

Forest Practices Habitat Conservation Plan

Annual Report

July 1, 2007 – June 30, 2008

On behalf of Washington State,
this report was prepared by the
Washington State Department of Natural Resources,
Doug Sutherland, Commissioner of Public Lands.
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Successful implementation of the Forest Practices Habitat Conservation Plan involves the efforts of all of our partners in resource protection:

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Washington Department of Ecology
Governor's Salmon Recovery Office
Washington Forest Protection Association
Washington Farm Forestry Association
Conservation Caucus
Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission
US Fish and Wildlife Service
NOAA Fisheries
US Environmental Protection Agency

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Executive Summary

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 United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) (collectively referred to as “the Services”) accepted the FPHCP and 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 State is committed under the ITPs to submit an annual report to the Services describing implementation activities. The second annual report covers the period from July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008. The report describes the State’s efforts (Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) forest practices program, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and Washington Department of Ecology) to implement the FPHCP.

July 2007 – June 2008 Activities and Accomplishments

The Services requested a status on statewide road improvement for all large landowners. Landowners reported approximately 22,800 miles of forest road identified in Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plans (RMAPs) as needing improvement and approximately 13,100 miles improved as of December 31, 2007, or a 57% accomplishment rate. Additionally, RMAPs show approximately 6,505 fish barriers needing repair and approximately 2,248 barriers repaired as of December 31, 2007.

Both ITPs include a condition regarding certain 20-acre exempt landowners that may not be covered by the ITPs since the 20-acre exemption forest practices rules provide less protection for the habitat of covered aquatic species. An in-office data collection method was used to determine the reduction in function for the 20-ac exempt forest practices applications on fish bearing streams by watershed administrative unit (WAU). There were 77 20-ac exempt FPAs from June 2006 to June 2007. The largest percent reduction in riparian function resulting from these FPAs was .204 percent in the Ostrander WAU. The second largest was .190 percent in Nineteen Creek WAU. The lowest was .001 percent in Grays Bay WAU. There were no 20-ac exempt applications within the spawning and rearing habitat of local populations of bull trout of particular concern to the Services.

The Forest Practices Board (Board) engaged in several topic areas. The Board adopted rules that authorize DNR to grant approvals of small forest landowners’ Forest Practices Applications (FPA) for longer terms than were previously authorized by rule – now up to 15 years. The Board approved two sections to be added to the Board Manual Section 21 Guidelines to Alternate Plans: The sections included, “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 also focused a meeting on the December 2007 storm which damaged many acres of land in western Washington. The Board asked staff to research and bring information back to the Board that could 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 (AMP) has many research projects on-going. The Work Plan shows 14 Tier One projects for FY 2009; nine on-going, one in final review stage and four in start-up mode. AMP also posted most reports, plans and research descriptions and results to the web for easy access to the public.

The small forest landowner office successfully intensified its outreach efforts over the last year to increase small forest landowner awareness of the Family Forest Fish Passage Program (FFFPP). 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.

The forest practices information technology section updated 7,100 stream lengths in DNR’s hydrography Geographic Information Service (GIS) data layer. A data layer depicting bull trout local populations of concern was added to the Forest Practices Risk Assessment Tool.

Unstable slopes are an on-going concern in light of their potential impact to aquatic habitat. The Landslide Hazard Zonation (LHZ) Project creates an improved screening tool that better describes and maps all potentially unstable slope areas in priority watersheds. The LHZ Project completed four watersheds, while three others are in the external review process, and two are in the process of being mapped.

An important part of maintaining habitat is enforcement of forest practices rules and compliance monitoring to provide feedback on rule compliance. From July 2007 through June 2008 DNR processed 5,396 FPAs. During the same time period, DNR issued 233 Stop Work Orders and Notices to Comply enforcement documents. The compliance monitoring program reviewed a total of 289 riparian activities and 234 road activities during the combined 2006 and 2007 field seasons. The compliance monitoring draft report is expected to be finalized in December 2008.