

 UI Extension Forestry Information Series

Firewood Gathering Permits

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Firewood can be obtained from many different forest owners in Idaho. The major land owners who permit firewood gathering are:

- USDA Forest Service
- Idaho Department of Lands
- Forest industry
- Small, nonindustrial woodlot owners

Each of these major forestland owners has specific regulations for permit requirements.

Public Lands. The USDA Forest Service has over 40 local offices throughout the state. Most of these offices issue free use permits for wood gathering. However, the conditions and number of available permits under which wood can be obtained vary by local forest area. A fee is charged in some areas. USDA Forest Service wood permits are available at the following locations in Idaho:

Region 1

- Clearwater National Forest – Kamiah, Kooskia, Moscow, Orofino, Potlatch and Powell Ranger Station (on U.S. 12, 5 miles west of Montana state line).
- Idaho Panhandle National Forests – Avery, Bonners Ferry, Coeur d’Alene, Priest Lake, Sandpoint, St. Maries and Wallace.
- Nezperce National Forest – Elk City, Grangeville, Kooskia and White Bird.

Region 4

- Boise National Forest – Boise, Cascade, Emmett, Idaho City and Mountain Home.
- Caribou National Forest – Malad, Montpelier, Pocatello and Soda Springs.
- Challis National Forest – Challis, Clayton and

Mackay.

- Payette National Forest – Council, McCall, New Meadows and Weiser.
- Salmon National Forest – Leadore, North Fork and Salmon.
- Sawtooth National Forest – Burley, Fairfield, Ketchum and Twin Falls.
- Targhee National Forest – Ashton, Driggs, Dubois, Idaho Falls, Island Park, St. Anthony and Swan Valley.

State Lands. The Idaho Department of Lands has district offices in Bonners Ferry, Sandpoint, Coeur d’Alene, St. Maries, Deary, Orofino, Craigmont, McCall, Boise, and Idaho Falls where you may obtain firewood permits.

Private Land Owners. Regulations or lack of regulations vary widely among owners. You must get permission from the land or timber owner before removing any wood. All wood, alive or dead, is private property on these lands. Be sure to get a “Bill of Sale” from the owner before transporting the wood on public highways.

Permits issued by public and industrial owners serve a dual purpose. First, they provide information to the forest managers on how many persons are gathering wood from the forest. More importantly, they provide the managers with your name and address for correspondence if fire conditions or road conditions change, etc. The number of specific regulations and duration of validity will vary by grantor.

Nonindustrial private owners almost always advertise fuelwood availability on their own lands by word-of-

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mouth. Additionally, in the late summer and fall, firewood is advertised and sold from individuals via newspapers and bulletin boards.

Permit Limitations. Regulations and limitations in the permit may include such items as:

- Fire precautions.
- Re-sale restriction.
- Down and dead material only.
- Prohibited species (such as western red cedar).
- Travel restrictions in wet weather to minimize road damage.
- Permit duration.
- Stump height regulations.
- Debris cleanup on roads and ditches.
- Closed areas.

Forest Management Practices. If your permit limits you to gathering down or dead material only, this implies the use of “waste” wood. The major forest management implication is fuel removal from the land which will reduce potential fire hazards and allow use of material that would otherwise be lost. If the tree you select is already on the ground, the most usable

portion will be the main stem that has been dead for more than 1 to 2 years. Loose bark or no bark at all (called “buckskin”) will indicate this age.

Trees directly on the ground absorb ground moisture and are not as suitable as slightly elevated trees such as those lying over other logs, stumps, or rocks.

Management Considerations. Most timberland owners in the state do not allow the removal of live trees. However, some private woodlot owners grant this privilege. Discuss with the owner the exact species and sizes of trees that can be removed.

If you would like to learn how you can improve your forestland through proper species selection and spacing control and then use the waste as fuelwood, contact an Extension Forester at the University of Idaho, your Cooperative Extension County Educator or your local Idaho Department of Lands office.

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