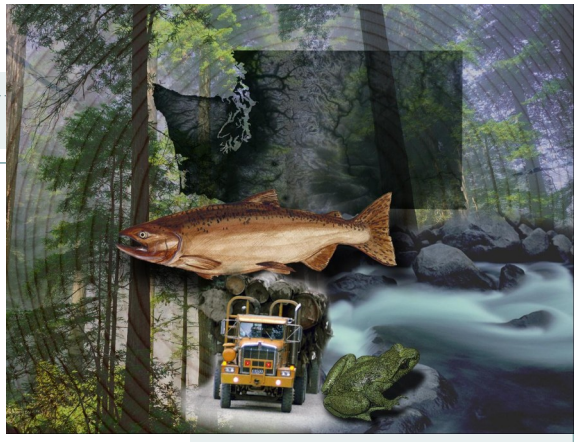
Washington State Department of Natural Resources - Adaptive Management Program



Quarterly Update to the Forest Practices Board

November 2025

Summary

Cooperative Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Committee (CMER) held regular monthly meetings this quarter. The Committee approved or advanced to TFW Policy the following Adaptive Management Program (AMP) project deliverables:

- Extensive Monitoring Scoping Document/BAS

The Timber, Fish, and Wildlife (TFW) Policy Committee held regular monthly, in-person meetings this quarter. The committee approved the following Adaptive Management Program (AMP) project deliverables:

- FY2026 Master Project Schedule
- Anadromous Fish Floor Project Charter

Master Project Schedule (MPS)

At its November 2024 meeting, the Forest Practices Board approved two MPS scenarios for FY2026–2027. These scenarios were developed with input from the TFW Policy Budget Workgroup and the AMPA, using a Contingency Plan to provide flexibility for TFW Policy and the AMPA to respond to legislative appropriation levels.

Following project refinements and adjustments to Scenario 1, the current MPS is set at $18.1 million—reflecting FFSA revenue at the appropriated level ($11.5 million on page 331). However, at this time, the projected FFSA account balance ($9.5 million) is lower than the appropriated amount. Therefore, TFW Policy approved the MPS for fiscal year 2026 only. TFW Policy will need to revisit the MPS for FY2027 with an updated FFSA fund balance information mid-biennium. DNR staff are committed to monitoring the FFSA account balance and keeping TFW Policy and the Forest Practices Board appraised.

TABLE OF CONTEXTS

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PROJECT UPDATES

ROADS PRESCRIPTION SCALE EFFECTIVENESS MONITORING PROJECT

The Roads Prescription-Scale Effectiveness Monitoring Project examines high-traffic, near-stream forest logging roads as sources of sediment and seeks to better understand and evaluate mitigating best management practices. The project collected 6 water years of precipitation, discharge, sediment, and traffic data associated with each of our 75+ study plots. The 6th and final water year of data collection was completed at the end of June 2025. In this reporting period the project team focused their efforts on the decommissioning of the project's 78 field sites across Western Washington, including project equipment, additional rain gauges, traffic cameras/sensors, and other ancillary equipment. Removal of the largest equipment (sediment tanks, tipping buckets, culverts, etc.) required the use of heavy machinery, operated by DNR Pacific Cascade Region crew, to remove and recycle/dispose. Project team members initiated compliance checks and final removal of project signage demarcation which will continue through the next quarter. The project team will continue to analyze and interpret data from the previous water year. In the next quarter, the project team will focus their efforts on data analysis and ongoing model development.

EXTENSIVE RIPARIAN STATUS AND TRENDS MONITORING PROGRAM – RIPARIAN VEGETATION AND STREAM TEMPERATURE

The Extensive Riparian Status and Trends Monitoring Program – Riparian Vegetation and Stream Temperature Project purpose is to (1) document the current status of key watershed resources and habitat condition indicators of stream shade, stream temperature, and riparian stand large wood supply potential (FPHCP, 2005) across Washington State lands managed under the FPHCP (2) evaluate trends in conditions over time as Forest Practices prescriptions are applied, and (3) assess whether condition trends are moving towards meeting Schedule L-1 resource objectives and performance targets at the landscape scale. During this reporting period the Project Team's final draft of the Scoping Document with Best Available Science (BAS) was reviewed and approved by CMER. The document was subsequently transmitted to TFW Policy for their review, approval, and alternative selection. In the next reporting period, the Project Team will respond to TFW Policy questions and comments to support the alternative selection. If approved and an alternative is selected, the project team will then initiate the development of a study design.

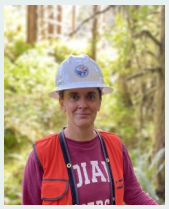
WESTSIDE TYPE F RIPARIAN PRESCRIPTION EFFECTIVENESS-EXPLORATORY FIELD STUDY

The **Westside Type F Riparian Prescription Effectiveness- Exploratory Field Study** evaluated the effectiveness of westside riparian prescriptions for F and S streams in achieving resource objectives and performance targets. The exploratory study was intended to reduce uncertainties associated with the relative sensitivity of post-harvest riparian stand conditions and riparian functions to harvest prescriptions and to potential harvest-associated disturbances. The study was also intended to be used to focus and refine the development of a future Study Design for a more rigorous test of the effectiveness of the Type F rule buffers. Exploratory Final Report findings package was approved by TFW Policy and CMER and the findings was presented to the Board in February 2025. In this report, CMER made the recommendation to discontinue the Type F Effectiveness Project series and instead continue with the Westside Type F Experimental Buffer Treatment Project. In September 2025, TFW Policy facilitated a kickoff meeting for a joint TFW Policy and CMER workgroup, using the Structured Decision Making principles, to discuss the approach for the Experiment Buffer Treatment Project. Having now established the meeting framework and goals, the group intends to reconvene in November 2025.

