All You Wanted to Know About ROADS on Your LEASE

by Donnie Wood, Senior Lease Manager

“Good Lord willing and the creeks don’t rise, we will be there.”

As a child, I heard my father say that a lot. He grew up in rural Georgia in an era when road conditions and your ability to get to a desired location often depended on the weather. That same story applies even today for forest roads.

As hunters ourselves, your recreation lease managers understand that access to and across your lease is vitally important. To Weyerhaeuser, the roads are vital for hauling timber and gaining access to the land for other silvicultural activities like mechanical site preparation, seedling planting and pruning. Across its ownership, Weyerhaeuser has tens of thousands of miles of roads and thousands of stream crossings. Maintaining this infrastructure is a huge responsibility.

As recreation lease managers, we frequently receive requests to repair roads. In fact, we created a road maintenance request form to make the process more efficient for both our customers and our staff. You can access the form from your online account.

For now, let’s tackle some of the questions we frequently receive.

How does Weyerhaeuser manage roads?

First, realize that all roads are not equal. Primary roads, the large roads on a tract, generally connect to public roads. Secondary roads branch off from primary roads and access smaller portions of a tract. Finally, there may also be a network of old firebreaks or old skid trails that clubs use for ATV access. These firebreaks and skid trails are not considered part of the road network and will often be closed following timber harvest.

A lot of road activity occurs before and after we clearcut. As part of the harvesting plan, foresters will identify roads that need to be retained and roads that should be closed. The roads will be prepped for harvesting by grading, adding rock or other means. During the harvesting operation, some roads and trails may be closed by placing logging slash over them. In some cases, these closed roads may be replanted. Following harvesting, roads slated for long-term use will be repaired.

On a periodic schedule or as issues arise, we perform maintenance or repairs. This might include grading, repairing or replacing culverts or bridges, placing rock on steep or boggy sections of road, or other activities. All maintenance is important for maintaining the integrity of the roads and preventing unnecessary and costly repairs.

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More Than Just a Hunting Lease Provider

By Glenn Johnson, VP, Recreational Leases

Many hunters are surprised to learn that Weyerhaeuser does more than provide great leasing opportunities.

Across the 12 million acres we own and manage in the United States, our company engages in many business ventures such as timber production, real estate, wetlands mitigation, mineral extraction and wind or solar energy projects, just to name a few. We are always busy searching for opportunities to create higher value from our land portfolio, and sometimes these interests compete for priority on the same property. We understand the problems that related activities can cause for hunters (especially during deer and turkey seasons), and we are working to improve these interactions to provide you the best experience possible.

The Recreation team ultimately links closely with Weyerhaeuser’s Forestry Group, the professionals responsible for planting, growing and harvesting trees to supply logs to the forest products manufacturing industry. Forestry, which is still the primary business at Weyerhaeuser, enjoys a rich history dating back more than 100 years. (To learn more, visit our company website at www.weyerhaeuser.com/company/history.) Our policy is to manage our forests for sustainable production of wood and wood products that meet the needs of current and future generations. Fortunately for hunters, this approach ensures diverse, productive wildlife habitats on a continuous cycle to ensure our forests and their inhabitants thrive forever.

It’s complicated…

So, given the scale on which Weyerhaeuser operates, you can probably appreciate the tremendous volume of work involved in forest management. Foresters lead stewardship efforts such as marking tract boundaries, installing and maintaining roads, creating stream buffers, and securing tract access via gates. This is just the starting point, though. From there, they monitor tree growth and health, and they plan any needed fertilizer and control of competing plants, along with periodic thinning to reduce tree density and boost growth. After 20 or more years of nurturing, the crop is ready for final harvest, only to be quickly replaced with fresh seedlings as the cycle starts again. Sometimes, Mother Nature throws challenges in the mix, too, such as insect outbreaks, catastrophic weather events or wildfires. Across millions of acres, our foresters are stretched thin making sure our tree farms run properly amid continuous challenges.

