WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF
Natural Resources

PETER GOLDMARK
Commissioner of Public Lands

April 17, 2012

MEMORANDUM

TO: Forest Practices Board

FROM: Marc Engel, Assistant Division Manager, Policy and Services
Rachael Jamison, Energy and Climate Policy Analyst

SUBJECT: Forest Practices Biomass Work Group

The Forest Practices Board adopted in 2010 into rule a revision of the definition of "Forest Practice" to include the harvest of forest biomass. At the November 2010 Forest Practices Board meeting, Commissioner of Public Lands Peter Goldmark made a commitment that DNR would convene interested stakeholders into a Biomass Work Group to review the potential impacts to public resources from the harvest of biomass from forestlands.

The Biomass Work Group developed a Charter and work-plan establishing meetings and field tours designed to ensure in-depth evaluations of potential impacts from biomass harvest operations to forestlands. The topics evaluated included soil health and productivity, roads, silvicultural practices, disturbances (pests, disease and fire), dead wood, slash disposal, carbon storage, water quality, riparian zones, unstable slopes, water infiltration, wildlife, biodiversity and cultural resources.

The group met monthly from January 2011 through March 2012. At each meeting, the group evaluated one or more topic based on an overview of the Forest Practices Rules, Best Management Practices and rules from other states, and current applicable science to identify follow-up areas of concern. In subsequent meetings, the group identified potential recommendations after discussing identified areas of concerns and making sure that all proposals were consistent with existing forest practices rules and founded on sound science.

The Work Group still has plans to take a field trip in late May or early June to look at biomass harvest operations in eastern Washington. The goal of the Biomass Work Group is to reach consensus in final recommendations to be presented to the Forest Practices Board their August 14, 2012 meeting. Attached is a summary of the group's work to date.

If you have any questions feel free to call Rachael at 360.902.1104 or Marc at 360.902.1390.

ME/
Attachment

Forest Practices Biomass Work-Group

Forest Practices Biomass Work-group Members

At the November 2010 Forest Practices Board meeting, Commissioner of Public Lands Peter Goldmark made a commitment that Department of Natural Resources (DNR) would convene interested stakeholders to engage in a dialog about how to ensure biomass harvest from forestland is sustainable and protects public resources. In the same year, the definition of "Forest Practice" was revised by the Forest Practices Board, to include the harvest of forest biomass. During the stakeholder discussions around this rule change, concerns were expressed regarding the potential need for specific best management practices (BMP's) and/or further modifications to existing Forest Practices Rules related to biomass harvest.

The work-group that was convened was comprised of the following members:

Bridget Moran, Chair	Department of Natural Resources
Rachael Jamison, Co-Chair	Department of Natural Resources
Craig Partridge	Department of Natural Resources, State Lands
Stephen Bernath	Department of Ecology
David Whipple	Department of Fish and Wildlife
Bill Hermann	Hermann Brothers Logging
Chris Mendoza	Conservation Caucus
Kara Whittaker	Conservation Caucus
Doug Hooks	Washington Forest Protection Association
Peter Goldman	Conservation Caucus
Ed Tolan	Nippon Paper, Inc.
George Cave	Port Townsend Paper
Marty Acker	NOAA
Dick Miller	WFFA
Eveleen Muehlethaler	Port Townsend Paper
Norm Schaaf	Merrill & Ring
Marc Engel	Department of Natural Resources, Staff
Darin Cramer	Department of Natural Resources, Staff

A kick-off meeting was held on January 31, 2011 to gain a clear understanding of the specific concerns about forest biomass harvest under existing forest practices rules; to develop a plan for "next steps" by the group; and to determine to the efficacy of existing Forest Practices rules in protecting Washington forests and public resources from the collection of biomass.

The group developed a team charter, which defined the purpose of the group to:

> "Educate ourselves on the science/policy and available technologies related to biomass harvest, the Forest Practices rules that apply to such harvest and biomass harvest BMPs. Discuss and determine if specific BMP's and/or Forest Practices rules and/or rule revisions related to biomass harvest are needed in Washington. If so, identify a path toward identifying what is needed."

The group agreed to the following deliverables at the conclusion of the process:

- Charter
- Regular status reports to the board
- Final recommendations to the board
- Supporting documentation/data.

The aim of the group was to reach consensus in the final recommendations to the Forest Practices Board (board). The group will present final recommendations at the August 2012 Forest Practices Board meeting. In cases where consensus could not be reached on specific recommendations, DNR will present those differences to the Forest Practices Board.

Monthly meetings were conducted from January 2011 through March 2012. The group developed a work-plan that was intended to ensure all relevant topic areas, including available scientific findings, were evaluated in depth, the

group had time to visit biomass collection operations in the field, and adequate time was provided to synthesize information and develop recommendations.

The topics covered by the group were:

1. Forest Practices Rules Overview
2. Best Management Practices/Resource Considerations Overview
3. Soil Health and Productivity
4. Silviculture and Roads
5. Disturbance (pests, disease, fire, conversion)
6. Dead wood, slash disposal, and carbon storage
7. Water Quality, Riparian Zones/Unstable Slopes, and Water Infiltration
8. Wildlife, Biodiversity and Cultural Resources

Each meeting included an overview of the Washington Forest Practices Rules, Best Management Practices for biomass removal from a few other states, and current science that applied to the topic being discussed. The current science reviewed by the group was not the result of a formal literature review process on forest biomass, and should not be considered as such. Rather, it was a collection of related articles (including peer reviewed, field trip hand-outs, and grey literature) known to exist by stakeholder participants. This summary of relevant information provided grounding for the discussions that followed, helped identify follow-up topics of concern, and ensured that potential recommendations were not at odds or redundant to existing rules.

Throughout each meeting, as topics emerged that were of concern to the group or that the group determined would need follow-up action, they were "flagged" and returned to at later meetings when the issues were being synthesized. The flagged items were then grouped into five "buckets" based on their relevance to biomass collection specifically:

1. Topics that related to biomass exclusively.
2. Topics that are primarily timber related but that affect biomass.
3. Topics that are timber specific.
4. Topics that affect state lands only.
5. Topics that fall outside the existing jurisdiction of Forest Practices Rules.

As of May 2012, the group has evaluated the following topical areas as they relate to biomass collection: soil health and productivity, silviculture, roads, disturbance (pests, disease, fire, and conversion), dead wood, slash disposal, carbon storage, water quality, riparian zones, unstable slopes, water infiltration, wildlife, biodiversity and cultural resources. From these topical discussions, recommendations have begun to emerge addressing issues such as (but not limited to) definitions in the Forest Practices Rules, retention levels, harvesting on steep slopes, timing of road abandonment.

The working group plans to take at least one field trip to Eastern Washington to further assess differences in biomass harvest strategies from Western Washington. In addition to current biomass harvest, the trip will allow the group to assess potential biomass removal from forest treatments to reduce the threat of fire and treatments addressing other related forest health issues (e.g. beetle infestations). The group, after the final field tour, will review, modify and finalize recommendations.

The group plans to present final recommendations to the board at the August 2012 meeting.