EASTSIDE FOREST HEALTH STRATEGY

The **Eastside Forest Health Strategy** workgroup developed a report that was reviewed by CMER in April 2022. The Eastside Forest Health Strategy workgroup recommended the development of a research and monitoring strategy investigating active RMZ management approaches that build on current RMZ prescriptions and are designed to balance disturbance resiliency and resource protection objectives outlined in the FP HCP (Schedule L-1 functional objectives and performance targets, Appendix N). SAGE is currently working to develop the full Eastside Forest Health Strategy after approval of the strategy guidance document in Spring 2023. CMER Scientist, Dr. Rachel Rubin, has completed a desktop analysis comparing riparian and upland burn severity, which will help in developing the Eastside Forest Health Strategy document that would outline a series of studies or projects to provide insight to the critical questions. SAGE has reconvened monthly strategy work group meetings discussing strategy details and project progress.

AMP PROJECT MANAGERS



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EASTSIDE TIMBER HABITAT EVALUATION PROJECT (ETHEP)

The Eastside Timber Habitat Evaluation Project (ETHEP) is designed to develop framework(s) for applying riparian harvest rules along Type S and Type F streams in eastern Washington based on the Forest Practices Habitat Conservation Plan (FPHCP) functional objectives and performance targets. The Project Team has completed Final Report with approval from SAGE. The report has been reviewed by CMER and the Authors are currently addressing CMER comments.

EASTSIDE TYPE N RIPARIAN EFFECTIVENESS PROJECT (ENREP)

The Eastside Type N Riparian Effectiveness Project (ENREP) will help inform if, and to what extent, the prescriptions found in the Type N Riparian Prescriptions Rule Group are effective in protecting water quality and some riparian functions, particularly as they apply to sediment and stream temperature in eastern Washington. The project is currently in full implementation. At each of the five sites, data are collected for at least two years pre-harvest and two years post-harvest, with a transitional year of data collected in between. TFW Policy approved an extension to allow for an additional three years of post-harvest data collection at each site. Each study site has a treatment basin and an unharvested, reference basin. Data collection includes biophysical variables, including streamflow, wetted channel extent, suspended sediment concentrations, stream shade, riparian forest mensuration, large wood, temperature, and stream cross sections, aquatic life (benthic macroinvertebrates), and habitat. Springdale and Tripps basins were harvested in 2021. Blue Grouse basin harvest was completed in 2022. Coxit basin harvest was completed in fall 2023. Fish Creek basin harvest was completed in 2024. During this quarter, the project team has been conducting fieldwork and ongoing data entry and QA/QC.

RIPARIAN CHARACTERISTICS AND SHADE (RCS)

The Riparian Characteristics and Shade (RCS) project is a field research project intended to evaluate the combined effect of stream-adjacent no-harvest zone width and adjacent-stand harvest intensity (i.e., thinning density) on stream shade. Implementation was completed at two sites in the West Cascades ecoregion this summer. Implementation included close coordination with the landowner (Weyerhaeuser) and contractors to complete a precise cutting sequence, gather hemispherical photos, and conduct LiDAR drone flights. In this upcoming quarter, the PI and project team will be identifying potential sites in the Northwest Coast and West Cascades ecoregions for implementation in 2026.

WATER TYPING STRATEGY

The purpose of the Water Typing Strategy is to inform a permanent water typing system that meets Forests and Fish Report (FFR) objectives. One goal of the DNR water typing system is to accurately identify the upstream extent of fish habitat.

In November of 2019 the Washington Forest Practices Board (Board) passed a motion recommending "the Cooperative Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Committee (CMER) to [sic] develop study designs for the PHB validation, physical characteristics, and map-based Lidar model studies" (WA FPB 2019a, WA FPB 2019b). The following April, CMER approved a strategy for the In-stream Science Advisory Group (ISAG) to complete study designs for the three projects identified by the Board: i) Potential Habitat Breaks (PHB), ii) Default Physical Criteria (DPC), iii) LiDAR Model Map. The Water Typing Strategy was approved by the Board in May 2020 (WA FPB 2020). CMER is currently implementing the first two studies. The implementation of a LiDAR model study will use findings from the PHB and DPC studies to define metrics and criteria to model. The LiDAR mapping also requires a statewide LiDAR-based hydrography, which is currently scheduled for a 2029 completion (per Department of Ecology).

DNR is working with Cramer Fish Sciences (CFS) on the implementation of the PHB and DPC studies. The studies include conducting electrofishing and habitat surveys along 350 streams across Washington over a three-year period. CFS completed surveys at 156 sites in the 2025 spring/summer season. The implementation team (CFS and AMP staff) are coordinating closely to continue to obtain landowner access and conduct reconnaissance on additional sites to meet the 350 total sites for the 2026 spring/summer

ANADROMOUS FISH FLOOR

The purpose of the **Anadromous Fish Floor (AFF)** Validation Study is to identify measurable physical stream characteristics downstream from which anadromous fish habitat would be presumed and to compare those measurable characteristics against field observation data throughout the state. TFW Policy approved the AFF Project Charter in August. The project team has initiated the Scoping and Best Available Science document development process.

