



[WAC 222-12-040](#)

“All forest practices operations must comply with both the act and the rules promulgated pursuant to the act, unless an alternate plan has been approved by the department.”

1) “The alternate plan process can be used as a tool to deal with a variety of situations, including where the cumulative impacts of regulations disproportionately impact a landowner. In some instances, an alternate plan may be used to make minor on-the-ground modifications, which result in significant operation efficiencies. The alternate plan process may be used to address circumstances where a landowner has an economically inaccessible unit. The alternate plan process may also be used to facilitate voluntary landscape, riparian or stream restoration. In all cases, the alternate planning process will result in a plan that provides protection to public resources at least equal in overall effectiveness as provided by the act and rules while seeking to minimize constraints to the management of the affected lands.”

Alternate Plans: A How-to Guide



A fire damaged stand with limited riparian function. A landowner may want to file an alternate plan for salvage harvest and post fire reforestation.

A Guide to Alternate Plans in Washington’s Forest Practices Rules

[Washington's Forest Practices Rules](#) have allowed landowners to develop alternate plans since the early 1980s and are intended to allow landowners to develop more site-specific management plans than standard Forest Practices Rules allow. An alternate plan may alter the prescriptions outlined in the rules as long as the plan provides protection to public resources at least equal in overall effectiveness to the protections the regular rules would provide.

The use of an alternate plan is useful in, but not limited to, riparian areas. Landowners may propose alternate management strategies for any forestry operation that is regulated by the state Forest Practices Rules.

Alternate plans must be submitted as part of a [Forest Practices Application \(FPA\)](#) to the nearest Department of Natural Resources (DNR) region office. The plan must describe how the proposed alternative management options depart from the Forest Practices Rules and how the proposal will provide sufficient resource protection. The Small Forest Landowner Office has a Regulation Assistance Program whose foresters can assist small forest landowners in navigating the forest practices rules and the alternate plan process and even provide site-specific suggestions for their plan. Please refer to [Regulation Assistance Program](#) website for more information.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is an alternate plan?

An alternate plan is a site-specific management plan written by a landowner that proposes different management strategies than what is allowed under current state Forest Practices Rules. An alternate plan may provide a landowner greater flexibility in how a forest can be managed, but must provide protection for public resources at least equal in overall effectiveness to the protection provided in the Forest Practices Act and Rules.

What are some situations where an alternate plan may be useful?

The following site-specific situations are commonly found on small forestland parcels. Other situations not mentioned here may also be appropriate for an alternate plan; some of those options are mentioned further on in this document.



1. Over-stocked stand management in riparian management zones



2. Riparian hardwood management



3. Forest health, which can include insect, disease, fuel loading, etc.



4. Salvage harvest and restoration (post fire/storm)

Alternate Plan Templates: Small forest landowners may use pre-agreed upon templates that address a few of the common situations repeatedly encountered with alternate plans. These templates can be found on the [Alternate Plans website](#). To assist with understanding the Alternate Plan process, this guide presents information pertaining to non-template alternate for true site-specific management options.

What information should be included in an alternate plan?

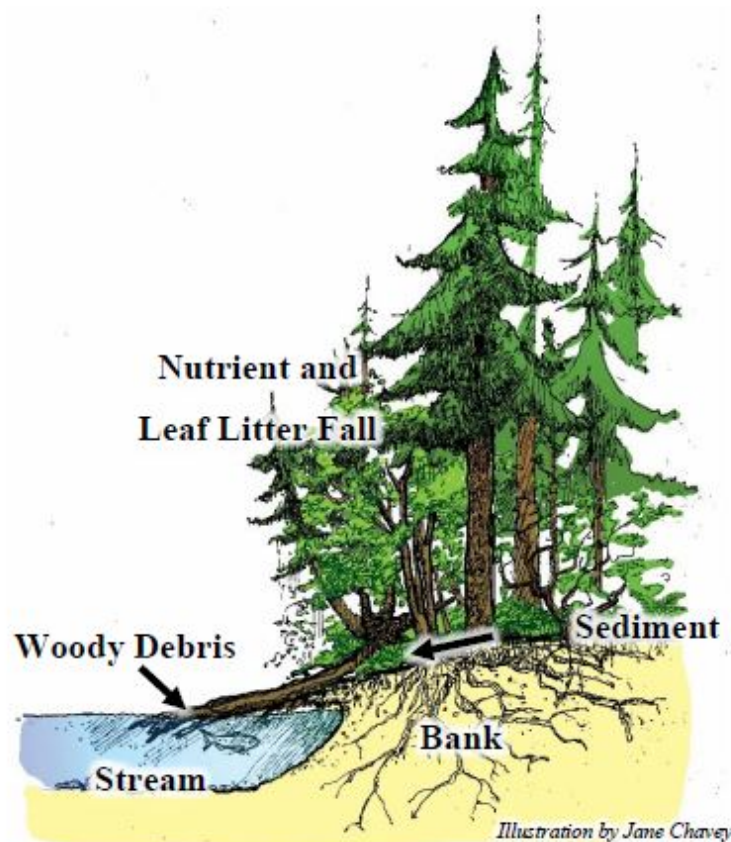
Alternate plan proposals must include all of the following elements:

1. Approval standard: Demonstrate how the proposal will provide protection for public resources at least equal in overall effectiveness to the protection provided in the act and rules. Include a detailed description of how the alternate plan provides public resource protection. Consult your forest practices forester whether you need to include alternative management options, site enhancement, and a monitoring plan.

2. Map: A map scaled to the size of the management unit showing the location of all affected streams, wetlands and other water bodies, potentially unstable slopes, existing roads/new road construction, timber harvest units and other forest practices activities. Use additional maps as needed.

3. Site conditions: A written description of the site's current and expected conditions, including:

- Riparian function description, such as:
 - stream shading
 - nutrients and leaf litter fall
 - stream bank stability
 - large wood debris availability and recruitment
 - sediment filtering



- Riparian function description should include current conditions and expected future conditions in the near term and over the long term, such as:

- Topography adjacent to the proposed water; geographic and/or other general factors that affect the site and are relevant to the management practices proposed by the alternate plan.
- Site classes: An indicator of site productivity based on the growing potential of a fully stocked forest stand.
- Stand structure: include understory and brush components, physical stream channel characteristics, in-stream fish habitat conditions; the health, age and structural conditions of the forest stand.
- Any other information that would help detail current riparian description and how the proposed alternative will affect short term and potential long term riparian function. Please see [Forest Practices Board Manual Section 21](#).

4. Forest Practices Rules: A detailed list of all Forest Practices Rules that the alternate plan will depart from using specific WAC citation. Small Forest Landowner Regulation Assistance Foresters are available to assist with identifying the specific WAC citations.

5. Monitoring plan: When applicable, a description of the proposed alternate management strategy, and a detailed strategy for post-harvest/reforestation monitoring. This includes thorough reforestation planning and strategies for establishing accepted stocking levels of the planted seedlings.

When reforestation is part of the proposal, a thorough and effective monitoring plan is crucial to an alternate plan being considered for approval. The applicant should demonstrate how the reforestation plan will be implemented for success. An example of successful reforestation is when the adequate stocking level of planted trees reaches a state when animal browse, vegetation competition, and tree mortality are not a factor in stand establishment. Please refer to reforestation requirements for establishment, survival, and growth by commercial species (WAC 222-34).

Describe the species to be planted. Include a schedule of brush control activities to ensure the planted trees will be vigorous and established. Remedial planting and vegetation treatment may also be included in the plan.

6. Multiple harvest units: When one alternate plan is submitted for multiple harvest units covered by multiple forest practices applications, the landowner must show that all sites included in the alternate plan share sufficient common characteristics to be considered together.

When may an alternate plan be submitted?

Landowners may submit an alternate plan with an FPA to a DNR region office at any time. Note: A draft alternate plan can also be reviewed by DNR staff prior to submitting an FPA. Recommendations can be provided by regulation assistance foresters.

What are the principal steps involved in submitting and reviewing an alternate plan?

1. Landowners are encouraged to contact a Small Forest Landowner Office regulation assistance forester to discuss the alternate planning process.
2. The landowner prepares a draft alternate plan. The optional [alternate plan form](#) is recommended. The alternate plan form and Forest Practices Application (FPA) are submitted in tandem to the local DNR Region office.
 - Before submitting this information to the DNR, landowners are encouraged to talk with a DNR regulation assistance forester to ensure that the proposal is considered complete and accurate.
 - At any time prior to operation under an approved alternate plan, a landowner may choose to amend their FPA to remove the alternate plan. With an approved amendment, the landowner would then follow standard Forest Practices Rules.
3. When the DNR Regional Office receives a Forest Practices Application with a complete alternate plan and FPA, the local DNR office will:
 - Appoint an [Interdisciplinary \(ID\) Team](#) and establish a deadline for completing a field review, and
 - Provide copies of the FPA and the alternate plan to the Washington State Departments of Ecology and Fish and Wildlife, affected Tribes, and other parties that have expressed an interest in reviewing alternate plans. Other interested parties must have landowner approval to participate in the ID Team visit.
4. The ID Team conducts a site visit with the landowner and/or the landowner representative.
5. The ID Team makes a recommendation for approval, disapproval, or revisions for the proposed alternate plan.
6. Decision making: the DNR considers the ID Team's recommendation and decides whether to approve the alternate plan as written, approve with conditions, request revisions, or to provide the landowner with non-approval options; withdrawal or disapproval of the FPA/alternate plan. If the DNR disapproves or conditions an application with an alternate plan, a written statement will be provided to the landowner explaining why the application was conditioned or denied.
7. When written approval is received, implementation of the plan may proceed.
8. The Alternate Plan becomes part of the approved FPA and all conditions of the Alternate Plan must be completed as part of the FPA.
9. The landowner implements and maintains the monitoring plan (if applicable).
10. DNR Forest Practices conducts compliance checks.

