

Road Maintenance and Abandonment Planning for Large Forest Landowners

9.1 Introduction

Forest practices rules include a road maintenance and abandonment program to prevent sediment and hydrology-related impacts to public resources such as fish and fish habitat. The rules require large forest landowners (as defined in WAC 222-16-010 under “Forest Landowner” and in Section 3 of the Forest Practices Board Manual) to develop and implement a RMAP for roads within their ownership. In an effort to minimize the economic hardship on small forest landowners, the 2003 Washington Legislature passed a RMAP bill (HB1095) that modified the definition of “small forest landowner” and clarified how the RMAP requirements applied to small forest landowners. Small forest landowners have the option to submit a “checklist” RMAP with each forest practices application or notification, rather than to provide a plan for their entire ownership. DNR, in consultation with WDFW, will submit a report to the Board in 2008 and 2013 on the effectiveness of the checklist RMAP.

Large forest landowners were required, by July 1, 2006, to have all roads within their ownership covered under a DNR-approved RMAP (WAC 222-24-051) and to bring all roads into compliance with forest practices standards by July 1, 2016. This includes all roads that were constructed or used for forest practices after 1974. An inventory and assessment of orphaned roads (i.e., forest roads and railroad grades not used for forest practices since 1974) must also be included in the RMAP. Forest practices rules allow large forest landowners to distribute the planning workload over a five-year period by submitting annual plans to DNR that cover 20 percent of their roads or ownership. In areas where watershed analysis has been conducted and approved, large forest landowners may elect to follow the watershed administrative unit-road maintenance plan rather than developing an RMAP under WAC 222-24-051.

9.2 Approved Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plans

The following table, “Status of Large Landowner RMAPs” lists by DNR region the number of large landowners with RMAPs and the status of their RMAPs. Currently, there are a total of 105 large landowners statewide requiring RMAPs. In many cases, a single large landowner may have multiple RMAPs distributed over more than one DNR region.

Status of Large Landowner RMAPs

DNR Region	# of Large Landowners with RMAPs	RMAP Status
Northwest	20	Plans Approved
Pacific Cascade	29	Plans Approved
South Puget Sound	13	Plans Approved
Olympic	21	Plans Approved
Northeast	8	Plans Approved
Southeast	14	Plans Approved, except as noted below*
Total	105	

* Landowner “A” has acquired industrial forestland under an existing RMAP and DNR is working with the landowner to amend the RMAP and the schedule of work.

* Landowner “B” has an incomplete RMAP (1500 acres out of 131,000 total acres) and is working with DNR to complete and update the inventory of roads; and identify fish passage barriers based on updated water type maps.

* Landowner “C” purchased industrial forestland that is currently under an approved RMAP. Landowner C harvests less than 2 mm board feet of timber per year, which would classify them as a small landowner, and is planning to petition DNR to have the RMAP requirement removed.

9.3 Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plans Implementation

The RMAP process is intended to bring all roads owned by large forest landowners into compliance with forest practices standards by July 1, 2016. The following tables, “RMAP Accomplishment Report From 2001-2006”, and “Yearly Cumulative Reports” details the progress that’s been made by both large and small landowners from July 2001 until December 2006.

RMAP Accomplishment Report From 2001-2006						
DNR Region	Total # of Approved RMAPs & Submitted Checklists	Miles of Forest Road identified in RMAPs ¹	Miles of Road Abandoned	Miles of Orphaned Roads	Miles of Fish Passage Opened ²	# of Structures Fixed on Fish Habitat Streams ³
Northeast Region	4,465	9,976	308	96	199	393
Northwest Region	1,459	5,841	720	650	68	126
Olympic Region	590	7,648	86	353	149	188
Pacific Cascade Region	2,322	21,861	349	728	356	795
South Puget Sound Region	650	7,886	192	215	80	182
Southeast Region	464	6,008	413	271	130	135
Statewide Totals (as of 12/31/06)	9,950	59,220	2,068	2,313	982	1,819

¹ The majority of the miles are from large forest landowner RMAPs

² Does not include data from the FFFPP (small landowners)

³ Does not include data from the FFFPP (small landowners)

Yearly Cumulative Reports

Reporting Years	Total # of Approved RMAPs & Submitted Checklists	Miles of Forest Road Identified in RMAPs	Miles of Road Abandoned	Miles of Orphaned Roads	Miles of Fish Passage Opened	# of Structures Fixed on Fish Habitat Streams
2001-2002	4,066	15,484	645	502	52	46
2001-2003	5,530	27,072	1,007	1,246	175	355
2001-2004	7,401	48,051	1,587	1,944	647	1,217
2001-2005	8,419	58,843	1,856	2,107	775	1,363
2001-2006	9,950	59,220	2,068	2,313	982	1,819

Note: In 2002, state law exempted small forest landowners from submitting annual reports. Therefore, this cumulative data includes both large landowner's annual reports from 2001-2006 and small forest landowners annual reports from 2001-2002.

9.4 Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Efforts

RMAPs are one of the major activities for WDFW's Forest and Fish (F&F) biologists who provide an essential role in the review and implementation of RMAPs. Following is a description summary of the RMAPS duties performed by the WDFW staff.

- Issue Hydraulic Project Approvals (HPAs) for RMAPs work.
The 2016 deadline for completing RMAPs work will continue to create a large demand for HPAs.
- Review forest practices applications associated with large landowner RMAPs and provide technical assistance as needed.
The number of applications associated with large landowners RMAPs has grown significantly over the past few years, from 230 in 2002, to 2963 in 2006. The complexity of technical assistance and HPAs needed from WDFW biologists has increased as work is shifting from the easier fixes to the more challenging crossing structures as well as structures located higher in the watershed.
- Develop, review, and consult with small forest landowners addressing road issues, as well as issue HPAs.
In addition, as part of the requirement for long-term forest practices permits (currently under development) small forest landowners will be submitting RMAPs for their roads. Additional review time will be required.
- Review revised RMAPs as landowners make annual changes pertaining to fish passage structures, fish habitat, stream typing, and sediment delivery.
- Review revised RMAPs as land ownership changes. Ownership changes have been occurring at a relatively high rate.
- Validate stream typing, including identifying the breaks between fish and non-fish streams, as part of the RMAPs process, as well as implementation of the forest practices rules for riparian zones.
With the development of the new DNR hydrolayer, state and private landowners have increased their efforts in identifying breaks between fish and non-fish streams. Additionally, as a result of the stream Type surveys, landowners are submitting hundreds of water Type change forms to DNR requesting changes to water Type maps. Many of these water Type modifications require more than one site review and have substantially increased F&F biologist's workload.

9.5 Future Reports

For the second annual report (July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008), the State will provide additional data relating to fish passage barriers for large forest landowners. The report will include the following information by region:

1. Total number of presumed fish passage barriers identified in RMAPs,
2. The number repaired annually (i.e. July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008),
3. Cumulative number repaired to date,
4. % of total repaired.

The State will also provide an update on whether the RMAP work that's scheduled is achievable by the July 1, 2016 deadline. If it's determined that a landowner is not on target to accomplish the work by July 1, 2016, more information will be provided that details the delay, and what action the State intends to take.

In addition, the State will be working with the Services over the next year to determine future RMAP data needs. In particular, the Services are interested in information regarding the number of road miles maintained or improved. A meeting will be scheduled between the Services and the State to discuss future RMAP data needs.