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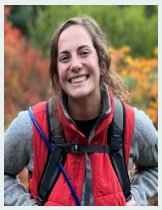

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WETLAND MANAGEMENT ZONE EFFECTIVENESS MONITORING PROJECT (WMZ)

The **Wetland Management Zone Effectiveness Monitoring Project (WMZ)** will evaluate wetland functions to determine if the target of no-net-loss of hydrologic function, water quality targets, and hydrologic continuity are being achieved. Following the May 2023 TWF Policy approval of the project charter, the project team has begun the scoping process. The development of the scoping document is ongoing, alongside review and potential revision of the Schedule L-1 Wetland Performance Targets. Schedule L-1 Performance Target revisions may have implications on how WMZ is scoped. Funding for the WMZ begins in FY27, with implementation slated to begin in FY29.

FORESTED WETLANDS EFFECTIVENESS PROJECT (FWEP)

The **Forested Wetlands Effectiveness Project (FWEP)** will evaluate the effectiveness of forest practices prescriptions to protect, maintain, and restore aquatic resources, namely water quality and wetland hydrologic and ecological functions. It will determine if they achieve the FPHCP goal of no-net-loss of wetland functions by half of a timber rotation cycle while meeting water quality standards (FPHCP). FWEP is comprised of a series of studies, with the Chronosequence Study currently in implementation. The Chronosequence Study uses an observational space-for-time substitution to examine forested wetland dynamics at 2, 10, 20, and 40+ years post-harvest in Western Washington. Dr. Tanner Williamson, CMER Wetland Scientist, along with the Project Team completed instrumentation of 24 project sites in summer 2023. They have since been monitoring hydrology, water quality, canopy structure, vegetative community, and timber stand characteristics. The Project Team is currently completing the final round of site visits and data collection, completing two years of data collection. They will begin data analysis which will continue through the winter. Results from this study will be used to inform the design of future FWEP studies.

WATER TEMPURATURE AND AMPHIBIAN USE IN TYPE NP WATERS WITH DISCONTINUOUS SURFACE FLOW

The **Water Temperature and Amphibian Use in Type Np Waters with Discontinuous Surface Flow** will inform the Overall Performance Goals to meet water quality standards and support the long-term viability of covered species by evaluating the influence of intermittent stream reaches on water temperature and FP-designated amphibian use. CMER and TFW Policy approved the Scoping Document in October 2024. The Project Team has completed the draft Study Design, and it is currently in review at CMER.

DEEP-SEATED LANDSLIDE RESEARCH STRATEGY

The **Deep-Seated Landslide Research Strategy** utilizes the results of the literature reviews for forest harvest effects on glacial and bedrock deep-seated landslides to address key knowledge gaps identified during the literature reviews and to address questions from the Forest Practices Board and TFW Policy regarding the potential effects of forest practices on deep-seated landslides. Implementation is ongoing and is expected to be completed by the end of this calendar year. Report writing will begin in 2026. The implementation contractor (BGC Engineering, Inc) provided an in-depth update on project progress and next steps at the October UPSAG meeting. The Project Team and UPSAG members attended a three-day field trip to inspect landslides that were evident in the digital data (InSAR and LiDAR change detection). A detailed description of the field trip is at the end of this newsletter.

UNSTABLE SLOPES CRITERIA PROJECT

The **Unstable Slopes Criteria project** will evaluate the degree to which the landforms described in the unstable slopes rules identify potentially unstable areas with a high probability of impacting public resources and public safety. During this reporting period, the Project 2, Object-Based Landform Mapping with High-Resolution Topography Study report completed UPSAG and CMER review and received approval in both committees. The report is now under ISPR review. The final report is expected by the end of the year.

Implementation continues on the combined projects of Empirical Evaluation of Shallow Landslide Susceptibility and Frequency by Landform (Project 3) and the Empirical Evaluation of Shallow Landslide Runout (Project 4).

TYPE N EXPERIMENTAL BUFFER TREATMENT PROJECT IN HARD ROCK LITHOLOGIES AMPHIBIAN MONITORING PHASE III

The **Type N Experimental Buffer Treatment Project in Hard Rock Lithologies – Amphibian Monitoring Phase III** project final report is under review. Data collection for stream-associated amphibian demographics and relevant covariates (e.g., stream temperature) for post-harvest years 14 and 15 was completed July-September 2022 and 2023 to allow for the evaluation of continued trends in amphibian densities at long-term study sites. The Final Report was delivered to CMER for approval, however a CMER member invoked the dispute resolution process over the report on February 25, 2025. An informal meeting was held on March 17 to discuss outstanding concerns. At that meeting, there was consensus that the informal stage would continue, with the authors making a final attempt at editing the report to resolve concerns. The disputing party determined that their concerns were not adequately addressed, therefore the dispute entered stage two of the process. Position papers were submitted by four parties. The dispute was characterized by the AMPA as mostly a process dispute, because the concerns raised by the disputants are focused on disagreements about data interpretation, statistical inference, ecological modeling, and the scope of scientific conclusions that were previously agreed to through the CMER process outlined in the PSM, via the Study Design and Final Reports from prior study phases. The report was sent to Independent Scientific Peer Review, where the technical concerns could be addressed via the eight standard questions that are sent to ISPR with AMP submitted reports. ISPR has returned and approved the Final Report, and the document is back in CMER for discussion and request for approval at the October meeting.

