



Tribal Off-Reservation BIRCH LODGEPOLE Commission Order FAQs

Overview

The increasing demand for woods-inspired home/business décor, containing birch saplings, has led to the overharvesting of young birch in certain parts of the ceded territories. The Tribes have been working with their technical staff and public land managers within the ceded territories to better understand the activity and potential consequences. Paper birch (wiigwasi-mitig/*Betula papyrifera*) and yellow birch tree (wiinzik/*Betula alleghaniensis*) are culturally-significant species and used by the Ojibwe as medicine, building material and for the creation of countless forms of craft and art. The Tribes are concerned that the overharvest of young birch for the décor industry may have lasting impacts on birch populations throughout the Ceded Territories as well as the availability of birch for future generations. In response to these concerns, the Voigt Intertribal Task Force authorized the issuance of a Commission Order to limit the harvest of young birch in an effort to reduce harvest pressures on this culturally valuable resource.

The Commission Order makes the following changes:

- Adds a definition of birch pole (“Birch Pole” means a paper birch tree (wiigwasi-mitig/*Betula papyrifera*) and yellow birch tree (wiinzik/*Betula alleghaniensis*) that is less than 5 inches DBH (diameter at breast height).
- Redefines lodgepole (“Lodgepoles” means any tree, other than a paper birch or yellow birch tree that is less than 5 inches DBH (diameter at breast height).
- Limits tribal members to harvest up to five birch poles with a valid “general gathering” permit.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Does this commission order affect my ability to gather birch bark, firewood or lodge poles?

No. The commission order only applies to the gathering of birch poles, which are defined as birch trees, less than 5 inches diameter at breast height (DBH). It does not apply to other gathering activities, such as the gathering of birch bark, firewood or lodgepoles that aren't birch.

What if I already have a permit to gather up to 75 birch poles?

The Tribes have determined that there is an immediate need to limit the harvest of young birch (birch poles). Even if you have an off-reservation general gathering permit earlier to gather up to 75 birch poles, your harvest is limited to no more than five (5) birch poles, per year.

Does the commission order apply to all GLIFWC member tribes?

Yes. The commission order amends the gathering codes for National Forest Service lands enacted by all GLIFWC-member tribes. It also amends the conservation codes applicable to the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore (applicable to some GLIFWC-member tribes) and the off-reservation conservation codes for the 1837 and 1842 off-reservation ceded territory (applicable to all GLIFWC-member tribes except Bay Mills). A tribe may rescind the commission order, but if it does, that would only affect its members. Contact GLIFWC Division of Intergovernmental Affairs if you have questions about the applicability of this commission order.

What if I want to gather more than five birch poles?

If you are interested in large-scale birch pole gathering off-reservation GLIFWC Biological Services can work with the U.S. Forest Service and/or the Wisconsin DNR to identify an off-reservation site on public lands that is available for the harvesting of more than five birch poles. If an appropriate site is located, you will be provided a large-scale gathering permit to gather birch poles in that area, under certain conditions.

What if I need more than five birch poles for a ceremony or spiritual purpose?

Ceremonial permits are still available for GLIFWC-member band tribal members to harvest birch poles beyond the limit imposed for general gathering, as long as the harvest does not impact the conservation of the species, within a particular location. If you are in need of a ceremonial permit, please contact your tribal conservation department. Although a permit will be issued directly by your tribe, GLIFWC will work with your tribal conservation department to locate a site with a sufficient number of young birch trees.

I just want to harvest birch poles on reservation. Does this commission order affect me?

No. This commission order only applies to off-reservation gathering. Some tribes, however, have imposed on-reservation closures on birch pole harvesting. Please check with your tribal conservation department prior to cutting.