

§3:4278.1. Trees, cutting without consent; co-owners and co-heirs; penalty

A.(1) It shall be unlawful for any person to cut, fell, destroy, remove, or to divert for sale or use, any trees, or to authorize or direct his agent or employee to cut, fell, destroy, remove, or to divert for sale or use, any trees, growing or lying on the land of another, without the consent of, or in accordance with the direction of, the owner or legal possessor, or in accordance with specific terms of a legal contract or agreement.

(2) It shall be unlawful for any co-owner or co-heir to cut, fell, destroy, remove, or to divert for sale or use, any trees, or to authorize or direct his agent or employee to cut, fell, destroy, remove, or to divert for sale or use, any trees, growing or lying on co-owned land, without the consent of, or in accordance with the direction of, the other co-owners or co-heirs, or in accordance with specific terms of a legal contract or agreement. The provisions of this Paragraph shall not apply to the sale of an undivided timber interest pursuant to R.S. 3:4278.2.

B. Whoever willfully and intentionally violates the provisions of Subsection A of this Section shall be liable to the owner, co-owner, co-heir, or legal possessor of the trees for civil damages in the amount of three times the fair market value of the trees cut, felled, destroyed, removed, or diverted, plus reasonable attorney fees and costs.

C. Whoever violates the provisions of Subsection A of this Section in good faith shall be liable to the owner, co-owner, co-heir, or legal possessor of the trees for three times the fair market value of the trees cut, felled, destroyed, removed, or diverted, if circumstances prove that the violator should have been aware that his actions were without the consent or direction of the owner, co-owner, co-heir, or legal possessor of the trees.

D. If a good faith violator of Subsection A of this Section fails to make payment under the requirements of this Section within thirty days after notification and demand by the owner, co-owner, co-heir, or legal possessor, the violator shall also be responsible for the reasonable attorney fees and costs of the owner, co-owner, co-heir, or legal possessor.

E. The provisions of this Section shall not apply to the clearing and maintenance of rights of way or to utility service situations where a utility is acting in good faith to minimize the damage or harm occasioned by an act of God. The provisions of this Section shall not apply to land surveying by or under the direction of a registered professional land surveyor, duly registered under the laws of the state of Louisiana.

F. Whoever violates the provisions of Subsection A as they relate to the cutting of standing cypress trees on water bottoms owned by the state of Louisiana shall, in addition to the penalties otherwise provided in this Section, be subject to a fine not to exceed five thousand dollars, imprisonment not to exceed six months, or both.

G. Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, a civil action pursuant to provisions of this Section shall be subject to a liberative prescriptive period of five years.

Acts 1987, No. 144, §1; Acts 1992, No. 405, §1; Acts 2009, No. 107, §2; Acts 2011, No. 226, §1.