SCHEDULE L-1 PERFORMANCE TARGET REVIEW AND REVISION

The **Schedule L-1 Performance Target Review and Revision** process began in September 2023 with a memo from the Schedule L-1 (SL1) Workgroup, which includes members from both the TFW Policy and CMER groups. The memo outlined the general review and revision process, including prioritizing Performance Targets for review and establishing a process for forming Subject Matter Expert (SME) groups. A CMER workgroup of 5 members was formed to lead this effort. They prioritized the Performance Targets to be reviewed (approved in March 2024) and developed the process for forming SME groups (approved in September 2024). The prioritized Performance Targets were categorized into three groups:

- Wetlands: Wetlands
- Riparian: Shade, Riparian Condition, Litterfall, Instream Large Woody Debris (LWD)
- Instream: Pool Frequency, Pool Depth, Peak Flows, Fines in Gravel

All three groups delivered their recommendations in early July. The recommendations were delivered to CMER, prompting discussion about how the review of the SME recommendations should proceed. CMER decided that the first step would be a binning exercise where each voting CMER member would fill out a spreadsheet where, for each SME recommendation, they determined if 1) the SME had followed the guidance provided to them and 2) they indicated if the recommendation should be accepted, rejected (keep the existing SL1 Target), or modified, and provide comments explaining their choice, if needed. The intent of the exercise was to determine which recommendation(s) already had consensus or near consensus, and which would need a more involved discussion. The collated results of this exercise will be discussed at the October CMER meeting and next steps determined.

DEEP-SEATED LANDSLIDE MAPPING AND CLASSIFICATION PROJECT FIELD TRIP

In October, UPSAG and BGC Engineering, Inc. (project contractor) collaborated on a three-day field trip to examine landslides for the Deep-Seated Landslide Mapping and Classification Project. The project is part of the Adaptive Management Program's ongoing research into forest management influences on landslide processes.

BGC Engineering, Inc. presented preliminary landslide classes and engaged the Project Team in discussions to evaluate and refine these classifications. The field trip was designed to visit at least one representative landslide from each draft class to gain firsthand insight, assess assumptions, and improve the definitions of these classes.

The trip traversed eight sites across King, Snohomish, and Whatcom counties. The group visited a rock avalanche in volcaniclastic rock, a landslide in glacial sediment, a mountain-scale landslide in phyllite, and landslides in the Chuckanut formation. At each site, the team observed and discussed geology, landslide features, and forest stand ages. The group compared field evidence with InSAR velocity data and lidar change detection information both on and off landslides.

The field trip fostered rich discussions about landslide behavior, the relationship between digital data and field observations, and the evolving classification system. These insights will be instrumental in refining the landslide classification schema and enhancing the overall understanding of deep-seated landslide dynamics.

UPSAG and BGC Engineering geologist discuss landslide processes and research at Tiger Mountain during a recent field trip.

POTENTIAL HABITAT BREAKS (PHB) FIELD TRIPS

Cramer Fish Sciences (CFS) hosted two field trips to sites within the Capitol Forest. CFS is the contractor conducting the implementation of the Potential Habitat Breaks (PHB) and Default Physical Criteria (DPC) studies, which include electrofishing surveys as well as intensive habitat surveys. CFS hosted the PHB/DPC Project Team at a site while their crews implemented an intensive habitat survey. The project team observed the data collection process and learned about the technology CFS uses to record the data. CFS will also be reviewing the data collected at this site with the project team to provide an in-depth look at how data will be processed and analyzed for the study.

In addition, CFS hosted a field visit for DNR staff to observe an intensive habitat survey in the field and associated data collection tools and techniques. Staff visited various locations along a stream network and observed a variety of physical stream characteristics.

Jason Shaffer (CFS) demonstrates data collection app to PHB/DPC Project Team.

Saboor Jawad tests out laser rangefinder in the field.

CFS crews conduct intensive habitat survey as part of PHB Study.

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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October 29, 2025

TO: Forest Practices Board

FROM: Tami Miketa, Program Manager, Small Forest Landowner Office

SUBJECT: Small Forest Landowner Office and Advisory Committee

After more than 35 years of service to the state of Washington, it's time to hang up my hard hat and cruiser vest and pass this experience to the newer generation of DNR employees. I am formally announcing my retirement from managing the Small Forest Landowner Office, effective December 1, 2025. Don't get me wrong, this decision was not made lightly. My time here with the Small Forest Landowner Office has been incredibly rewarding and I am deeply grateful for the opportunities I've had to grow both personally and professionally. Working alongside such wonderful and talented staff, colleagues, and landowners in collaborating to keep lands working in forestry has been both an honor and a privilege. To help "keep the wheels on the SFLO bus", KelliAnne Ricks, our Conservation Easement Program Manager, will be Acting as the Program Manager of the SFLO until the position is filled permanently.

Small Forest Landowner Advisory Committee
The Small Forest Landowner Advisory Committee (SFLAC) met twice since the last Board Report on July 1, 2025. The SFLAC meetings on July 22, and October 21, 2025, focused on discussions around updating the language in Board Manual 17, and various scenarios that have arisen in FREP.

