

### **Sec. 30-270. Title.**

This article shall be known as "The Effingham County Timber Operations Ordinance."

### **Sec. 30-271. Purpose and intent.**

The purpose of this article is to provide procedures, rules and regulations governing persons, firms, businesses, companies, and corporations engaged in timber operations in Effingham County and to provide for the notice by such persons, firms, businesses, companies, and corporations to allow for the taxation of timber harvesting at fair market value, to provide the efficient collection of the timber harvest tax and to protect the environment, county road network and to assure the public's safety.

### **Sec. 30-272. Notice of timber harvest operations required.**

All persons or firms harvesting standing timber in any unincorporated area of Effingham County for delivery as pulpwood, logs, poles, posts, or wood chips to any woodyard or processing plant located inside or outside this state shall provide Notice of such harvesting operations to the County Manager or the designated agent thereof prior to entering onto the property if possible, but in no event later than 24 hours after entering onto the property to initiate timber harvesting activities. Further, such persons shall give notice of cessation of cutting within 24 hours after the job is completed.

### **Sec. 30-273. Content of such notice and related procedures.**

- (a) The notice of harvesting operations required by this article shall be provided for each separate tract to be harvested. Such notice shall be made in such form as prescribed by rule or regulation of the Director of the Georgia Forestry Commission, and shall include the following information:
  - (1) A map of the area which identifies the location of the tract to be harvested and, as to those trucks which will be traveling to and from such tract for purposes of picking up and hauling loads of cut forest products, the main point of ingress to such tract from a public road and, if different, the main point of egress from such tract to a public road. If multiple points of ingress and/or egress will be used, all such points shall be identified;
  - (2) A statement as to whether the timber will be removed pursuant to a lump sum sale, per unit sale, or owner harvest for purposes of ad valorem taxation under O. C.G.A § 48-5-7.5;
  - (3) The name, address, and daytime telephone number of the timber seller if the harvest is pursuant to a lump sum or per unit sale or of the timber owner if the harvest is an owner harvest; and
  - (4) The name, business address, business telephone number, and nighttime or emergency telephone number of the person or firm harvesting such timber.
- (b) Subject to the provisions of section 30-274, the notice required by this Ordinance may be submitted in person, by transmission of an electronic record via telefacsimile or email, or by mail.
- (c) Subject to the provisions of section 30-274, upon notification published by the Director of the Georgia Forestry Commission that a state-wide notification website or platform is available for public use, persons or firms wishing to utilize said website or platform to provide the notice required by this article may do so at their option, and Effingham County will accept notifications submitted in this manner.

### **Sec. 30-274. State-wide notification.**

On and after a date specified and published by the Director of the Georgia Forestry Commission, use of the state-wide notification website or platform shall be mandatory and shall be the sole means of providing the Notice

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required by this article; on and after said date submission of the notice by any of the means listed in subsection 30-273 above shall cease and will no longer be deemed acceptable or in compliance with this article.

**Sec. 30-275. Bond or letter of credit requirement.**

The notice required by this article shall not be or remain effective unless and until the person or firm providing such notice has delivered to the director or its designated agent a valid surety bond, executed by a surety corporation authorized to transact business in this state, protecting the county against any damage caused by such person or firm in the amount of \$5,000.00; provided, however, that at the option of the person or firm harvesting timber a valid irrevocable letter of credit issued by a bank or savings and loan association, as defined in O.C.G.A. § 7-1-4, in the amount of \$5,000.00 may be provided in lieu of a surety bond. Such bonds or letters of credit shall be subject to the conditions set forth in Sections 30-276 and 30-277. No more than one bond or letter of credit shall be required from each person or firm harvesting timber, regardless of the number of tracts harvested in the county for so long as the bond or letter of credit remains in effect. The bond or letter of credit required herein shall be valid only for the calendar year in which it was delivered.

**Sec 30-276. Bond or letter of credit coverage.**

The bond or letter of credit required by section 30-275 shall protect Effingham County against any damage requiring re-ditching or repair of existing ditch structures or the removal of any harvesting residue, including tree tops, debris, logs, pulpwood and other materials, placed in or around the county's rights-of-way caused by such person or firm tendering the bond or letter of credit. The proceeds of such bond or letter of credit shall be available to reimburse the county for any cost incurred to repair such damages or remove such debris in or around the county's rights-of-way. The proceeds of such bond or letter of credit shall also be available to reimburse the county for any costs incurred to maintain or repair county roads damaged by the ingress or egress of motor vehicles engaged in the harvest operations located within 500 feet of any point of ingress or egress of the timber harvesting operation. The right of Effingham County to call such bond or letter of credit in accordance with the provisions of section 30-277 shall be in addition to any other remedies available to the county at law or in equity for damage to county roads or rights-of-way.

**Sec. 30-277. Damage claim.**

When damage results from a person or firm's harvesting activities, the County Manager or the designated agent shall make and provide a written claim to the person or firm causing the damage within 30 business days after the County Manager becomes aware of the damage. Such claim may be given in person, by telefacsimile, email or mail. The claim shall describe the damage in detail and, in compliance with subsection 30-278(a), give the person or firm the opportunity to repair such damage within 30 days of the notification; provided, however, the county shall be authorized to repair the damage immediately if the County Manager or its designee determines the conditions present a threat to public safety, health or welfare and, upon making such repairs, shall present to the person or firm and the issuer of the applicable bond or letter of credit an itemized list of expenses incurred as a claim against the responsible party and the issuer of its bond or letter of credit. Upon the issuance of a claim as provided in this section the County Manager or its designee shall notify the issuer of the bond or letter of credit that a claim has been made and will be resolved or adjudicated according to the terms of this article.

