14, 2012