Why am I highlighting our forestry operations? Because, of all the Weyerhaeuser businesses mentioned above, forestry has the greatest impact on hunting satisfaction. Working forests are healthy forests that support better wildlife habitats and populations for game and nongame species. We hope that if you understand our management goals and approach, you can appreciate the reasons behind activities you may encounter as well as the challenges we face. Harvests and tree planting that disrupt hunting season are indeed unfortunate for a short while, yet they occur infrequently on each site. Roads that become rutted by heavy equipment during wet weather and gates that incur inadvertent damage are not forgotten or ignored; we’re simply working through a larger process to ensure efficient and effective repairs. We always appreciate your patience and support during these events.

Top value over the long run

Our Recreation Team is working to improve visibility around forestry activities and communicate plans with you in advance, so you can better deal with any inconvenience. We try to provide you with quality hunting venues and the best value for your dollar over the long run. If ever you have questions or concerns about your lease property or our forestry activities, please reach us through the Contact Us link on our website at www.wyrecreation.com or call 1-855-248-6872. Thank you!
Roads

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Why doesn't Weyerhaeuser fix my roads now?
Hunters often provide us the first notice of an issue. The most frequent reasons for delays are because it is too wet to fix the roads or there is not enough time for the roads to set up after maintenance before receiving high-volume traffic. In fact, there is nothing worse than to perform road maintenance that is followed shortly by rain and high levels of vehicle traffic—the exact conditions typical during fall and winter hunting seasons. If hunters wait until deer season to request maintenance, it likely will be delayed until after deer season closes. If you become aware of a road issue in spring or summer, please don't wait until the onset of fall hunting season to make your request. By then, you will be competing with a flood of others.

In many locations with certain soil types, we often must wait for summer and early fall for soils to dry out enough to perform repairs. Additionally, if a harvest will occur within one or two years and the issue is not critical and will not get worse in the near-term, we may wait until harvest to repair the road.

If the requested maintenance is at the end of a secondary road and overall access on the lease is barely affected, maintenance also may be delayed as lower priority. Finally, if a repair is requested for what we consider a hunter access trail, firebreak, or a road which serves no forestry purpose, the repairs may be delayed—or the repair may, in fact, close the route.

What if a road is unsafe to drive?
Safety is a priority at Weyerhaeuser. If you discover road conditions that may be a safety risk, please email your lease administrator. The more detailed information you can provide, the quicker we can respond. If a road has been deemed unsafe, a forester will close it. In many cases, it may be a wash-out or collapsed culvert that has gone unnoticed because it isn't easily detected under high grass. Until the road is repaired to safe driving conditions, it will remain closed. Do not drive beyond that point. Our goal is not to prevent use of long stretches of roads but to close the immediate area around the unsafe road.

Can I repair roads on my lease?
Lessees can make some minor road repairs, but only after first getting approval from their Weyerhaeuser lease manager.

What can I do to speed things?
To help Weyerhaeuser investigate your road maintenance request more quickly:

- Submit a request through your online account as soon as you notice the issue.
- If possible, please include a map of your lease showing the location(s) of concern. This will help Weyerhaeuser staff drive directly to the spot.
- Please include photos. Damage information helps us prioritize where to go first.

Weyerhaeuser depends on hunting clubs to notify us of deteriorating road conditions, and we appreciate the help. Please keep safety the number one priority as you enjoy your recreational lease. If you have a road maintenance request, log into your account at www.wyrecreation.com and fill out the Road Maintenance Request form there.

GAME ON!

Marcus Dunlap, Smithville, OK
Big Fun with Small Game

By Paul Durfield, Senior Lease Manager

Many hunters’ earliest memories of hunting take them back to sitting on a stump, listening and watching for grey squirrels jumping from limb to limb through a mature hardwood canopy. The sound of beagles chasing cottontail rabbits may also stir memories of days past, when an influential hunter introduced you to a lifelong commitment to life afield—and wildlife conservation. Studies show that most hunters spend their hunting time chasing big game, but don’t forget the joy of a great small game hunt.

Small game hunting is a great way to extend hunting seasons throughout the year. Grey squirrels and cottontail rabbits are the most commonly hunted small game species.