SFLO Program Updates
In the new FY 25-27 biennium, the SFLO received full financial support. The SFLO received $2 million that is "*provided solely for the small forest landowner office, in order to restore staffing capacity reduced during the great recession and to support small forest landowners, including assistance related to forest and fish act regulations."* From the SB 5167 – Concerning Operating Budget

The following are the Capital Budget allotments:

FFFPP

Appropriation:	
Natural Climate Solutions Account	$7,904,000
Reappropriation:	
State Building Construction Account	$97,000

Reappropriation:	
State Building Construction Account	$119,000
Reappropriation:	
Natural Climate Solutions Account	$5,093,000
TOTAL	**$13,213,000**

FREP

Appropriation:	
Natural Climate Solutions Account	$4,900,000
Reappropriation:	
State Building Construction Account	$5,116,000
Reappropriation:	
Salmon Recovery Account	$1,241,000
TOTAL	**$11,257,000**

RHOSP

Appropriation:	
Natural Climate Solutions Account	$2,305,000
State Building Construction Account	$2,326,000
TOTAL	**$4,631,000**

Long-Term Applications (LTA)

In this Forest Practices Board report, the SFLO regularly shows the status of Long-Term Applications. There are currently 330 approved long-term applications that have passed Phase 2 of the process. This is an increase of one approved LTAs since the end of the last reporting period (July10, 2025).

LTA Applications	LTA Phase 1	LTA Phase 2	TOTAL
Under Review	3	3	**6**
Approved	1	330	**331**

Upcoming Events

November 13 **WFFA Upper Puget Sound Chapter – Tour of Mackenzie Castings Inc.** **Arlington, WA**

November 18 **WFFA Lewis Chapter – Awards Banquet** **Chehalis, WA**

November 19 **NNRG Online Fireside Chat**

December 6 **WFFA Whatcom County – Holiday Meeting** **Deming, WA**

December 8 **2025 Carbon Friendly Forestry Conference** **Seattle, WA**

December 6 **Forestry 101 Workshop** **Location TBD**

December 13 **Forestry 101 Workshop** **Port Hadlock, WA**

December 13 Wildlife Bird Class WSU ext. DNR Preston, WA

January WSU DNR Winter Schools TBD / Eastern WA

February WSU DNR Winter Schools TBD / Western WA

February 10 **Winter Online Forest Stewardship Coached Planning Puget Sound**

February Western WA Interagency Service Forestry Meeting, Datye TBD

Please contact KelliAnne at (360) 480-9702 or kellianne.ricks@dnr.wa.gov if you have questions.
TM

TIMBER FISH
& WILDLIFE

Timber, Fish and Wildlife Policy Committee
Forest Practices Board

PO BOX 47012, Olympia, WA 98504-4712

Policy Co-Chairs:
Cody Thomas, Upper Columbia United Tribes
Rico Vinh, Washington Conservation Action

October 31, 2025

TO: Forest Practices Board
FROM: Cody Thomas and Rico Vinh
SUBJECT: TFW Policy Committee Report

The Timber, Fish, & Wildlife Policy Committee (Policy) workload is driven by internal process deadlines and priorities directed by the Forest Practices Board (Board). To accommodate the heavy workload, Policy relies on additional meetings, email communications between meetings, and policy workgroups to address specific issues and meet deadlines to accomplish their work.

TFW POLICY COMMITTEE BUSINESS UPDATE for August 2025 – October 2025

SAO Recommendation #5
Policy's State Auditor's Office (SAO) working group continues to meet as needed to refine and implement the Board-approved action plan. Several recommendations are being worked on including structured decision making, decision criteria, review of Schedule L-1, and how to handle non-CMER science.

Structured Decision Making
Policy continued work on reviewing materials developed by Compass to help guide Structured Decision Making (SDM) for both decision making and project prioritization. Policy is working with CMER through a workgroup to utilize the first stages of SDM to guide the development of the Type F Experimental Buffer Prescription Project.

Master Project Schedule
The Policy budget workgroup continues to meet to discuss projects and funding. Policy approved the FY26 Final Master Project Schedule.

Anadromous Fish Floor (AFF) Project
Policy approved the AFF Project Charter

Non-CMER Science Dispute
Policy concluded the Non-CMER Science Dispute with an agreement to redirect it's efforts towards incorporating structured decision-making into the AMP.

MAJOR TFW POLICY COMMITTEE TOPICS FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2025

- **Adaptive Management Program (AMP)** budget and the **Master Project Schedule (MPS):** Policy will continue to review and refine the MPS and prepare recommendations to the Board.
- **SAO**: Policy is continuing to develop the implementation criteria for SAO recommendation #5 (Net Gains Options) and 6 (adopt decision criteria) for inclusion in the rule or guidance in calendar year 2025. Policy will continue to work on incorporating SDM in the program. The SAO workgroup will continue to meet as needed to provide guidance for updating the Schedule L-1.
- **Unstable Slope Criteria Project – Object Based Landform Mapping with High Resolution Topography Report:** CMER is expected to deliver the report to Policy in Fall 2025
- **Eastside Timber Habitat Evaluation Project (ETHEP):** Findings report and Final 6 questions will be delivered from CMER to Policy in Fall/Winter 2025.
- **Extensive Riparian Status and Trends Monitoring Program – Riparian Vegetation and Stream Temperature Study:** The Scoping Document and Best Available Science (BAS) Report will be delivered to Policy in 2025.
- **Type Np Hard Rock Phase III – Amphibian Demographics Project –** Findings report and Final 6 Questions to Policy in 2025 or early 2026.
- **Westside Type F Experimental Buffer Project -** Policy will work with CMER on utilizing Structured Decision Making (SDM) to begin to develop the Westside Type F Experimental Buffer Project.

