



**TFW/Forests and Fish Policy
Forest Practices Board**


P.O. Box 47012, Olympia, WA 98504-7012

**Policy Co-Chairs: Stephen Bernath, Department of Ecology
and Tom Robinson, Washington State Association of Counties**

May 14, 2009

MEMORANDUM

To: Forest Practices Board

From: Stephen Bernath, Co-chair
Tom Robinson, Co-chair 

Subject: Policy Priorities for FY2010

In the last six months, the Forests and Fish Policy Committee (Policy), has revisited its priorities twice, because of the urgency of issues affecting our work. The following list reflects our most urgent priorities.

1. **Adequate funding of the adaptive management program.** As will be explained to you at the May 20, 2009 Forest Practices Board meeting, the annual funding by the federal government ended a couple of years ago. The balance of this funding will run out during FY2010. In addition, the Forests and Fish Support Account, because of the economic downturn, is not fully funded. The adaptive management system will experience approximately a \$2 million shortfall in capacity and resources in FY2011. This shortfall will undermine progress toward completing necessary studies to determine if forest practices are effective and determine if there is a positive trend in protecting public resources such as water quality. Without a full court press in the next 12 months to make up for this shortfall, the adaptive management program will face a 60-70% reduction in staff and funding to perform its work, putting the adaptive management system at risk.
2. **Clean Water Act assurances.** The Department of Ecology is on its second draft of a review of the forest practices program/system to determine if it is adequate for protecting and restoring water quality on state and private forest lands in the state. This review is scheduled to be completed by July 2009. There will be a separate discussion on this during the Forest Practices Board meeting on May 20, 2009.

3. **Adaptive Management Strategic Plan implementation.** Full implementation of the actions identified in the strategic plan are essential to reviewing how the system has worked after 10 years, and making mid-course corrections to adjust and improve performance, efficiencies and priorities. Part of this effort is also getting a recommitment by the caucuses to the adaptive management system. The strategic plan for adaptive management is complimentary to the Clean Water Act needs.
4. **Water typing.** Work should resume to shift from a last-fish-based system to implementation of a last-habitat-based system. A focus on this work is needed to determine where protections end for fish-bearing streams and begin for non-fish-bearing streams.
5. **Type Np/Ns waters.** Develop an action plan to determine whether there is a better alternative for protecting Type N waters than to identify the uppermost point of perennial flow in the field. This would improve the current approach of best professional judgement.

The first three items above, in particular, have many sub-tasks. There is no doubt that Policy could easily spend all its resources on just one of these priorities in the next year. Additional priorities are likely to take away from timely efforts on funding, Clean Water Act assurances and implementation of the adaptive management strategic plan. For example, Policy recognizes the need for riparian rules to be simplified from an implementation perspective, and the need to address the disproportionate economic effects on small forest landowners. However, there is no consensus on a solution to this issue at this time and it will take significant work by all stakeholders to be addressed successfully.

Finally, please be cognizant that Policy and CMER operate by consensus and are primarily staffed by members volunteered by their organizations. Also, this is not a full time resource-based system. Each of the Policy and CMER members have other assigned duties from their respective employers/interests and many times play multiple roles within the forest practices system, such as board support work and field implementation of forest practices.

cc: Forest Practice Board Liaisons
FFR Policy Members