The population biology of rodents, including squirrels and rabbits, makes them highly prolific and subject to high mortality. One study suggests that as much as 80 percent of a given population may be lost to predation, hunting and disease without an overall negative impact on the regeneration of the population. High populations also allow most states to provide opportunities for hunters to focus on small game hunting.

Grey squirrels (sciurus carolinensis) Anyone who has hunted forest squirrels knows there is a big difference between a wild squirrel and a yard squirrel that spends its days eating from a bird feeder and running from the occasional dog.

Wild squirrels are more skittish and harder to locate. Understanding their habitat needs will go a long way in helping you spot them in the canopy.

Squirrels love hard mast such as acorns and hickory nuts, but since hard mast is a relatively seasonal food source, it is important to understand their other common foods. Depending on availability, squirrels also feed on fruits and berries, flowers, buds, bark, roots and mushrooms. It’s also common for them to cut pine cones and harvest pine seeds. Typically, if you can identify their food source, you can find the squirrels in limit-producing numbers.

Finding squirrels in managed pine plantations can be a challenge. When cones are maturing, squirrels can be found in mature pine stands cutting cones for seeds. Freshly chewed cones are a telltale sign that squirrels are in the area. Squirrels are also found in the buffered areas of mixed hardwoods and pines located along streams, creeks or drainages. These buffered areas often have mast-producing hardwoods that are attractive to squirrels and easier for the hunter to maneuver through.

Hunting during the early part of the season usually produces the best results.

Wildlife during the early part of the season usually produces the best results. While at the same time scout for the upcoming deer season.

One issue that disturbs some warm season hunters is the presence of the larvae of the bot fly, often called “wolves.” The bot fly eggs are laid on the fur of the host animal and burrow into the skin upon hatching. The larvae grow until they are around an inch and a half long when they exit the skin and bury themselves into the ground only to emerge as adult flies. The presence of wolves does not render squirrel meat inedible. Just trim around the location of the larva and the squirrel will be perfect for your stewpot.

Look for insights on rabbits in the next issue. In the meantime, check your state hunting regulations for the small game seasons where you hunt and get out there and fill that stew pot!
Hunters are drawn to the woods each year for a variety of reasons. One common theme among all hunting trips is the expectation everyone will arrive home safely. Unfortunately, not everyone’s hunt ends as expected, and ATV incidents are one reason.

Because ATVs provide many advantages to hunters, their use during hunting season has increased. But there are about 650 deaths and 100,000 injuries every year involving ATVs, according to the Consumer Products Safety Commission Report. Outdoor Underwriters, Inc. shows that 16 percent of their insurance claims are from ATV incidents. Although this number may not appear remarkable, the injuries sustained are overwhelming. If the risks are not taken seriously, major injury or death can occur.

During the last five years, over 46 percent of ATV accidents reported to Outdoor Underwriters, Inc. were due to:

- Operator error.
- Traveling too fast.
- Turning sharply.
- Underage drivers.
- Exceeding the passenger capacity.

**Too fast, too many... too fatal**

**Background:** At approximately 4 p.m. on a clear day in October, several South Carolina hunting club members left their camp riding on ATVs. The road conditions were typical—some rocks, gravel and debris on the road, with tree limbs overhanging it. The club president indicated that the members had not experienced any problems with the roads on the leased property. The members were riding to hunting stands that had been selected and marked. Two hunters, who were running behind, left the camp approximately 5 minutes later.

**Unsafe Act:** The two late hunters were riding on a single passenger ATV. Trying to catch up with the others, they were traveling at a high rate of speed.

**Accident:** The driver came around a curve and swerved to miss a limb overhanging the road. The front tire hit gravel and began to slide. The driver over-corrected and the passenger was thrown from the ATV and pronounced dead at the scene. The driver was not injured. A drug and alcohol test was inconclusive.

The passenger is survived by his spouse and two children.

**Recommendation:** A single passenger ATV should not be used to carry two. In addition, hunting club members should be familiar with the roads, and road conditions should be taken into consideration while traveling. Speed should be adjusted according to the road and its condition. As extra precaution, club members may want to clear debris and remove overhanging limbs.