How soon can an alternate plan be approved after it is submitted?

Forest Practices Applications submitted with a complete alternate plan will be approved or disapproved within:

- 30 days of DNR's receipt of the plan and a three-year forest practices application; or
- 45 days of DNR's receipt of the plan and a multi-year application.

Can my alternate plan be disapproved?

Yes. The primary objective of an alternate plan is to create management options that provide at least equal overall effectiveness for resource protection as exists in the Forest Practices Act and Rules. If the ID Team

determines that the management options developed by the landowner are not as effective as the Forest Practices Rules for natural resource protection, the alternate plan will be evaluated for revision potential. The alternate plan will either be conditioned for approval, revised if there are no significant changes, or the Forest Practices Application (FPA) may be deemed as not eligible for approval. The DNR will provide the reasons why the alternate plan cannot be approved. A landowner may then have the opportunity to resubmit their alternate plan with a new FPA.

What can I do to improve the chance of my alternate plan being approved?

The most significant steps a landowner can take to improve the likelihood that their alternate plan will be approved is to provide justification how the management options they are proposing will either improve the long term natural resource conditions of the site or, at least, not adversely affect the functions of the site (typically referring to riparian areas). In other words, ensure that the approval standard is met by demonstrating that the alternate plan will "provide protection for public resources at least equal in overall effectiveness to the protection provided in the act and rules." WAC 222-0401(6).

The landowner is strongly encouraged to work in coordination with the DNR, other agencies, and affected tribes to develop and implement a monitoring plan, when applicable, to track the effects of the management activities conducted under the alternate plan. The monitoring plan should be comprehensive and adequately track long-term changes to the ecosystem including, for example, riparian function, reforestation, and the effects of forest management.

Landowners are also encouraged to submit a draft alternate plan to the Small Forest Landowner Regulation Assistance Program for review prior to submitting the Forest Practices Application (FPA). This will give the forester time to assess the plan and provide the landowner critical feedback for meeting the approval standard. A forester's review will also help troubleshoot any potential problems with the FPA and the alternate plan, which may delay the ID Team's review.

How long is an alternate plan valid?

A Forest Practices Application with an alternate plan is valid for up to five years, or up to 15 years with a Long-Term Application. An alternate plan may be part of a single FPA or multiple applications. Once the forest management activities have been completed, or when the FPA expires, the alternate plan will expire. A new alternate plan must be submitted with a new FPA covering future harvest and management activities.

Are there any additional costs associated with filing an alternate plan?

The standard FPA fees apply with an alternate plan. The alternate planning process will require significant effort and input from the landowner. While a regulation assistance forester can provide suggestions and review of an alternate plan at no cost, a landowner may also choose to hire a private consulting forester to assist in the preparation of an alternate plan.

Among other possibilities, consulting foresters may provide field work, plan preparation, management/monitoring strategies, and options to meet the approval standard.

Where can I find more information on alternate plans?

Alternate plans are described in the state Forest Practices Rules under WAC 222-12-040. A landowner can also visit the [Small Forest Landowner Office website](http://www.dnr.wa.gov/sflo) (<http://www.dnr.wa.gov/sflo>). You may also contact the [Regulation Assistance Program](mailto:sflo_tech_assistance@dnr.wa.gov) at sflo_tech_assistance@dnr.wa.gov. There is more contact information at the end of this document.

How does the Interdisciplinary Team and the review process work?

An ID team will conduct a site visit and provide a recommendation that helps determine whether the alternate plan meets the approval standard. The DNR forest practices forester will facilitate and lead the ID Team meeting. Representatives invited to evaluate the alternate plan for ID Teams will include only qualified personnel. Participants will include any affected Tribe and the state departments of Ecology and Fish and Wildlife. Other representatives should include the landowner and/or landowner representative(s) and, if requested, a DNR Small Forest Landowner regulation assistance forester.

After receiving the ID Team's recommendation, the DNR forest practices forester determines whether to approve, disapprove, or condition the application based on the approval standard. The Department relies heavily upon recommendations from the ID team. The DNR will provide reasoning for approval conditions or if the Alternate Plan/FPA does not meet the approval standard and cannot be approved.

Note: The ID team may submit a recommendation without a site visit in the following cases: if the small forest landowner submitted the alternate plan using a template contained in board manual section 21 (Fixed Width Buffer or Overstocked Stand Template) and the team determines a visit is not necessary to evaluate the site specific application of a template.