New Projects:
The Policy Committee workload is heavy yet must also remain sensitive to the changes in various timelines and to new issues as they come up. The capacity for Policy to accept any new work as assigned by the Forest Practices Board or taken on for other reasons could require delaying existing priorities and/or scheduling additional meetings.

State of Washington
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M E M O R A N D U M

October 27, 2025

To: Forest Practices Board
From: Darrin Masters, WDFW Senior Forest Habitat Biologist, Forest Habitats Section
Subject: Upland Wildlife Update

The following provides a brief status update for ongoing or pending actions pertaining to priority wildlife species in forested habitats:

Marbled Murrelet

1992: Federally listed as Threatened
1993: State listed as Threatened,
1996: Federal critical habitat designated
1997: FPB enacted State Forest Practices Rules
2017: State up-listed to Endangered
2023: Proposed expedited rule making for recommended changes to Title 222 WAC
2024: New Murrelet rules take effect

The final 2025 Periodic Status Review (PSR) for Murrelet has been completed. There is no change in status. The updated PSR includes updated literature, which will be used to refine the previous PSR published in 2016. WDFW will present the PSR to the Wildlife Commission in November 2025. After the PSR is published, WDFW will then begin developing a state level recovery plan for Murrelet.

Under the Northwest Forest Plan, the west coast of the U.S. is divided into five conservation zones for the Marbled Murrelet with Zone 1 starting in Puget Sound and Zone 5 ending just north of San Francisco. WDFW continues to monitor Marbled Murrelet populations at-sea in the Puget Sound and Straits, and along the Washington coast. The Strait of Juan de Fuca, the Strait of Georgia, and Puget Sound (Zone 1) are monitored on even years, most recently in 2024. The Washington coast from Cape Flattery to Columbia River mouth (Zone 2) is monitored on odd years, most recently in 2025. The Zone 2 survey work has been completed, and the report is in progress. Monitoring in Zone 1 continues to indicate that the species' status has not improved since state listing in 1993. It has continued to decline annually at a rate of 4.6% (Lance et al. 2024), which is consistent with the 2022 results. These are the only data available to assess Murrelet abundance and trends. The Northwest Forest Plan Effectiveness Monitoring team's 25-year report has been published (McIver et al. 2021) as well as a report on trends in habitat conditions (Lorenz et al 2021). Further, McIver 2024 summarizes abundance and population trends across all conservation zones within the Northwest Forest Plan area. At sea population surveys for Zone 1 were completed in 2024 and are currently being processed. Zone 2 surveys will be conducted in 2025. Along with these surveys, our science team is continuing diet sampling work. A publication date for that work has not been identified.

WDFW's Diversity and Science Divisions are currently working on a few projects funded by the Navy through the National Wildlife Foundation Fund and are as follows:

1. Annotated bibliography of recent Murrelet publications (WDFW)
2. Table of actively collected distribution and abundance datasets on murrelets (WDFW)
3. Analysis to determine hotspots and drivers of distribution and abundance (UW)
4. Peer-reviewed list of recovery priorities for Murrelets (WDFW). Priorities will be used as a foundation of the recovery plan.

All four projects have been completed, and reports were submitted to the Navy since the January 2025 wildlife update. These deliverables will help WDFW inform recovery planning decisions.

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Canada Lynx

1993: State listed as Threatened
1994: FPB enacted voluntary management approach
2000: Federally listed as Threatened
2017: State up-listed to Endangered
2023: Federal Species Status Assessment and Draft Federal Recovery Plan published

In June 2025, DNR sent a memo to the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) outlining a statement of intent for developing a Lynx Habitat Management Plan (LHMP) working group. The statement indicated that there is a need to amend the 2006 plan to incorporate new lynx research and include considerations for lynx habitat management that more accurately reflects historical fire regimes, the influence of recent large-scale mega fires, and the ongoing effects of climate change. The first meeting of the working group was held on June 30 with representatives from DNR, WDFW, and the USFWS. The intent of the working group will be to assemble regional agency lynx management personnel in order to:

1. Define the Goal of the LHMP Working Group
2. Build a timeline for deliverables in order to stay on pace for a final draft in June of 2027
3. Identify new research findings that are appropriate to incorporate into the new LHMP
4. Identify current 2006 LHMP guidelines that are outdated or no longer applicable that need to be removed or amended to better align with current research findings
5. Develop on-going monitoring and reporting standards
6. Identify potential needs for future research projects to help inform regional lynx management
7. Final LHMP Draft to be completed by June of 2027.

To date, the working group has finalized its charter and outlined objectives to review and update the management plan over the next two years with the estimated completion date of June 30, 2027. In October 2025, the working group participated in a field tour of lynx habitat in the Loomis State Forest. DNR and WDFW wildlife biologists viewed and discussed the status of lynx denning, travel, and foraging habitats in the forest.

A draft Periodic Status Review for lynx was recently completed and is now under review by WDFW's management team. Once that review is complete, the PSR will go out for public comment, likely in November 2025.

In March 2025, the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) published their Lynx Habitat Management plan (1996, 2006) Implementation and Effectiveness Monitoring Report (Krausz et. al. 2025) for the period between 2004 and 2024. The report outlined DNR's monitoring efforts for the foraging, travel, denning, temporary non-habitat, permanent non-habitat, and road density requirements described in the management plan. The plan provides a summary of the changes in percentage of these habitats found in the management plan area across the years 2006, 2013, 2021, and 2024. Of the five Lynx Analysis Units (LAU) monitored, the Loomis Central LAU showed a consistent positive response to management with net increases in foraging and denning habitats and net decreases in temporary and permanent non-habitats between 2006 and 2024. The net increase/decrease across habitat types in the remaining LAUs were variable, indicating a need for review of management implementation in those areas. Overall, the report provides an excellent summary of the plan's efficacy since 2006 and a good foundation for plan improvement moving forward. One notable takeaway and perhaps a cause for the

variability in habitat net change is that "at this time an estimated 50% of the known lynx habitat in Washington State had burned in the previous 20 years." Please see the monitoring report for more details.