Often, a little common sense is enough to prevent many accidents. As an example, the incident below shows how quickly things can change when riders choose not to follow recommended safety practices.

Weyerhaeuser welcomes the responsible operation of ATVs by our hunting clubs. Accidents rarely

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Lease managers get a lot of questions related to the timing of timber operations. How long after final harvest will the stand be replanted? At what stand age will foresters thin the trees? How long after being thinned will the forest be harvested?

These are all great questions with significant impact on the habitat and recreational activities on a lease. Unfortunately, specific timings are hard to predict. Think of it like having a cabin built. We have blueprints of what we want that we pass off to a contractor, who works everything up and comes back with a bid. Simple! But then the big question: How long will it take? That’s when the contractor takes a deep breath and says, “Twelve to 16 weeks, depending on weather and other factors.” That’s how growing timber works. The difference is that rather than a process that takes three to four months overall, foresters think in terms of 25 to 30 years to complete the process. Many things can impact a plan over a 25-year window.

Harvesting
Harvesting activities clearly have the largest impact on our recreational customers, and Weyerhaeuser works hard to share as much timely information as we possibly can. Unfortunately, harvest timing is the hardest to predict. Weather, market demands, contractor availability, equipment issues and mill outages are just a few things that can move the timing of a harvest by weeks, months or even years.

Site preparation
The good news is that most of Weyerhaeuser’s ownership in the South is pine plantations. These plantations grow very predictably, and in most cases the general timing of site preparation activities—such as mechanical site preparation or planting seedlings—is easy to predict. General guidelines are provided in the chart on page 7.

For example, a stand of timber that is final harvested in July 2018 will not be site-prepped and planted until 2019. This allows competing species time to sprout before site preparation work is done. The site preparation will take place between April and July, and planting will be done that winter.

Some rules of thumb can help clubs understand the general timing of harvest activities:

1. Once planted, pine plantations are seldom re-entered for forestry work until the trees are 12 to 15 years old. At this time, foresters will perform a first thinning to reduce tree density and improve growth rates. This is the perfect time for leaseholders to install food plots or do other approved habitat work.

2. Many pine stands receive a second thinning five to seven years following the first thinning to optimize growth.

3. Final harvest will generally occur between 23 and 28 years of age, depending on site quality and growth rates. Then the process starts all over again.

4. Harvest areas next to all-weather gravel, ditched dirt or county roads will be harvested during wetter months, typically between November and May. During this period, we can’t build forest roads that will support the weight of loaded log trucks, so all-weather, improved roads are needed, and our harvest operations focus on those areas that have them.

5. Stands that are a quarter-mile or more from any improved road, on the other hand, will be logged during drier weather.

6. Any harvest notifications you receive after February mean that harvesting is imminent. Members should move personal items that could be damaged by logging activity.
Unfortunately, harvest timing is the hardest to predict.

Therefore, you can assume that the cleared area you are hunting this fall will look much different next fall and removing stands and other personal property after the 2018 season is a wise move to prevent damage by site-prep activities.

Plan your time on the ground
Armed with the information Weyerhaeuser provides and a basic understanding of how timber management works, you can develop plans to better manage your recreational time. Use your least-mobile hunting blinds in younger timber where little will happen for 10 to 12 years. In older timber, keep things simple and remove stands, feeders and cameras after each season. If you have the potential for multiple stand locations, set them up in timber of variable ages so if one location is affected by harvesting, the others are not.

Planning is the key! Spend as much time thinking about how the timber management process may affect your location as you do scouting and preparing for the hunt. This will lead to more quality time on your lease.

TOP ATV TIPS

- Stay off paved roads.
- Never allow children to operate an ATV designed for adults.
- Do not allow more people on the vehicle than it was designed to carry.
- Always wear a helmet.
- Get hands-on training.
- Avoid alcohol use while operating an ATV.
Hunters are taking hunting more seriously than ever.
It used to be that we just went to the woods and took a seat on the ground in a likely spot.

Now look at us:
Quality deer management? Trophy deer management? Maximum deer harvest management? Which program is for your club? Or do you even need to be on a program?
Why have doe management recommendations changed so dramatically over the last 20 years?

