Washington State Department of Natural Resources - Adaptive Management Program

Quarterly Update to the Forest Practices Board

May 2024

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:

- Approved the Unstable Slopes Criteria Charter,
- Approved the ISPR Approved Deep-Seated Landslide (DSL) Study Design,
- Approved Protocols and Standards Manual (PSM) Sections 6-10 edits,
- Schedule L-1 Prioritization Memo,
- Eastside Timber Habitat Evaluation Project (ETHEP) Prospective 6 Questions,
- Anadromous Fish Floor (AFF) Technical Memo, and
- Approved the Unstable Slope Criteria Project 3 and 4 Project Management Plan.

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:

- Approved the Anadromous Fish Floor (AFF) Technical Memo, and
- Schedule L-1 Prioritization Memo.

AMP participants continue to make progress on advancing State Auditor's Office (SAO) Recommendations to improve the Adaptive Management Program. Key advancements this quarter include: CMER completed PSM revisions to improve process, transparency, and accountability, Schedule L-1 revision, launched the AMP public facing dashboard, and participants attended a Structured Decision Making workshop.

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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 team has completed the fourth year of main experiment data collection, with two subsequent additional years of data collection planned. In this last quarter, the project team has focused primarily on the continued execution of the main experiment as well as preparing for the implementation of the Sediment Trap Efficiency (STE) experiment and annual maintenance, such as rocking, ditching, and grading, planned for the next quarter. The project team has also been working on developing the second of two interim reports, to formally relay early results and data methodologies to CMER. To prepare this interim report the project team and contractors are diligently analyzing our many data streams so that preliminary results and methods can be reviewed by CMER ahead of the submission of the final report at the end of the project. In the next quarter, the project team expects to continue to work on the interim report, implement the STE experiment, conduct annual road maintenance, and conduct other end of season sample collections and site maintenance.

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** 's purpose is to provide data needed to evaluate landscape-scale effects and changes over time of implementing forest practices riparian prescriptions. The objective is to build and maintain a status and trends monitoring program that will evaluate how aquatic conditions, riparian forest structure and functions, and the desired habitat conditions they support, change on a landscape scale. This project is in an early stage of development in which the project team is considering how to scope and design the long-term study as well as how to tackle the development of specific critical questions and objectives. This last quarter, the project team continued to develop the scoping document package, including the scoping document itself and the best available science (BAS) document. An interim principal investigator (PI) has also been assigned to the project, to further support the scoping effort. In the next quarter, the project team expects to continue to scoping effort.

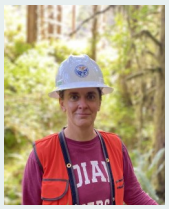
WESTSIDE TYPE F RIPARIAN PRESCRIPTION EFFECTIVENESS-EXPLORATORY FIELD STUDY

The **Westside Type F Riparian Prescription Effectiveness- Exploratory Field Study** evaluates the effectiveness of westside riparian prescriptions for F and S streams in achieving resource objectives and performance targets. This exploratory study is 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 as well as 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. At the November 5, 2022, Cooperative Monitoring, Evaluation, and Research Committee (CMER) meeting two relevant motions were passed, one that approved the final draft of the "Westside Type F Exploratory Report" and another which moved to forward the approved report to ISPR. Department of Natural Resources Adaptative Management Program (DNR AMP) staff subsequently submitted the Westside Type F Riparian Management Zone Exploratory Study Report to Independent Scientific Peer Review (ISPR). The ISPR response document package was received in January 2023. Since then, the author has been responding to the ISPR comments and making the requested revisions in an effort to develop a response document package (comprised of a comment matrix, revised report, and memo) to be sent back to ISPR. This effort has required the author to undertake significant and extensive revisions to not only the report itself, but also the underlying data analytics, upon which many sections of the report are based on. A complete response to ISPR is expected to be complete by the end of April 2024.

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 Rachel Rubin has begun collecting Geospatial datasets and additional literature to develop a desktop analysis to aide in developing a more robust Eastside Forest Health Strategy document which would outline a series of studies or projects that will provide insight to the critical questions.

