

Q&A: DNR Region Boundary Changes

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ABOUT ADJUSTING BOUNDARIES OF OLYMPIC, PACIFIC CASCADE (PC), AND SOUTH PUGET SOUND (SPS) REGIONS

On February 25, 2014, Commissioner of Public Lands Peter Goldmark announced that DNR will adjust the borders of three westside regions – Olympic, Pacific Cascade (PC), and South Puget Sound (SPS). Realigning these boundaries will balance staff workloads and improve efficiency while preserving the quality of the numerous services DNR region staff provides to the public, landowners, and the forest products industry. The border changes will be implemented on July 1, 2014.



Here are answers to some common questions about the boundary changes:

Q: What is changing?

A: When the boundary adjustments are completed, all of Thurston County and all of Capitol State Forest (including the portion in Grays Harbor County) will become part of the South Puget Sound Region. The Wynoochee River drainage, a small segment on the northern boundary of present Pacific Cascade Region east of Aberdeen, will become part of the Olympic Region.

Q: Why is DNR making these changes?

A: It's about better distributing workloads. Currently, there is a large disparity in the volume of timber harvested annually, with Pacific Cascade Region producing three to four times the amount of timber as South Puget Sound Region.

Q: Why is there a concern about one region managing significantly greater timber volume than another?

A: A disproportionately large timber sales workload can stress region management's span of control. With a more even workload balance among its regions, DNR can better maintain the readiness and the flexibility it needs to respond to wildfires, recreational use of state trust lands, complex state and federal regulations, the impacts of a changing climate, and other management challenges.

Q: Did DNR consider creating a new region to handle the higher timber volume in the southwestern counties?

A: Pacific Cascade Region was formed in 2003 by a merger of the former Southwest and Central regions. At that time, there were discussions that future changes may be needed to accommodate the overall workload and other challenges associated with managing a large and productive region. Overall, the 2003 merger has produced cost-savings and efficiencies; now, it is time to better balance the workload of Pacific Cascade Region with that of neighboring regions.

Q: How will the boundary adjustment affect things like fire protection responsibilities, and landowner assistance?

A: The overriding goal of this effort is to improve the department's efficiency with minimal impact on employees, services, safety, or quality of work.

Q: Will the aquatic districts be changing, too?

A: No, the assignments and supervision of staff who work in the aquatic districts will remain unchanged.

Q: How is DNR informing the general public and the businesses that rely on DNR region offices to apply for permits, bid on timber sales, get recreation information, and other services?

A: Both preceding and following the announcement of the boundary changes, DNR has reached out to businesses; recreation users; tribes; state, local and federal officials; and the many others with strong interest in DNR's stewardship of the trust lands. We will continue to explain the boundary adjustments through media announcements, social media, and additional outreach to the general public and other stakeholders in DNR's mission.