Under DNR's Lynx Habitat Management Plan (2006), DNR and Washington State University (WSU) developed a project to investigate the effects of different pre-commercial thinning designs on snowshoe hare use of habitat, vulnerability to predation, and sources of mortality. The information gathered may then be used to better inform forest management treatments favorable for snowshoe hare while also providing increased foraging opportunities for lynx. DNR and partners have completed the first year of post-treatment snowshoe hare radio telemetry and began the second year of trapping and radio telemetry in October 2024. The project has now moved into its post-treatment phase, with particular interest in short-term behavioral responses and mortality patterns after thinning.

Contact: Jeff Lewis (Jeffrey.Lewis@dfw.wa.gov)

Northern Spotted Owl

1988: State listed as Endangered
1990: Federally listed as Threatened
1996: FPB enacted State Forest Practices Rules
2012: USFWS designation of revised critical habitat
2016: State retention of Endangered status
2024: State retention of Endangered status

The Northern Spotted Owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*; NSO) is in steep decline in Washington and across its range (see Periodic Status Review for the Northern Spotted Owl in Washington, 2024). Without immediate intervention, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and our conservation partners expect NSO to be functionally extinct from Washington within a decade. WDFW is committed to preventing the loss of this flagship species of old growth forests in Washington. There are no simple or straightforward paths to recovery left for NSO; WDFW, our conservation partners, and the public are left with only the most difficult options available to support recovery of the species. WDFW's intended approach for NSO resilience and recovery includes three major efforts (none of which are enough in isolation to recover NSO):

▪ **Maintaining habitat** for NSO through support for the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) and participation in the NWFP Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and amendment process to ensure adequate consideration of spotted owl persistence and recovery.

▪ **Exploring NSO population augmentation** through analysis of potential methods such as captive rearing, captive breeding, and/or translocation.

- Julia Smith and Emilie Kohler started a range wide working group with zoos, federal, state and tribal partners from BC, WA, OR and CA to learn about and discuss Northern Spotted Owl conservation translocation strategies. So far, the group has learned about the B.C. NSO Breeding Program, was briefed about Northern Spotted Owl monitoring and occupancy modeling and has heard from other augmentation efforts like the California Condor program.
- WDFW is currently reviewing the draft report prepared for the agency that assesses the feasibility of using conservation translocations to improve recovery outcomes for NSO in Washington state. Modeling was used to simulates NSO abundance, distribution, movement, and changes in genetic diversity, which will inform future conservation strategies. The manuscript for the augmentation feasibility assessment will be completed this year.

▪ **Implementing barred owl (*Strix varia*) management** following the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)'s Barred Owl Management Strategy.

- Some projects under the Barred owl Management Strategy have started; however, funding continues to be an issue.

- In addition to lawsuits by animal rights groups, the Strategy has congressional opposition and S.J. Res. 69 - A joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service relating to "Record of Decision for the Barred Owl Management Strategy; Washington, Oregon, and California" was put forward in July. In October, it was placed on the Senate Legislative Calendar under General Orders. Calendar No. 190.
- For more information, please see the website: Barred Owl Management | U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, including the FAQs page: Barred Owl Management Strategy Record of Decision FAQs.
- WDFW has updated the NSO information page with information about barred owl impacts to spotted owls and resources about management: Things to know about Barred Owls in Washington

▪ **NSO monitoring**- Federal hiring freezes and layoffs impacted the NWFP NSO range-wide passive acoustic monitoring (PAM) program; however, most surveys were accomplished through partnerships with other agencies and nonprofits. NSO PAM surveys in the Teanaway Community Forest were completed this season with a record 40 recorders deployed. Data analysis is currently underway. WDFW purchased ARU equipment and continues to develop plans with federal partners to expand monitoring this fall in the Mt. Barker-Snoqualmie NF; however, federal hiring freezes and firings have reduced capacity for partners in the project, and the federal government shutdown has delayed field work. It is uncertain if it will move forward this year.

▪ **Barred owl diet study on JBLM-** Barred owls have the potential to undermine other sensitive species' conservation efforts and cause local extinctions; however, most barred owl diet studies on the West Coast have been in and around spotted owl habitat. Therefore, WDFW is developing a barred owl diet study on Joint Base Lewis McChord (JBLM) to evaluate the potential threat of barred owls to other species like Western Gray Squirrels.

▪ **NSO site status review-** WDFW received a request from a landowner to review call survey records for their lands from 2007 to present. Twenty-one active owl site centers or their median home range circles intersect the landowner's properties, which also occur within the I-90 East Spotted Owl Special Emphasis Area (SOSEA). The purpose of the review is for WDFW to determine whether the surveys meet US Fish and Wildlife Service requirements for occupancy. If the survey efforts are satisfactory, then the landowner will request a Spotted Owl Conservation Advisory Group review. The landowner's goal is to change the site center designations from Active to Historic so that they are not subject to Critical Habitat (state) protections outlined in Forest Practices Rule. WDFW is in the process of assembling an internal working group to review the reports and associated data. WDFW has also notified DNR of the request and has begun consultation. A completion date for the survey review is yet to be determined.