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 ISPR-approved Study Design has been approved by CMER and was delivered to TFW Policy in December 2023. Ben Spei (Principal Investigator) gave a presentation to TFW Policy updating them on the study overview at their December Meeting. Sage delivered the CMER approved Prospective 6 Questions document to TFW Policy at the April TFW Policy Meeting. The project team is developing the Project Management Plan, which is expected to CMER in May.

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. 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. The harvest at Fish Creek basin was delayed by one year and is now scheduled for completion in 2024. Due to this delay, the project team recommended extending monitoring at Fish Creek for one additional year, to collect two years post-harvest data, as indicated in the Study Design. SAGE and CMER approved this recommendation. The budget needed for this request has been incorporated into the MPS which was approved by TFW Policy in April 2024. The project team also recommended extending the ENREP study for an additional 5-year period with a reduced suite of variables. SAGE approved these recommendations. CMER and TFW Policy are considering these recommendations.

WATER TYPING STRATEGY

The purpose of the **Water Typing Strategy** is to inform a permanent water typing system that meets 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)**. ISAG is currently developing and 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).

The PHB project team is working on desktop site selection. The project team has also made outreach to gauge the interest and availability of potential PI candidates. The DPC project team continues work on the DPC Study Design, which is expected to be delivered to CMER to initiate a concurrent CMER/ISAG review in spring 2024. A statistical consulting firm has been assisting the project team in developing proposed analysis methods for the DPC Study Design.

ANADROMOUS FISH FLOOR

A Proposal Initiation (PI) was received in May 2023 from Washington Department of Natural Resources for the **Anadromous Fish Floor (AFF**) Validation Study. In August 2023, TFW Policy approved the AFF PI with a recommendation that the Forest Practices Board add the AFF Validation Study to the CMER Work Plan and Master Project Schedule. CMER assigned the AFF Validation Study to ISAG in August 2023. In December 2023, CMER directed ISAG to winnow the proposed Project Team and work on a technical summary for TFW Policy that clarifies how the AFF Validation Study would best fit as a companion or add-on study to the existing PHB Study. CMER approved the AFF Project Team makeup in February 2024. The Project Team developed the requested technical summary, which was approved by ISAG, CMER, and TFW Policy.

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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. The Principal Investigator, Project Manager, and Project Team are preparing for implementation at two sites in the Northwest Coast ecoregion this summer. The Forest Practices Board, at their February 2024 meeting, approved a pilot rule request to authorize the implementation of experimental harvest treatments at these two sites.

RIPARIAN FUNCTION LITERATURE SYNTHESIS

The **Riparian Function Literature Synthesis** is a stand-alone literature synthesis that will address questions regarding the effects of timber harvest on riparian functions. The literature synthesis is in RSAG review. The authors have responded to two rounds of RSAG comments and RSAG is determining if their follow-up comments have been adequately addressed. The literature synthesis is expected to be sent to CMER to initiate review in spring 2024.

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, CWA assurance targets, and hydrologic connectivity are being achieved. Following the April 2022 CMER approval of the project charter, the project team has begun the scoping process. The development of scoping documents such as the Best Available Science Document and Prospective Six Questions Document is underway. The project team has just delivered the first draft of scoping to WetSAG for review. Funding for the WMZ begins in FY26, with implementation slated to begin in FY28.

FORESTED WETLANDS EFFECTIVENESS PROJECT (FWEP)

The **Forested Wetlands Effectiveness Project (FWEP)** projects will look at the effectiveness of forest practices prescriptions to protect, maintain, and restore aquatic resources, namely water quality and wetland hydrologic and ecological functions. It will be evaluated to determine if they achieve the FPHCP goal of no-net-loss of functions of those wetlands by half of a timber rotation cycle while meeting water quality standards (FPHCP). FWEP has an approved Study Design. Tanner Williamson, CMER Wetland Scientist, along with the project team completed the instrumentation of all 24 project sites over the 2023 field season. Water Quality data collection began in October and will continue through 2025. Data collection includes water quality analysis for: Suspended Sediment Concentration, soluble Reactive Phosphorus, Dissolved Organic Carbon and Nitrogen. The project team has conducted its's first round of hemispherical photography and is currently preparing for summer field work. The team will be conducting forest and vegetation surveys at all sites beginning in June and running through the end of September.

