



1.1 PRUNING AND THINNING TO WASTE (REGULATIONS 18 - 21)

1.1.1 Overview of the plantation forestry activity

Pruning and thinning to waste is a regulated activity under Regulation 5(1)(b) of the NES-PF. The NES-PF regulations relating to ancillary activities (Part 2, subpart 9)¹ and general provisions of the NES-PF (Part 2, subpart 10) must also be complied with as relevant when undertaking *pruning and thinning to waste* (Regulation 5(2)).



Pruning and thinning to waste is defined in the NES-PF as:

'means pruning plantation forest trees and thinning to waste involving the selective felling of plantation forest trees within a stand where the felled trees remain on site'

The two principal tending (silviculture) operations during the forestry cycle are *pruning and thinning to waste*. Pruning removes branches from the lower sections of a tree, typically up to about 6.5m above ground. Thinning is selective removal of trees within a stand to achieve an optimum stocking rate for the final crop. Pruning and thinning operations leave the removed branches and felled trees on the forest floor and the main potential adverse effect to manage is the deposition of this *slash* material (*slash* is defined in the NES-PF as any tree waste left behind after *plantation forestry activities*).

'Thinning to waste' is a separate process to 'production thinning' or 'low intensity harvesting'. 'Production thinning' involves the removal of thinned trees for sale or use and falls within the definition of *harvesting*.

1.1.2 Potential adverse environmental effects

Pruning and thinning to waste typically has very limited adverse environmental effects, with the main adverse effect relating to deposition of the *slash* material within or near a *water body*. Pruned or thinned material such as branches, young trees or other woody debris that is deposited into a *water body*, or where it has the potential to enter a *water body*, can have adverse effects on water flow, water quality, and aquatic life. These adverse effects are generally rare due to the small quantities of *slash*² produced from *pruning and thinning to waste* but can be more substantial where there are larger volumes of *slash* material and/or the *water body* is particularly sensitive. In extreme cases, *slash* from *pruning and thinning to waste* transported during flood events can cause damage to downstream property and infrastructure, and cause amenity issues if transported to the coastal environment.

1.1.3 Permitted activity and conditions

Pruning and thinning to waste is a permitted activity in relation to **territorial authority functions** (Regulation 19) and there are no conditions.

Pruning and thinning to waste is a permitted activity in relation to **regional council functions** if regulations 20(1) is complied with. If Regulation 20(1) is not complied with then Regulation 20(2) must be complied with (i.e. there is no need to comply with Regulation

¹ Slash traps, indigenous vegetation clearance, and non-indigenous vegetation clearance in subpart 9, Part 2 of the NES-PF.

² Defined in the NES-PF as '*any tree waste left behind after plantation forestry activities*'.



20(2) if Regulation 20(1) is complied with). A summary of the permitted conditions for *pruning and thinning to waste* is provided in Table 1. For the exact wording of the conditions, refer to the NES-PF which can be accessed through the hyperlinks in the table.

Table 1: Permitted activity conditions for pruning and thinning to waste.

Condition	Regional Council
Slash (Regulation 20)	<p>Regulation 20(1) - <i>Slash</i> must not be deposited:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Into a <i>water body</i>; • Onto land that would be covered in water during a 5% AEP event; or • Into coastal water. <p>Regulation 20(2) - If the above is not complied with, <i>slash</i> must be removed from the three areas above unless it is unsafe to do so in order to avoid certain adverse effects.</p>

1.1.4 Determining whether a resource consent is required

The flow chart in Figure 1 illustrates that the *pruning and thinning to waste* regulations are straightforward; if Regulation 20 is not complied with then a controlled activity consent will be required from the relevant regional council. *Pruning and thinning to waste* is also required to comply with the ancillary activity regulations (Part 2, subpart 9) and general provisions (Part 2, subpart 10) as relevant, to be a permitted activity.

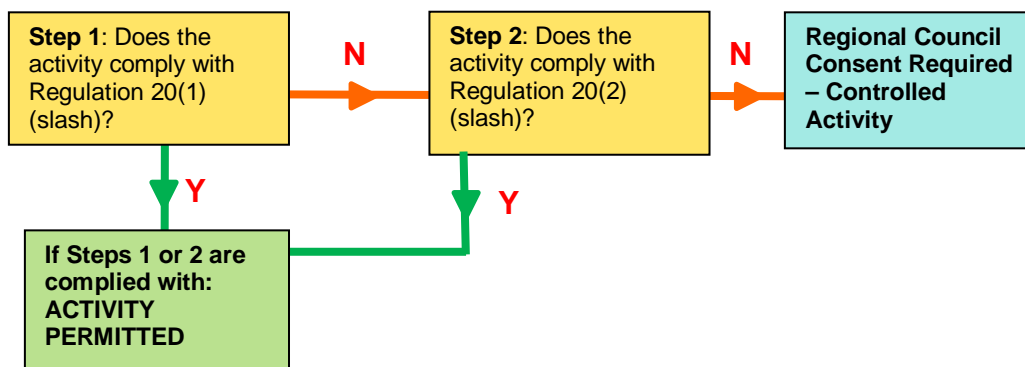


Figure 1: Flow chart to determine when resource consent is required for pruning and thinning to waste.

1.1.5 Guidance on conditions for pruning and thinning to waste – slash management

Regulation 20(1) requires that *slash* is not deposited:

- Into a *water body*** – note that the definition of *water body* in Regulation 3 of the NES-PF states that it has the same meaning as the definition of *water body* in the RMA which ‘means fresh water or geothermal water in a river, lake, stream, pond, wetland, or aquifer, or any part thereof, that is not located within the coastal marine area’
- Onto land that would be covered by water during a 5% AEP event** – this condition is intended to ensure *slash* is not deposited on land close to waterbodies that may be flooded during high rainfall events. A pragmatic approach to assess the extent of this area is required. Refer to section 4.10 of the [NES-PF User Guide](#) for guidance on how to calculate AEP.
- Into coastal water** – coastal water is not defined in the NES-PF but is defined in section 2(1) of the RMA as “means seawater within the outer limits of the territorial sea and includes -
 - seawater with a substantial fresh water component; and
 - seawater in estuaries, fiords, inlets, harbours, or embayments”



Where *slash* is deposited in these areas, Regulation 20(2) requires that *slash* be removed from these waterbodies and areas unless it is 'unsafe' to do so. Regulation 20(2) does not provide any guidance on when it is 'unsafe' to remove *slash*. It is expected that foresters and councils will take a pragmatic approach to determine when it is 'unsafe' to remove *slash* from these areas, taking into account health and safety requirements in other legislation.

Regulation 20(2) does not specify how soon after deposition the *slash* must be removed from the waterbodies and areas referred to. Foresters should remove *slash* **as soon as practicable** during or after the *pruning and thinning to waste* activities have been completed to avoid the adverse effects listed in Regulation 20(2)(a)-(d). If either of regulations 20(1) or 20(2) are not complied with, then resource consent will be required as a controlled activity (i.e. it cannot be declined) and control will be reserved over matters which correspond with the adverse effects listed in Regulation 20(2)(a)-(d).