

Forest Practices Habitat Conservation Plan 2008 Annual Report

1.1 Introduction

In 2006 Washington State completed the Forest Practices Habitat Conservation Plan (FPHCP) for aquatic and riparian-dependent species on over nine million acres of state and private forestlands. This was a multi-stakeholder effort in response to the federally threatened and endangered status of certain fish species. The stakeholder group comprised six caucuses including: environmental, tribal, industrial forest landowners, nonindustrial private forest landowners, federal government, and state government.

The FPHCP was submitted to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) (collectively referred to as “the Services”). The Services accepted the FPHCP and formalized documentation of this 50-year agreement. Under the authority of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), on June 5 2006 the Services issued Incidental Take Permits (ITPs) to Washington State. The ITPs provide assurances for forest landowners, who if conducting forest practices in compliance with forest practices rules, cannot be prosecuted if they inadvertently “take” a member of a riparian species covered by the ESA. The implementation of the FPHCP is a partnership between the Services and Washington State.

Three state agencies, the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), and the Washington Department of Ecology (DOE) work together to implement the FPHCP. DNR provides the majority of staff positions that implement the FPHCP because of the authority given the department in the Forest Practices Act (chapter 76.09 Revised Code of Washington (RCW)) and Rules (Title 222 Washington Administrative Code (WAC)). However, both WDFW and DOE have dedicated office and field staff time to support the various functions of the forest practices program and the implementation of the FPHCP. WDFW and DOE support includes participation in the following:

- The Cooperative Monitoring Evaluation and Research Committee (CMER),
- The Forests and Fish Policy Working Group,
- The Adaptive Management Program (AMP),
- The Compliance Monitoring Program,
- The Family Forest Fish Passage Program (FFFPP),
- The review of Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plans (RMAPs),
- The development of Forest Practices Board Manual (Board Manual) chapters,
- The evaluation of water type change proposals,
- The review of Forest Practices Applications (FPAs), and
- Interdisciplinary Teams.

The state is committed under the FPHCP to submit an annual report to the Services describing the implementation activities. This second annual report covers the period from July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008. The report describes the efforts within the forest practices program and with our partners to implement the FPHCP.

This year regularly scheduled discussions between the State and the Services continued. Agreement was reached on data collection methods to demonstrate RMAP accomplishments. The RMAP data was collected and results are reported in Chapter 9. Operational office and field procedures have been determined for collecting the required riparian harvest data on 20-acre exempt parcels and improved tracking of landowner/tribal meetings when a forest practice involves cultural resources. These are just a few of the ongoing efforts to establish a solid foundation for successful implementation of the FPHCP.

1.2 2008 Report Highlights

Highlights of the FPHCP implementation from July 1, 2007 – June 30, 2008 include:

- The Forest Practices Board (Board) adopted rules that authorize DNR to grant approvals of small forest landowners' FPAs for longer terms than were previously authorized by rule – up to 15 years.
- The Board approved two sections to be added to the Board Manual Section 21 Guidelines to Alternate Plans: “Riparian Function Considerations”, and “Alternate Plans for Restoring Riparian Function in Eastern Washington – Identifying Stands at Imminent Risk from Insects, Disease, and Fire.”
- The Board held a meeting that focused on the December 2007 storm which damaged many acres of land in western Washington. The Board asked for follow-up work to help determine if any changes to the forest practices rules and/or operational guidance are needed to prevent potential damage to public resources during future storm events.
- The Adaptive Management program posted most reports, plans, and research descriptions and results to the web for easy access to the public.
- The CMER Work Plan has 14 Tier One projects for FY 2009; nine are ongoing, one is in final review stage and four are in start-up mode.
- Outreach efforts for the FFFPP resulted in over 1,000 small forest landowners attending 28 events and 3,600 small forest landowners receiving information by mail.
- There were 78 non-conversion FPAs eligible to use the 20-acre riparian exempt rules along fish-bearing waters. There were no applications within the spawning and rearing habitat of delineated sensitive bull trout areas.
- Chapter 6 of this report contains Geographic Information System (GIS) maps showing the location of 20-acre exempt FPAs for both the 2007 and 2008 reports.
- DNR processed 5,396 FPAs. Of these, DNR issued 233 Stop Work Orders and Notices to Comply.

- DNR implemented the second annual statewide programmatic training for forest practices staff and offered courses in wetlands, riparian function, enforcement, sharepoint, negotiations and communications, forest health, ArcPad technology, and water typing.
- Industrial forest landowners with RMAPs reported approximately 12,000 miles of forest road improved statewide as of December 31, 2007.
- 943 Water Type Modification Forms resulted in 7,100 updates to DNR's hydrography GIS data layer.
- The Landslide Hazard Zonation (LHZ) Project completed mapping in four watersheds, while three others are in the external review process, and two are in the process of being mapped. The LHZ Projects creates an improved screening tool that better describes and maps all potentially unstable slope areas in priority watersheds.
- A data layer was added to the Forest Practices Risk Assessment Tool (FPRAT) depicting bull trout local populations of concern, as identified by USFWS.
- A total of 289 riparian activities and 234 road activities were reviewed during the combined 2006 and 2007 field seasons in the Compliance Monitoring Program. The draft report is expected to be finalized in November 2008.

The report provides additional information related to each of these highlights in the relevant chapter that follows.