A century of change
By the early 1900s, whitetail populations in the South were nearly eliminated in many areas due primarily to market and subsistence hunting and to habitat loss in some areas. Beginning in the 1930s, deer populations began to very slowly regrow.

Later, limited hunting was allowed. However, the season was extremely short, and generally only one buck could be harvested. Does were not harvested because the population was still very low and negatively affected by any harvest of does. There also were not many deer hunters then. Folks either did not have the free time to hunt, or they pursued small game.

Fast forward to the 1960s and 1970s. The deer herd was still low relative to what the habitat could support. Deer had access to lots of prime forage. Because of short seasons and low limits, many bucks were making it into the older age categories, resulting in spectacular bucks being harvested.

Deer everywhere
From the mid-1980s through mid-1990s, many deer populations exploded. Deer hunting popularity also exploded, and everyone wanted to harvest a buck. States began liberalizing doe harvest in an effort to stabilize or reduce the population, but many hunters remembered earlier years, so doe harvest levels were slow to increase. Buck harvest levels were very high, and most bucks harvested were yearlings. In some cases, 1.5 year old bucks represented 80 percent or more of the total buck harvest.

Across most of the South, deer populations peaked in the mid-1990s through mid-2000s. By this time, hunters were more receptive to harvesting does. Also, hunters as a whole began to call for improved buck quality, and many hunters voluntarily restricted their harvest of young bucks. In some states and counties, new regulations required minimum antler criteria. As a result, total buck harvest is now lower, but the number of older bucks in the harvest is at or near historic highs.

Where are we now?
In a few areas in the South, deer...
populations are at historic highs, but in most states, they’re post-peak. In some states, population reductions through doe harvest were needed to reduce the impacts of burgeoning herds on habitat. In some areas, fawn predation, especially by coyotes, has become an issue. Deer in some states have suffered large die-offs associated with outbreaks of blue-tongue disease. Regardless, deer populations have changed, and hunters may need, once again, to adjust.

Does my club need a program? The truth is, every club is on a deer management program because every time you decide to harvest or not harvest a deer, you are making a management decision. But to evaluate whether you need a more formal management program, ask these questions:

■ Is the club unsatisfied with the number or quality of deer seen and harvested each year?
■ Would you like to harvest more deer? More bucks?
■ Do you have enough land to affect the deer population with more strenuous deer management efforts?
■ Do you have the funds and tools needed for additional deer management?

If your answers to the first few questions are yes, your club should consider developing a deer management program.

Habitat management is the foundation of a successful deer management program. But the average club has limited financial ability and flexibility to perform habitat management on their hunting lease. Mowing thick, rank browse between rows of pine trees to encourage new growth is one tool clubs can use, as is targeted fertilization of important browse plants. For the majority of clubs, however, developing high quality, year-round food plots is the best way to improve forage on their lease. Multiple studies have shown that just one to two percent of the land in high-quality food plots can improve deer numbers, condition and harvest rates of mature bucks. Weyerhaeuser Outdoors has addressed food plots in the past and will again in the future.

Deer population management—controlling what is or is not harvested on your lease—is something every hunter can employ. It is an essential tool in deer management programs.

Monitoring is the third component. To develop a sound deer management plan, you must monitor the herd and your harvest. This involves collecting deer camera surveys, hunter observation data, and deer harvest data. Frankly, many clubs don’t want to put in the work of weighing deer, collecting jawbones, or recording observation data. But if you are not collecting data on your deer herd and harvest, a wildlife manager cannot give you a site-specific solution. They can only give you general guidelines, which is the equivalent of a doctor telling you to “take two aspirin and call me in the morning.”

Hunter management includes setting proper expectations about the results of your deer management program, selecting the right hunters for your club, and managing hunter density. It also includes educating club members about deer management, such as distinguishing between does and fawns to avoid button buck harvest, aging bucks on the hoof to allow young bucks to grow, and a myriad of other basics. Without the right, educated hunters, it’s likely any management program will fail.