Will an alternate plan allow me to cut more timber in the riparian management zone than the standard rules allow?

A landowner can submit an alternate plan that includes management activities having a greater level of harvest in a riparian zone than is normally allowed under the standard Forest Practices Rules. However, alternate plan strategies must describe how the activities will provide at least overall riparian function as the rule it is intended to replace. This includes assessing Riparian Function ([See Forest Practices Board Manual Section 21](#)). This includes stream shade, sediment trapping, large woody debris recruitment, nutrient/leaf litter fall, stream bank stabilization and other riparian features that are important to the health of both riparian forests and the aquatic systems. Habitat enhancement activities may be accomplished through the alternate plan process. Enhancement activities may include in stream placement of large woody debris, creating snags, hardwood replacement with conifer species, planting trees and shrubs, sowing grass seed for erosion control, and many other options.

May I submit an alternate plan for multiple, non-contiguous harvest units?

Alternate plans may be part of a single Forest Practices Application (FPA) or multiple applications if the sites included in the plan have sufficient common physical characteristics to justify being considered together. There may be other commonalities between non-contiguous sites that could justify a single alternate plan as part of forest practices applications for more than one site.

Please contact the Regulation Assistance Program if you have similar situations between two or more harvest units that were not mentioned above. Contact information is posted at the end of this alternate plan document.

May I write an alternate plan for my property, then enroll the trees remaining in the riparian zone in the Forestry Riparian Easement Program?

Yes. If a landowner develops an alternate plan for harvesting more timber than is currently allowed under the standard rules, and the plan is accepted by DNR, the timber remaining in the riparian area following harvest may then be eligible for compensation under the Forestry Riparian Easement Program. For more information, visit the [Forestry Riparian Easement Program \(FREP\) website](#) or contact the Forestry Riparian Easement Program Manager at (360) 480-9702 or email frep@dnr.wa.gov.

MORE INFORMATION

Please see

[Alternate Plans](#)

[Forest Practices Forms and Instructions](#)

[Alternate Plan Form](#)

[Forest Practices Rules and Regulations](#)

[Small Forest Landowner Regulation Assistance Program](#)

DNR'S SMALL FOREST LANDOWNER OFFICE

The Department of Natural Resources Small Forest Landowner Office provides assistance to small forest landowner concerns and policies. With a mission to protect both the economic viability of small forest landowners and the natural resources on which they depend, the office promotes incentive based approaches for improving the management of Washington's privately owned non-industrial forests. Recognizing the significant contribution small landowners make to the protection of Washington's forests and fish, the office will strive to equip landowners with all the necessary tools and information to help them keep their land in forestry use.

For more information on the Small Forest Landowner Office Programs, please visit our website at: www.dnr.wa.gov/sflo. You may also email the Small Forest Landowner Office with general questions to: sflo@dnr.wa.gov or call 360-902-1849 and ask for the specific Small Forest Landowner Program that is in your interest.

Small Forest Landowner Regulation Assistance Program:

If you need regulatory/technical assistance, please contact your local regulation assistance forester directly by visiting the [Small Forest Landowner Regulatory Assistance Program](#) website or email at sflo_tech_assistance@dnr.wa.gov. The Small Forest Landowner Regulatory Assistance Program Manager can be reached at 360-742-6825.

Additional small forest landowner programs and resources, including a [Find your Forester search tool](#), can be found at the DNR [LandownerAssistancePortal](https://www.dnr.wa.gov/LandownerAssistancePortal) website <https://www.dnr.wa.gov/LandownerAssistancePortal>



DNR FOREST PRACTICES REGION OFFICES BY COUNTIES THEY COVER

Northeast

Okanogan, Spokane, Ferry, Stevens and Pend Oreille Counties
 (509) 684-7474
fp_ne@dnr.wa.gov

Northwest

Whatcom, Skagit, Snohomish, Island and San Juan Counties
 (360) 856-3500
NW_FP@dnr.wa.gov

Pacific Cascade

Lewis, Pacific, Wahkiakum, Cowlitz, Clark and Skamania Counties
 (360) 577-2025
pcforestpractices@dnr.wa.gov

Olympic

Clallam, Jefferson and Grays Harbor Counties
 (360) 374-2800
fp_oly@dnr.wa.gov

South Puget Sound

Thurston, King, Pierce, Mason and Kitsap Counties
 (360) 825-1631
southpuget.forestpractices@dnr.wa.gov

Southeast

Chelan, Douglas, Kittitas, Grant, Lincoln, Adams, Whitman, Garfield, Columbia, Asotin, Walla Walla, Benton, Franklin, Yakima and Klickitat Counties
 (509) 925-8510
SoutheastFP@dnr.wa.gov