WATER TEMPURATURE AND AMPHIBIAN USE IN TYPE NP WATERS WITH DISCONTINUOUS SURFACE FLOW (CWA PROJECT)

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. The project team is currently developing the scoping documents, with plans to deliver to CMER in June.

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 is in implementation. 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 team is conducting QA/QC on data collected through 2023, which will be followed by data analysis and report development through the end of the current biennium (June 2025).

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. This quarter, the project team made some progress on Project 2, Object-Based Landform Mapping with High-Resolution Topography Study report. The project team worked on a necessary mapping exercises and began revising the final report. A draft of the final report is expected in CY 2024. This project is delayed and continues to fall further behind. While the results of this project are not needed to begin Projects 3 and 4 (discussed below), there is a point during the implementation of Projects 3 and 4 where the results from this project will be needed, and there is concern that on the currently trajectory, delays in this project could cause delays in subsequent projects.

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) moved into implementation this quarter after the approval of the updated Project Management plan. Early stages of implementation are ongoing.

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 Policy regarding the potential effects of forest practices on deep-seated landslides. This quarter the Study Design was returned from ISPR with approval and was subsequently received final approval at the March CMER meeting. The Project Team is now working on finalizing the Prospective 6 Questions document and developing a RFQQ solicitation to recruit an entity to implement the approved Study Design.

STRUCTURED DECISION MAKING WORKSHOP

AMP participants attended a 2-day Structured Decision Making (SDM) course April 9-10th hosted by a team of instructors with USGS Washington Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Center. Natural resources management is, at its core, a decision-making exercise. The field of decision analysis offers a vast set of tools for framing, structuring, solving, implementing, and revisiting decisions, as well as for understanding the frailties of humans and institutions as decision makers. The SDM workshop outlined the fundamentals of decision analysis, with an emphasis on participatory discussion and hands-on practice. Topics covered included: the structure of decisions; articulating objectives; developing creative alternatives; using the best available ecological and social science to evaluate alternatives; methods for analyzing different classes of decisions; the role of uncertainty; and adaptive management.

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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April 22, 2024

TO: Forest Practices Board

FROM: Karen Zirkle, Forest Regulation Policy and Services Assistant Division Manager

SUBJECT: Small Forest Landowner Office and Advisory Committee

Small Forest Landowner Advisory Committee

The Small Forest Landowner Advisory Committee met on January 23 and April 22, 2024. Topics discussed were:

- Discuss SFLAC Charter, Mission, and Work Plan
- fpOnline
- E. WA FPA Instructions Q19/Uneven-aged vs even-aged
- New FREP legislation

SFLO Program Updates

Forestry Riparian Easement Program (FREP)
The program has been working diligently to ensure full implementation of the new law and rules including changing the easement, the application, welcome packet information and reach out to current applicants to get their harvest dates. In addition, the team continues to cruise and value easements to not lose momentum.

Family Forest Fish Passage Program
For the 2024 construction season, the program is starting construction on 15 barrier removal projects. In addition, the program is drafting the 2025 request to the legislature for funding.

Rivers and Habitat Open Space Program
The Rivers and Habitat Open Space Program will be purchasing 4 easements this biennium.

Regulation Assistance Program
The Small Forest Landowner Regulation Assistance Program has foresters located across the state to help landowners navigate the Forest Practices Rules. The program also has one Fish & Wildlife Biologist to assist landowners with water typing and any wildlife related topics. Since the last Board meeting we've welcomed John Schmeltz to our Olympic Region. In addition, we added Grays Harbor and Lewis county to John's area to share the workload more equitably.

