

**Prioritization Scoring Process  
for Acquiring Forestry Riparian Easements  
in the FY 2011 Funding Period**

This narrative outlines the Forest Practices Division's methods used to prioritize eligible applications as directed by the legislature in HB 2836, Sec. 3041 of the 2009-11 Supplemental Capital Budget to implement the purchase of conservation easements for the Forest Riparian Easement Program (FREP). The budget proviso directed the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to prioritize eligible FREP applications should the application demand exceed funding. DNR was directed to determine eligibility and funding priorities for the FY 2011 FREP based on the fourteen prioritization elements listed in the budget proviso. To become eligible for funding, landowners were required to submit additional information via a declaration form; of the declarations received, 77 easement projects were eligible to be prioritized for funding during FY 2011.

The prioritization process to determine Forestry Riparian Easements acquisitions for FY 2011 occurred using the following assumptions and methods:

1. DNR has the authority, through the budget proviso, to develop weighted scoring criteria to prioritize projects.
2. The six conditions in HB 2836, Sec. 3041 (3)(a) through (f) were assigned scores in descending value relative to the lower priority condition. The first condition (highest priority) was assigned a score weighted at a maximum of 30 points; with the next condition in order (2<sup>nd</sup> highest priority) weighted 5 points less or 25 points; with the next condition....etc.
3. HB 2836, Sec. 3041 condition (3)(g) "the applicant has been waiting three years or more for a forestry easement purchase" did not enter in the scoring because the condition did not apply to any of the landowners. The longest a landowner has been waiting to receive a forestry riparian easement in the present queue is 2 years 10 months as of the date the declaration was received by DNR.
4. HB 2836, Sec. 3041 condition (3)(h) was not scored because it refers to "...conditions specified in subsection (2)..." in which there are no conditions found. Therefore this condition has been ignored.
5. Available funding and staffing capacity will limit the number of appraisals to between 7 and 14 projects and easement acquisitions to approximately seven.
6. After reviewing the Declaration forms, there were some landowners that met at least one of the conditions in the six lowest priority elements in HB 2836, Sec. 3041 (4)(a) – (f). Because available funding for FY 2011 is limited only the highest priority projects will be purchased, all landowners that meet any one of the lowest priority elements are ineligible for current funding.

7. For the landowners that did not meet any one of the low priority conditions, those remaining 50+ projects were evaluated using HB 2836, Sec. 3041 condition (3)(a) "The greatest proportion of riparian buffer impacted in the related forest practices application." The prioritization scoring for this element was accomplished using an acreage ratio of harvest area to riparian buffer area within the forest practices application.
8. Riparian buffer area was estimated using GIS information and the landowner's FPA.
9. Riparian buffers do not include unstable slopes or uneconomic to harvest areas.
10. The risk of conversion under HB 2836, Sec. 3041 condition (3)(c) "lands at greatest risk of conversion to other land uses . . ." was determined using data published by the College of Forest Resources, University of Washington, in a report dated March 25, 2009, "Retention of High-Valued Forest Lands at Risk of Conversion to Non-Forest Uses in Washington State."
11. Supplemental information from landowners was used to assist in prioritizing the Forestry Riparian Easement Applications as directed in HB 2836, Sec 3041 (5).

Prioritization Elements	Evaluation Rational	Notes
<b>A. Highest priority shall be given to applications that include one or more of the following conditions, in the following priority order:</b>		
1. The greatest proportion of riparian buffer impacted in the related FPA.	Ratio of riparian buffer acreage to FPA harvest acreage and buffer. For the FREP applications with multiple FPA's, the ratio was determined by each FPA, not based on the cumulative total of FPA's in FREP application.	For every one percentage point of calculated proportion of riparian buffer impacted, assign 0.3 points. The largest proportion is 100%, therefore the maximum points is 30. Data gathered for this element is subject to field verification.
2. Lands in deferred tax status of classified timber land or classified open space as defined in RCW 84.34.020.	All tax parcels included in the easement application must be classified timber land or open space.	Declaration Question #2 If Yes, increase priority score by +25 points. If No, do not increase priority score. (0)
3. Lands at greatest risk of conversion to other land uses as determined by county zoning and land classifications and proximity to urban growth areas or other areas of concentrated land development.	Data gathered by RTI of risk of conversion of SFL forest land parcels grouped by WRIA. Applications were assigned a risk depending on which WRIA they occupied. No known GIS data to determine proximity to UGA or concentrated land development.	Using GIS data of % conversion risk by WRIA. Assign one point for every five conversion risk percentage points. The largest risk of conversion percentage is 97.1 therefore the maximum points is 19.4
4. Lands that are certified by a forest certification recognized by the department.	Question asks, "is land certified as SFI, FSC, or American Tree Farm?" Forest Stewardship Plan noted on several apps.	Declaration Question #3 If Yes, increase priority score by +15 points. If No, do not increase priority score (0)
5. The applicant has not received a forestry riparian easement since July 1, 2007.	Question asks, "Have any of the individuals or companies that currently own an interest in the property in the application area granted to the State a FRE in the past?"	Declaration Question #4 If No, increase priority score by +10 points. If Yes, do not increase priority score. (0)
6. Applicant is not a nonprofit organization.	Is the landowner a non-profit organization?	Declaration Question #5 If No, increase priority score by +5 points. If Yes, do not increase priority score. (0)
7. The applicant has been waiting three years or more for a forestry easement purchase.	Not included as a scoring element because the oldest applications was received October 17, 2007. (2 years, 10 months from when the declaration was due.)	N/A
8. The application does not include any of the conditions specified in subsection (2) of this section.	DNR can determine this condition from the declaration answers of the questions for the lowest priority conditions.	If Yes, begin scoring for highest priority applications If No, do not score for highest priority applications (0)

Prioritization Elements	Evaluation Rational	Notes
<b>B. The lowest priority shall be given to applications that include any of the following conditions:</b>		
1. The forest management activities for the aggregated ownership of the landowner referenced in the application, his or her spouse, and his or her children exceed the small forest landowner definition in RCW 76.13.120(2)(c).	For the total ownership of applicant, their spouse, and children, do they exceed harvest that exceeds limit in SFL definition?	Declaration Question #6 If yes = reduce priority
2. The applicant has had legal ownership for less than five years, except when the applicant is a lineal descendant of a landowner meeting this condition.	Have you owned this property for less than 5 years? If yes, did you inherit the property from a lineal descendant?	Declaration Questions #7 and 8 If yes on #7 and no on #8 = reduce priority If no on #7, or yes on #7 and yes on #8 = elevate priority
3. The applicant has an outstanding violation of the forest practices act under chapter 76.09 RCW.	Are you currently in violation of the forest practices act?	Declaration Question #9 If yes = reduce priority
4. The applicant is in default on a financial obligation to an agency of the state including noncompliance with a child support order under RCW 74.20A.320.	Are any of the applicant(s) in default of a financial obligation to an agency of the state?	Declaration Question #10 If yes = reduce priority
5. The application is for land on which other conservation easements have been executed and recorded on the title.	Are there any other conservation easements on the property the application is located in?	Declaration Question #11 If yes = reduce priority
6. The land is owned by a nonprofit organization that does not have deferred tax designations of either classified timber land or classified open space as defined in RCW 84.34.020 and does not have a county-recognized forest management plan.	Evaluate based on the combination of answers to questions #5, 2 and 3.	None of the landowners that answered the questions met all three criteria in this condition.