**Sec. 30-278. Damage claim procedures.**

Within 30 days of receipt of the written claim described in Section 30-277, the person or firm against whom the claim is submitted may:

- (a) Repair such damage at his or its own expense with the approval and supervision of the County Manager or its designee. When repairs are completed to the satisfaction of the County Manager or its designee, the County Manager or its designee shall provide a written notification of satisfactory completion within five business days to the responsible person or firm and to the surety issuing the bond or the bank issuing the letter of credit, thereby terminating the claim.

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- (b) In the event of inclement weather or other factors preventing repair of the damage, request a 30-day extension to repair the damage from the County Manager, provided that no extensions shall exceed 90 days from the date the claim was tendered. Approval of any extension shall be at the discretion of the County Manager or its designee.
  - (c) Appeal the claim to the magistrate court of Effingham County. Any such appeal must name the issuer of the bond or letter of credit as a party, who shall be served with all pleadings in the action and shall have the right to appear. The magistrate court will hear evidence and arguments within 30 days of the written appeal and issue a ruling within ten days of such hearing. Any such appeal shall toll the 30-day period, or any extension thereof, required by section 30-277. If the magistrate court rules in favor of the person or firm against whom the claim was made, Effingham County shall have no right to recover any proceeds of the bond or letter of credit. If the magistrate court rules in favor of Effingham County, the court shall determine the amount of damages to which the county is entitled to recover and enter judgment accordingly; the County Manager or designated agent shall be authorized to call the bond or letter of credit and recover from the proceeds thereof an amount equal to the judgment entered by the court, up to the total amount of the bond or letter of credit. The portion of any judgment entered in favor of the county that exceeds the amount of the bond or letter of credit shall be subject to collection by any additional remedies at law or equity.
  - (d) In the event the person or firm against whom the claim has been submitted fails to take any of the actions allowed under subsections (a), (b) or (c) of this section within the time required therein, such person or firm shall be deemed to have waived any and all rights to contest the call of the bond or letter of credit.

#### **Sec. 30-279. Bond or letter of credit renewal.**

If the person or firm tendering a bond or letter of credit pursuant to the requirements of this article continues its timber harvesting operation beyond the calendar year in which the bond or letter of credit was issued, the person or firm continuing the timber harvesting operation shall tender a new bond or letter of credit within five business days after the first day of the new calendar year.

#### **Sec. 30-280. Bond or letter of credit revocation.**

In the event a bond or letter of credit tendered pursuant to the requirements of this article is revoked by the surety or bank, then a valid replacement bond or letter of credit must be delivered to the County Manager or the designated agent within five business days after the date of revocation in order for timber harvesting operations to continue. In addition, if the person or firm tendering the bond or letter of credit caused its revocation, the amount of the bond or letter of credit required shall be increased to \$7,500.00 after the first revocation, and \$10,000.00 after a second revocation caused by the person or firm tendering the bond or letter of credit. The maximum amount of the bond or letter of credit shall not exceed \$10,000.00.

#### **Sec. 30-281. Scope of operations.**

Submission of the notice required by this article shall authorize the person or firm submitting same to undertake the timber harvesting operation described in the notice and shall remain in effect until such time as the person or firm gives Notice that the harvesting operation is complete; provided, however, that any change in the facts required to be provided for purposes of such notice, including but not limited to a change in the scope or extent of the operation, must be reported to the County Manager or the designated agent within three business days after such change.

#### **Sec. 30-282. Violations.**

Any person or firm that engages in a timber harvesting operation in the unincorporated portion of Effingham County without complying with the Notice requirements of this article or Georgia's Best Management procedures

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for Forestry shall be subject to a citation and trial, and upon conviction shall be fined in an amount not to exceed \$1,500.00 for each violation.

**Sec. 30-283. Authority.**

This article applies to activities which qualify as forestry land management practices or agricultural operations under O.C.G.A. § 12-7-17 (5) and (6) on land that is zoned for or used for forestry, silvicultural or agricultural purposes. It shall not authorize land disturbing activities incidental to development in conflict with the limitations set forth in O.C.G.A. § 12-7-17(6).

**Sec. 30-284. Governance and administration.**

Consistent with O.C.G.A. § 12-6-24:

- (a) No fee shall be charged to provide and submit the notice required by this article; and
- (b) Persons and firms providing the notice required by this Ordinance may be asked to consult with County Manager or designated agent for the purpose of minimizing damage to the county's roads, rights of way and infrastructure, and are urged to follow recommendations from County officials, including without limitation:
  - (1) Signage posted at each ingress/egress point on a county road with four 48-inch orange "Trucks Entering Highway" advance warning signs placed on the shoulder of the road at 500 feet and 1,000 feet intervals from both directions;
  - (2) All such signs and posts shall conform to the current edition of the Manual for Uniform Traffic Control Devices;
  - (3) No harvester equipment or vehicle(s) may be parked on a county right-of-way; and
  - (4) The county right-of-way shall not be used as a loading facility.

Notwithstanding the forgoing, the person or firm conducting the timber harvest operation bears ultimate responsibility for their actions, and nothing in this article shall preclude the county from taking any and all legal action necessary to protect its property and the health, safety and welfare of its citizens.

**Sec. 30-285. Validity and effectiveness.**

The provisions of this article are severable, and the invalidity of any phrase, clause, section or part of this Ordinance shall not affect the validity or effectiveness of the remainder of this ordinance.

**Sec. 30-286. Reserved.**