Long-Term Applications (LTA)

This Forest Practices Board report normally shows the SFLO status of Long-Term Applications. Last report there were 315 approved long-term applications in Phase 2 of the process, which was the same number as the previous reporting period (10/04/2023). This could not be updated for this report as a new report needs to be generated, this will be resolved by your next meeting.

Upcoming Events

Upcoming Forest Stewardship Coached Planning Courses

Spring 2024 Snohomish Forest Stewardship Coached Planning Course – Tuesdays starting April 2, 2024

Spring 2024 Key Peninsula Forest Stewardship Coached Planning Course – Thursdays starting April 4, 2024

Fall 2024 Preston Forest Stewardship Coached Planning Course – Tuesdays starting September 3, 2024

Please contact Tami Miketa at (360) 902-1415 or tamara.miketa@dnr.wa.gov if you have questions.

Karen Zirkle
Assistant Division Manager – Policy & Landowner Services
Forest Regulation Division

TIMBER FISH
& WILDLIFE

Timber, Fish and Wildlife Policy Committee
Forest Practices Board

PO BOX 47012, Olympia, WA 98504-4712

Policy Co-Chair:
Cody Thomas, Upper Columbia United Tribes
Brandon Austin, Department of Fish and Wildlife

April 23, 2024

TO: Forest Practices Board
FROM: Cody Thomas and Brandon Austin
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 February 2024 – April 2024

TFW Policy Operating Manual

Policy worked with the Adaptive Management Program Administrator (AMPA) to develop a manual to improve transparency and provide much needed clarity regarding Adaptive Management Program (AMP) processes. The manual has undergone extensive review and revision and was approved by Policy in November. The Board received a recommended revision to Board Manual Section 22, adding a reference to the manual at the February Board meeting. A workgroup was formed by Policy members in February to review and provide any suggested edits to the Policy Manual moving forward.

SAO Recommendations

Policy formed a State Auditor's Office (SAO) working group that meets monthly to refine and implement the Board-approved action plan. Several recommendations are being worked on including structured decision making (SDM), decision criteria, onboarding for new members, review of Schedule L-1, and how to handle non-CMER science.

TFW Policy began working with the consulting firm Compass Resources, from Vancouver, British Columbia. Compass will be working with Policy for the next year and a half, guiding the committee through implementing structured decision making. Compass also attended the April SDM workshop conducted by Sarah Convers of the USGS Washington Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Center. This workshop was a two day program that included all areas of the AMP including several board members.

Extensive Monitoring

Policy received and approved the Extensive Riparian Status and Trends Monitoring – Riparian vegetation and Stream Temperature, Type F/N Westside and Eastside Project Charter.

Budget Workgroup

The Policy budget workgroup continues to meet to discuss projects and funding in future. Policy sent an approved Master Project Schedule to the Board for the May meeting.

MAJOR TFW POLICY COMMITTEE TOPICS FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2024

- **Adaptive Management Program (AMP)** budget and the 25-27 **Master Project Schedule (MPS):** Policy will review and prepare recommendations to present to the Board at the May 2024 meeting.
- **SAO**: Policy is developing 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 2024. Policy be supported by a facilitator to begin to develop a custom Structure Decision Making model and will attend a Structured Decision-Making Workshop in April 2024, with final recommendations developed by August 2024. Policy is assisting to develop onboarding and training for new Policy members (SAO Recommendation 8).
- **Small Forest Landowner Experimental Harvest Prescriptions**: Policy has received the workgroup recommendations for two alternative harvest prescriptions. Policy has formed a workgroup and will bring forward recommendations for experimental harvest prescriptions to the Board in 2024.
- **Unstable Slope Criteria Project – Shallow Landslides Susceptibility and Frequency by Landform & Runout**: CMER delivered the study design and prospective 6 questions to Policy in February 2024.
- **Unstable Slope Criteria Project – Object Based Landform Mapping with High Resolution Topography Report:** CMER is expected to deliver the report to Policy in October 2024
- **Extensive Riparian Monitoring:** Policy received a recommended extensive riparian monitoring charter for riparian vegetation and stream temperature in December 2023. The scoping document will follow in fall 2024.
- **Riparian Literature Synthesis Report:** CMER will deliver to the report to Policy in September 2024
- **Eastside Timber Habitat Evaluation Project (ETHEP):** Prospective 6 questions were delivered from CMER to Policy in March 2024.

