



Helping Landowners to Protect Washington's Streamside Forests

IMPLEMENTING THE FORESTRY RIPARIAN EASEMENT PROGRAM

Throughout Washington, forest owners are required to leave trees along many of their streams, wetlands, unstable slopes, and other sensitive features on their land during a timber harvest. Small forest landowners, or those who harvest less than two million board feet of timber per year, are often eligible to apply to the Forestry Riparian Easement Program (FREP) and receive some compensation for the trees they are required to retain in the area. FREP is administered by the Small Forest Landowner Office at the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

Participating landowners grant to DNR a 50-year conservation easement to protect the trees along their streams. Landowners still own the property, have full access, and are not required to allow public access after leasing the qualifying trees and riparian (streamside) function to the state. During the 50-year easement, the landowner must protect all trees in the easement area.

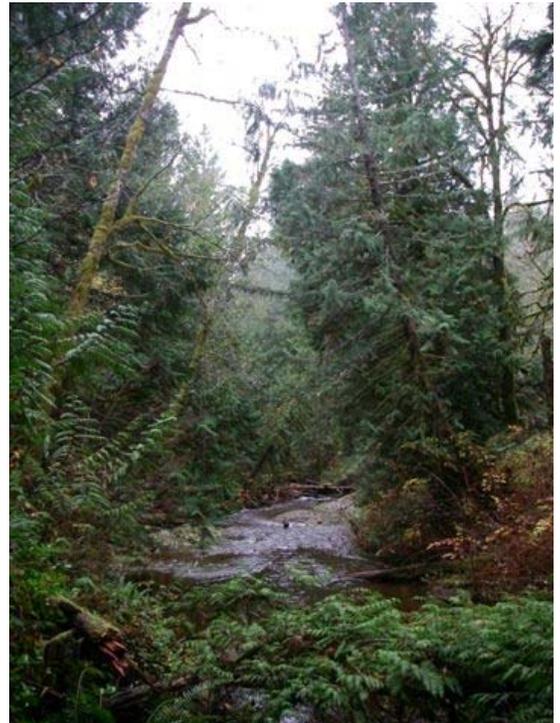
Since the legislature created and funded FREP in 2001, the program has been successful in protecting the state's sensitive resources, and it has given landowners incentive to keep their land in forestry, rather than converting to other uses.

Across Washington, more than 4,000 acres of streamside forest is now held in conservation easements that protect water quality in about 110 miles of streams that flow year round. About \$20.8 million has been spent to purchase 235 easements at an average of \$88,857 per easement. In the first year of the program, DNR was able to purchase eight easements. In recent years, with increased funding, about 40 easements are purchased annually.

The FREP is able to purchase a larger number of easements each year, due to the streamlined acquisition process that targets Washington's riparian forests. Other entities that acquire forestry easements are able to obtain only a handful of easements annually, because they encompass so many other attributes of the forest parcel, which lengthens the negotiation process.

FREP participants receive a minimum of 50 percent of the fair market stumpage value for qualifying timber. Many landowners receive more than 50 percent of the timber value, depending on how much the leave-trees impact their harvest.

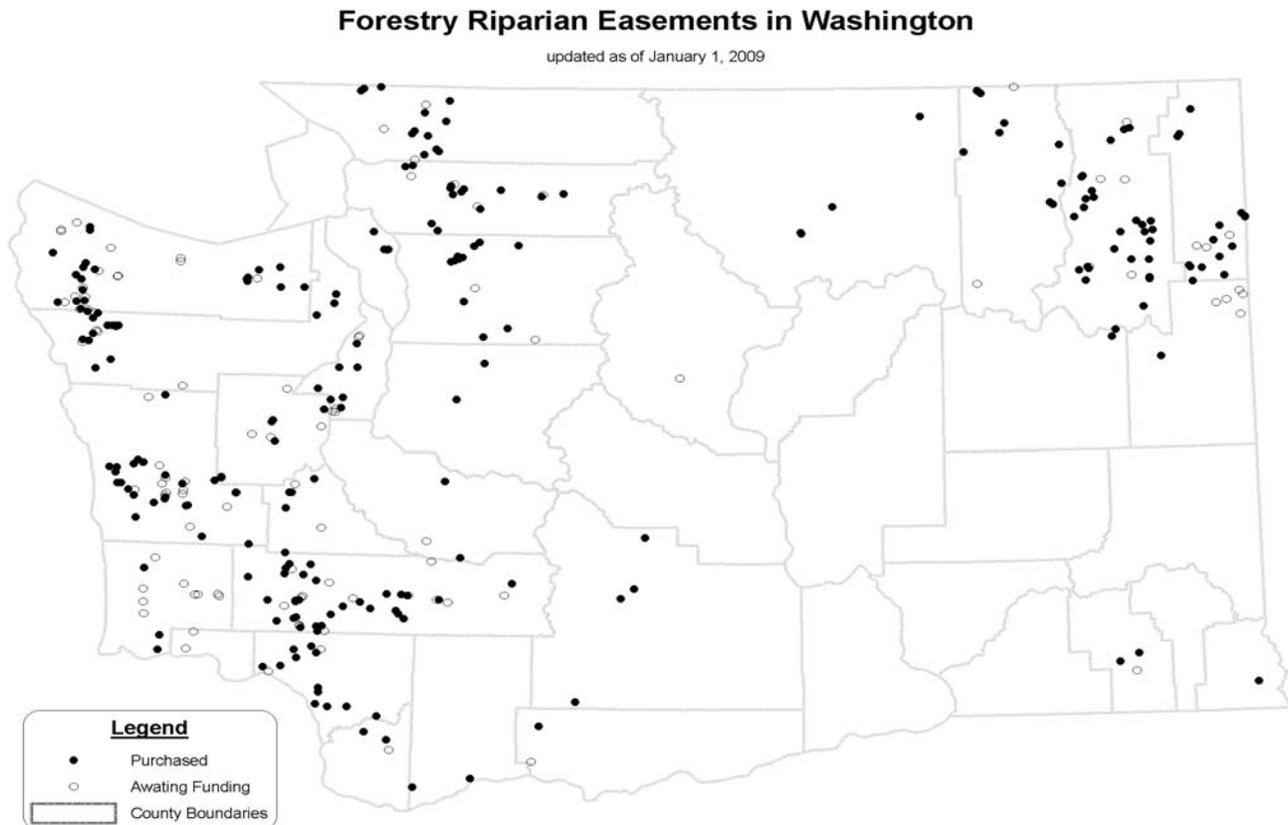
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Looking Ahead

FREP receives an average of 44 applications annually. Currently, 92 landowners who have applied for FREP are awaiting payment for an easement on their property to help them bear the economic impact of Forest & Fish rules. The demand has exceeded funding, which has created a backlog.

Of the 92 landowners waiting, 40 currently have funding, leaving a backlog of 52 landowners at an estimated cost of \$5.2 million to purchase easements. Future funding will alleviate some of the pressures on many landowners who might otherwise consider converting their forest land.



“The Forest Riparian Easement Program (FREP) is one more tool that allows us to practice non-industrial forestry and continue our small family business. FREP allows for riparian management on a landscape basis that helps to promote timber related jobs and good conservation in riparian management.” **David Overton, 4th generation small forest landowner, Kitsap and Mason Counties**

Photo: a fully functioning riparian forest with mature trees and wood in the stream (Ritch Wood/DNR)