Stay tuned
The Spring 2019 issue of this newsletter will cover deer population management in detail. If you are positive you need to begin a deer management program and want to start now, reach out to your Weyerhaeuser lease manager. Most have extensive wildlife management training, and all can either help you directly or put you in touch with the right resources. Or contact your local state wildlife agency biologist.

If you are not sure whether enacting a deer management program is right for you, give it some thought as you go through the fall hunting seasons, read the Spring 2019 newsletter article, and then decide. Best regards for safe hunting!
We would like to introduce the Horseshoe Hunting Club of Arkinda, located in extreme southwest Arkansas. It is very similar to many Weyerhaeuser hunting lease holders in this part of the United States: A family-oriented club that enjoys a healthy, abundant population of whitetail deer and eastern wild turkey, along with the usual small game animals and predators found in the Mid-South. Their terrain consists of a mix of gentle rolling hills, creek bottoms and moderately flat ground. A combination of pine plantations in a variety of stages—large trees thinned and waiting for final harvest, thick mid-age plantations, young seedlings and of course, a few clearcuts waiting for planting season. Throw in a few interspersed areas of hardwoods and you have the makeup of this club’s 2500-acre lease.

Does that seem to describe your lease? The unique thing that sets this club apart is the guests who are hosted every year. You see, many of the 23 club members are also board members of an organization called Southern Sportsmen Foundation (SSF). SSF is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization based in Foreman, Arkansas. It is a group of outdoor enthusiasts who want to share their love for the outdoors with people who have disabilities or life-threatening illnesses.

They believe the world of hunting has room for people of all abilities. The Horseshoe Hunting Club of Arkinda is dedicated to providing exceptional outdoor activities to people who have missed out on many kinds of experiences that can provide memories and enjoyment for a lifetime.

Since forming in 2004, the SSF has hosted over 250 men, women and youth with disabilities or life-threatening illnesses from all over the United States, with a large number of participants coming through the Wounded Warrior Project. The Horseshoe Hunting Club of Arkinda provides hunts for around eight adults and eight youth each season. It partners with many local area businesses and individuals who generously give to help make these hunts happen.

Those lucky enough to be selected through an application process are treated to an experience like no other. Through funds raised, the club is able to build blinds and pay for the hunters’ licenses, hotel rooms and food. The only expense the hunters incur is their travel, and in certain cases, the club has covered that cost as well.

The hunts take place during the latter part of the first week of Arkansas.

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gun season, which usually opens the second Saturday in November. This allows the club members to hunt opening weekend with their families before opening up camp for their special guests. Generally, the deer haven’t seen an enormous amount of pressure by the time the guests arrive and, if the timing is right, they might even experience a little early rut activity as well. Some hunts end with the taking of an animal and some don’t, but success is not measured by whether there was a harvest but by the smiling faces, the full bellies and the stories that will last forever.

Clubs who share their lease this way are extremely caring and giving and provide a good example for others to follow. It is Weyerhaeuser’s privilege to support their efforts. If you or someone you know have a severe mobility impairment or a life-threatening illness, please contact them and fill out an application. They would love to show you some good old Southern hospitality and a few days chasing whitetail deer. They would also like to hear from other clubs who might be interested in partnering with them.

Their website is at www.sharingtheoutdoors.com. Look them up on Facebook at Southern Sportsmen Foundation or email mike.cranford@sharingtheoutdoors.com.

Weyerhaeuser is proud to highlight the accomplishments of this club and appreciates its members’ efforts and determination to bring the outdoors to those who might otherwise miss out. We would also like to hear from other clubs that are making a difference in their local communities to introduce the wonders of the outdoors to others.
Send Us Your Hunting Photos!

Did you harvest the deer of a lifetime? Or did your child recently take their first wild turkey? We would like to share your success in an upcoming Weyerhaeuser Outdoors. Please email photos to amy.james@weyerhaeuser.com, along with details surrounding the hunt. Your photo and story may appear in a future issue!

Visit Weyerhaeuser Recreation on Facebook and "like" our page. You’ll find the latest news about Weyerhaeuser hunting leases and can share your stories and photos.

https://www.facebook.com/WeyerhaeuserRecreation/

And our new helpline for all phone support: 855-248-6872