<u>New Projects</u>:

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.

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April 19, 2024

M E M O R A N D U M

To: **Forest Practices Board**
From: **Darrin Masters, WDFW Senior Forest Habitat Biologist, Forest Habitat 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 WAC 222
2024: New Murrelet rules take effect

The species' status has not improved since state listing in 1993. State-wide, Washington's Murrelet population has declined by 4.1% annually (2001-2020) overall. It has declined by 3.3% annually along the Washington coast (2001-2021) and 5.0% in the U.S. portion of the Salish Sea (2001-2020) (Pearson et al. 2022). To put these numbers in perspective, in the Salish Sea during the breeding season in 2001 for example, there were an estimated 5,740 birds. In 2020, there were approximately 3,140 birds in this same area. There has been nearly a 50% decline in the regional population over those 20 years. Following the 2017 state uplisting to state Endangered status, the Washington Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), in consultation with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), recommended that the Forest Practices Board (Board) support a forest practice rule assessment including relevant stakeholders. WDFW established a Murrelet Wildlife Working Group (WWG) to evaluate efficacy of the Forest Practices Rules (Rule), identify potential Rule modifications to improve clarity and implementation, and provide recommendations to the Board. The WWG completed its work in May 2023 and recommended several changes to Rule. The Board accepted the changes and approved the use of the expedited rule-making process. Rule-making was completed in August 2023 with the date of implementation scheduled for January 1, 2024. DNR then convened a group comprised of some WWG members and DNR foresters and forest managers to revise Board Manual Sections 14 and 15 to reflect the new Rules. The sections were finalized in November and December and prepared for distribution in advance of the effective date for the new Rules.

Three online training presentations for foresters, landowners, consultants, tribes, and WDFW biologists were conducted; November 30 and December 11, 2023, and March 6, 2024. The online trainings covered all changes to the Rule and the updated methods in Board Manual 15. A total of 158 people attended the online sessions. Each online training was followed by field training. Four field sessions were conducted to give people from the four west side DNR Regions the opportunity to attend. Field trainings were held near Naselle, Forks, the Gold Basin campground on Mountain Loop Highway east of

Verlot, and Oakville. Each field session focused on Murrelet platform identification and practice, suitable and occupied habitat identification and delineation, and managed buffer layout and leave tree calculation. A total of 77 people attended the field sessions. All required training for new rules implementation was completed in March 2024.

WDFW continues to monitor Marbled Murrelet populations at-sea in the Puget Sound and Straits (most recently monitored in 2022) and the Washington coast (monitored in 2021) every other year during the nesting season. These are the only data available to assess Murrelet abundance and trends. The NW 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). The 2020 and 2021 at-sea survey reports are now available (Lance & Pearson, 2021; McIver et al. 2021) and a paper on winter trends over an eight-year period was recently published that found strong non-breeding season declines in Puget Sound (Pearson et al. 2022). Research in collaboration with Dr. Beth Gardner and PhD Student Sierra Gillman at the University of Washington is ongoing. They are developing predictive density surfaces for the murrelet and examining the factors driving changes in abundance and distribution.

Contact: Jennifer Mannas (jen.mannas@dfw.wa.gov)

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: Draft Federal Recovery Plan to be released in December

With the 2017 up-listing to state Endangered status, it was recommended that no action be taken to include lynx in the Forest Practices Rule designation for critical habitat (state) and to maintain existing voluntary protections. WDFW continues to explore lynx conservation opportunities in collaboration with landowners, Canadian federal and provincial entities, US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), US Forest Service (USFS), conservation organizations, tribes, and academic partners. The goal is to refine recovery actions that can be implemented in the near- and long-term to benefit lynx conservation in Washington.