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Fisher

1998: State listed as Endangered
2016: Federal status: Final decision for west coast DPS - not warranted for listing (April 2016)
2018: Ruling on 2017 withdrawal of proposed ESA listing, USFWS ordered to revisit that decision
2019: Federal revised proposed rule to list fishers, excluded fisher in Washington

There is nothing substantive to report this quarter for fisher. Fisher reintroductions into Washington have been completed by WDFW and cooperating partners, with a total of 260 fishers, including 90 in Olympic National Park (2008-2010), and 170 in other federal lands within the Cascade Range. Non-federal landowners can continue to voluntarily enroll in the Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) and receive federal regulatory assurances if the fisher were to become listed under the ESA in the future. By enrolling in the CCAA, landowners agree to follow basic conservation measures that protect fishers that may use their lands. To date, 68 entities who own or manage 3,486,855 acres of non-federal forest lands are enrolled in the CCAA.

WDFW and project partners conducted a distribution and occupancy survey (using camera stations) of much of the federal lands in the South Cascades Ecosystem from October 2022 – July 2023. Data analysis of this survey is still ongoing, but our preliminary results included the detection of fishers at >=28 of 107 functioning survey stations. This survey effort was also implemented in the North Cascades Ecosystem with deployment of 155 camera stations from 15 September to 15 November 2023. Station revisits to obtain data were completed in August 2024 and is currently still under review and analysis. Data analysis on habitat selection/associations and fisher distribution are expected to be completed in spring 2026.

WDFW is considering an opportunity to conduct the next iteration of the fisher occupancy survey of the Olympic Peninsula, which was last done in 2013-2016. At this time, a start date has not been determined.

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Western Gray Squirrel

1993: State listed as Threatened
2002: Petitioned for Federal listing
2003: Federal listing denied
2013: FPB enacted voluntary management approach
2016: State retention of Threatened status
2023: State listed as Endangered

▪ **WGS Working Group-** In August, the group finalized its charter and began working on management planning. The group talked about data gaps and how to measure the success of management recommendations implemented over the years. September 24-26, group members participated in the second of three planned field trips. On this occasion, we toured WGS habitat found throughout the Okanagan and Methow Valleys. We spent two full days in the field talking with DNR, US Forest Service (USFS), and WDFW wildlife biologists and wildlife area managers. Discussion topics included the unique differences in habitat between the Okanagan, JBLM, and Klickitat population centers, effects of wildfire on WGS habitats, and forest treatments. We discussed the value of a landscape approach to management and viewed many treatment areas across ownerships (DNR, WDFW, and USFS). After the tour, we agreed that it was a success because group members were able to dive deeper into management questions in addition to becoming better acquainted with northeast Cascades WGS habitat.

▪ **WGS Research**- In July 2024, WDFW's Wildlife Diversity Grant Program awarded the University of Washington $100,724 to develop a spatial prioritization model that can identify priority land parcels for targeted conservation efforts to aid the recovery of the Klickitat County's WGS population. The vast majority of Klickitat County's WGS habitat is on privately held forest lands and the model will also aid in developing incentives for landowners adopting WGS habitat restoration recommendations. WDFW staff are currently reviewing the project deliverables and considering next steps.

▪ **WDFW is developing a barred owl diet study on Joint Base Lewis McChord (JBLM)** to evaluate the potential threat of barred owls to species of concern, like western gray squirrels. Barred owls have the potential to undermine other sensitive species' conservation efforts and cause local extinctions; however, most barred owl diet studies on the West Coast have been in and around spotted owl habitat. Western gray squirrels are one of multiple SCGNs on JBLM that could benefit from barred owl research and/or removal. Habitat loss and degradation are the primary factors affecting WGS; however, we have learned from spotted owls that barred owls can make suitable habitat inaccessible. Western gray squirrels have low juvenile survival and over half of squirrel deaths at JBLM were attributed to predation. Only 3 isolated WGS populations exist in WA and the population at JBLM is especially vulnerable because of its small size, limited geographic range, and isolation from other populations. Past translocations improved genetic diversity; however, genetic fitness is still a concern. For these reasons, WGS fit the criteria for a species that would be significantly impacted by a novel predator. Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) permits have been approved, and staff are waiting for the government shutdown to end before starting the project.

▪ **WDFW is finished conducting the 2025 WGS occupancy surveys** in core habitat areas on the westside of the Cascades. This is a continuation of the 2018 surveys using hair tubes that proved effective for documenting occupancy of western gray squirrels in Washington (Vander Haegen and Keren 2021). The surveys will continue for two years and next year, surveys will also happen on JBLM.

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Future Updates to the Board

The Forest Practices Rules require that when a species is listed by the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission and/or the U.S. Secretary of the Interior or Commerce, WDNR will consult with WDFW and makes a recommendation to the Forest Practices Board as to whether protection is needed under the Critical habitats (state) rule (WAC 222-16-080). WDFW and WDNR coordinate to anticipate federal actions and to respond to changes in the status of species addressed by the rules.

c: Tom O'Brien (WDFW), Hannah Anderson (WDFW), Taylor Cotten (WDFW), Julie Smith (WDFW), Brandon Austin (WDFW), Saboor Jawad (DNR), Maggie Franquemont (DNR), Colleen Granberg (DNR)

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