

SWC COST-SHARE AVAILABLE FOR SNAGGING AND CLEARING

A collection of trees and other debris on the Sheyenne River.

The build-up of debris in rivers and streams is a common and naturally occurring event that we see throughout North Dakota. In the spring, or during large rain and runoff events, rivers swell beyond their banks, picking up fallen trees and other associated debris within the floodplain. Also, if water levels within the channel recede too quickly, they can become unstable and susceptible to slumping – resulting in more trees and debris falling into the channel.

When debris is evenly scattered, it poses little or no impact to the river's ability to convey flows. However, when debris piles up in a specific location (as depicted in the above photo), it reduces the river's ability to effectively move water downstream, and can cause isolated flooding. In the spring, when chunks of ice are trying to move downstream, large snags of piled trees and associated debris inhibit ice flows, resulting in ice jams - potentially flooding areas upstream.

In more rural areas, this is less of a concern. But, when piles of trees and debris occur in close proximity to farmsteads, roadways and bridges, or communities, they sometimes need to be removed to reduce the threat of flows being backed up and causing damages.

“Widespread flooding of the last several years has made this problem a lot worse, so we would like to get the word out to communities and water boards that the State Water Commission can provide cost-share for snagging and clearing projects – meaning the removal of trees and associated debris that impact river flows” said Bruce Engelhardt, Director of the Water Development Division at the State Water Commission. “We know there are a lot of trouble spots on rivers throughout the state, and if we can provide assistance to local project sponsors to take care of some of those areas that may pose a flood risk, we hope they will come to us for cost-share consideration,” continued Engelhardt.

For those potential local project sponsors out there that are wondering what is eligible for snagging and clearing state cost-share, the Commission's policy states:

Snagging and clearing projects consist of the removal and disposal of fallen trees and associated debris encountered within or along the primary channel as well as any sediment that has accumulated in the immediate vicinity and any trees in imminent danger of falling in the channel. Snagging and clearing projects are intended to prevent damage to structures such as bridges,

and maintain the hydraulic capacity of the channel during flood flows.

The snagging and clearing of artificial/manmade channels; the dredging of watercourses for sediment/silt removal; the clearing and grubbing of cattails and other plant vegetation; or the removal of any other unwanted materials are not eligible under State Water Commission's snagging and clearing cost-share policy.

Regarding the amount of cost-share available for snagging and clearing, the Water Commission can provide up to 50 percent of eligible costs.

Political subdivisions that wish to submit a cost-share request to the Water Commission for a snagging and clearing project, can start by downloading a cost-share application form at www.swc.nd.gov, then click on “Water Laws and Policies.” Along with the form, applicants should also submit a map showing the river reach where the project will take place.

Questions regarding the Commission's cost-share program can be directed to the Regulatory Section of the Water Commission at (701)-328-3446.