Evaluation of Forest Practices Applications (FPAs) on private lands continues in order to identify potential impacts to lynx habitat. Given wildfire impacts in northcentral Washington, WDFW has pursued ongoing coordination with partners to bring awareness of the importance of balancing habitat protection with the need to address fire risk, including on federal lands.

Under DNR's Lynx Habitat Management Plan (2006), DNR and Washington State University (WSU) have begun developing a proposal 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 hares while also providing increased foraging opportunities for lynx. DNR and partners are nearly complete with the pretreatment phase of the project and are beginning planning for the treatment phase. Additionally, Colville Confederated Tribes is leading a lynx conservation project and they released 19 lynx from 2021 to 2022 into the Washington Kettle Range. They actively trapped in October, November, and December of 2023 with the goal of translocating 10 more lynx to release in this reintroduction area. We understand that seven were actually released although this number is unconfirmed. WDFW and partners (USFS, WSU, and Conservation Northwest) have proposed a long term lynx monitoring project for the northern Kettle Range to evaluate the ongoing and extended success of the Colville lynx reintroduction during and following the last releases. It is possible that this monitoring effort could begin this summer.

To further lynx conservation, WDFW participates in ongoing multi-agency surveys for lynx in the North Cascades, WDFW maintains a current database of verifiable lynx detections, and WDFW is currently updating the periodic status review for the lynx (last done in 2017), and this updated version is expected to be available for public review in Spring 2024.

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 Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission was briefed on the final The Northern Spotted Owl (NSO) Periodic Status Review in January 2024. The Commission voted "No change" to the endangered status recommended by WDFW.

The NSO population has continued to decline primarily due to ongoing competitive interactions with Barred Owls. The public comment period for the draft USFWS Barred Owl Management Strategy and Environmental Impact Statement closed in January 2024. The Service is currently reviewing the comments and is developing the final versions of the documents. WDFW continues to be a Cooperating Agency in the process.

Modeling suggests NSO population recovery will require both Barred Owl management and NSO augmentation. Given this need, a NSO population augmentation feasibility assessment began in January 2024 and will continue for 18 months. This work is led by WDFW and is being undertaken collaboratively with USFWS and other NSO experts. The primary goal of this project is to develop a science and planning document that assesses the feasibility of NSO augmentation in select WA populations. This document will clearly define the augmentation objectives, identify and assess risks, and detail the measures of performance. This document will be used by WDFW to guide decisions about using augmentation as part of NSO population recovery efforts in WA and related management actions.

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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

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 are continuing the long term monitoring of reintroduced fisher populations in the state, following the 2013-2016 monitoring project on the Olympic Peninsula. 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 are ongoing, but our preliminary results included the detection of fishers at >=28 of 102 functioning survey stations. This survey effort is now being implemented in the North Cascades Ecosystem with deployment of 155 camera stations from 15 September to 15 November 2023 and station revisits to be conducted in July of 2024.

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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

On December 28, 2023, western gray squirrels were officially added to the list of wildlife classified as endangered species in WAC 220-610-010. After uplisting, WDFW sent a memorandum (WDFW 2024) to DNR that stated their recommendation for next steps to the Board. WDFW recommended that the Board support WDFW's initiation of a western gray squirrel Wildlife Working Group to:

1. Evaluate the existing volunteer protection measures completed to date and determine if they were implemented successfully and/or provided adequate protection.
2. Develop new alternatives to enhance or rebuild the existing volunteer measures as needed.
3. Consider the requirements for Critical habitat under WAC 222-16-80.
4. Develop recommendations on how to protect WGS habitat during timber harvesting and mitigation measures for land conversion by development. This could include conservation incentives and creating landscape approaches that encourage landowners to protect habitat.
5. Consider whether developing new Rules would provide benefit to the species or whether revised volunteer measures would work.

The Board approved the formation of the Wildlife Working Group at the February 14 meeting. WDFW is currently drafting a letter to TFW partners and stakeholders to solicit interest in the group. WDFW expects to have the working group formed and begin meeting by fall, 2024.

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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 Habitat (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.

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