

Draft Environmental Impact Statement

For the Proposed Issuance of Multiple Species Incidental Take Permits or 4(d) Rules Covering the Washington State Forest Practices Habitat Conservation Plan

Lead Agencies: National Marine Fisheries Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Responsible Officials:

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Abstract

The State of Washington has applied for authorizations that would allow the take of aquatic species under the Endangered Species Act, relative to activities under the State's Forest Practices Regulatory Program. This Draft Environmental Impact Statement evaluates the environmental effects of the proposed action and several alternatives, including no action. The No-Action Alternative is examined in terms of two scenarios, which capture the range of possible outcomes associated with not issuing take authorizations. Three action alternatives are examined: 1) an alternative in which the Services would issue incidental take permits (ITPs) for incidental take of covered species that may result from activities under the Washington Forest Practices Regulatory Program in accordance with a Habitat Conservation Plan prepared by the State; 2) an alternative in which a take limit would be issued by NMFS under the existing Section 4(d) rule and take exemptions would be issued by NMFS and USFWS under new Section 4(d) rules, to cover the take of threatened species that may result from activities regulated by the Washington Forest Practices Regulatory Program; and 3) an alternative in which the Services would issue ITPs based on more protective Forest Practices Rules. Following a 90-day public comment period on the DEIS, the Services will review and respond to comments in writing and/or as changes in the FEIS. The Services may also suggest, to the State, changes to the proposed Habitat Conservation Plan as a result of comments received. The resulting Final Environmental Impact Statement will be circulated for an additional 30-day public review period. Following the 30-day review period, the Services will prepare a Record of Decision that will formally document their ITP or take authorization decisions.

