



BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES for OCCUPIED OSPREY NESTS in Pennsylvania

Osprey nests typically occur over or adjacent to water in areas with high fish populations. Following are three management zones based on the osprey tolerance for disturbance and the Best Management Practices (BMP) for each zone. The distances for each zone are consistent with guidance provided by other states and Canadian provinces (Naylor, 2004). The zones are general guidance and every project with a potential impact must be reviewed by the PGC on a project by project basis.

Zone 1 consists of the area within 300 feet of the nest that is essential to maintain in order to promote current and future nesting. This zone may be reduced if a direct line of sight prohibits the activity from being observed by the nesting osprey while on the nest.

No permanent habitat alterations that could jeopardize the future existence of the nesting osprey.
No permanent habitat alterations that could jeopardize the existence of the stream, lake, or wetland that is adjacent or underneath the nest.

No significant tree removal or commercial logging operations. Super canopy trees (large trees providing the highest canopy) should not be removed.

Herbicide or pesticides should not be sprayed within Zone 1 during the nesting season (March 25 to July 31).

No human activities (with the exception of monitoring and research) during the active nesting season.

Special Use Permits, issued by the PGC, may be required for some projects within Zone 1 when the impacts may cause reduced nesting success.

Zone 2 is the area that extends from 300 to 500 feet from the nest and or the habitat area that certain disturbances could affect nesting success. Some activities may be permitted within this zone depending on the current level of disturbance that the birds are habituated to. For example, an existing road with consistent traffic and pedestrians currently exists in Zone 2 and that may indicate the birds are habituated to similar activities.

Some permanent habitat alterations could occur provided the amount of disturbance is not of a magnitude that could cause abandonment of the nest area by the osprey.

A limited amount of permanent habitat alterations may be acceptable to streams, lakes, or wetlands so long as the overall integrity of the systems remains intact.

A limited amount of tree removal may be acceptable outside of the nesting season (March 25 to July 31). Super canopy trees should be maintained.

Limited and infrequent human activity of a low impact might be acceptable.

Herbicide or pesticides should not be sprayed within Zone 2 during the nesting season (March 25 to July 31).

Zone 3 is the area extending from 500 feet to 800 feet of the nest that supports the future existence of the habitat that surrounds the nest.

Generally, this zone should be maintained in a natural habitat condition with minimal to no permanent fragmentation.

Logging can occur in this zone outside of the nesting season (March 25 to July 31). Super canopy trees should be maintained.

A limited amount of permanent habitat alterations may be acceptable to streams, lakes, or wetlands so long as the overall integrity of the systems remains intact.

Best Management Practices for all Zones:

Wetland creation in the area would be encouraged.

Fisheries management that encourages high fish density in shallow water.

Stabilization of the nest tree, if needed, and provide secondary nesting structures and dead trees.

Maintain a buffer of trees for roosting or nesting around streams and wetlands.

Reduction of disturbance from human activity.

Conservation easements can be used to protect the osprey nest and the appropriate buffer around it.

Hydrology to existing streams, lakes, and wetlands should be protected in order to maintain the wetlands and the foraging areas for osprey.

Zoning osprey nests and the associated wetlands as critical and unique habitat as non-development areas/open space.

Prevent acid mine drainage from impacting streams, lakes, and wetlands and treat existing discharges.

Prevent sedimentation in streams, lakes, and wetlands in the area.