

# **HISTORY: FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM IN WASHINGTON STATE**

## **The First Nineteen Years**

In 1990, Congress created the Forest Legacy Program to protect environmentally important forestlands threatened by conversion to non-forest uses – mostly commercial or residential development. This national Forest Legacy Program pays for conservation easements and other land protection to retain forests, and assure both the traditional uses of private forestlands and the natural resource values embraced by the public are protected for future generations.

Lands acquired through the Forest Legacy Program include “working forests,” where forestland is managed to produce forest products, and traditional forest uses are nurtured and encouraged. Uses include commodity production and non-commodity values – such as healthy riparian (streamside) areas that protect the waters, wetlands, fish and wildlife, scenic, aesthetic, cultural, and recreation resources, and other ecological values.

The USDA Forest Service administers the National Forest Legacy program promoting the long-term integrity of forestlands using cooperative efforts of willing landowners, state lead agencies, and a state Forest Coordinating Committee. Through the program, the federal government funds up to 75 percent of the land acquisition costs, with the remaining 25 percent provided by the state or other conservation partners.

## **Forest Legacy in Washington State**

Washington is one of the five original states to start the program in 1990. Former governor Booth Gardner designated the State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) as Washington’s lead agency for managing the Forest Legacy Program. DNR has established goals, objectives, and parcel evaluation criteria for the state program in the 2004 Washington State Assessment of Need (AON).

## **Washington State Forest Legacy Program Major Goals**

- Provide present and future timber management opportunities
- Protect water quality
- Provide habitat for native fish, wildlife or plants

From the beginning, Washington has worked to support the national and state program objectives. Forest Legacy financial resources are leveraged with partners (federal, state, local government, private corporations, non-profits, interest groups and foundations) to maximize conservation benefits. Partners have worked together to help consolidate forest landscapes to meet Legacy goals and the goals of all partners. The Mountains to Sound Greenway landscape in the Interstate-90 Corridor includes many successful Washington Forest Legacy projects.

- Protect existing landscapes to discourage further fragmentation
- Incorporate federal program goals to ensure Washington projects meet the intent of the authorizing legislation

Since 1999 the program has branched out from the Mountains to Sound Greenway to support the Foothills Forest Initiative, to protect forestlands where many are being developed into non-forest uses. In October 2004, Washington State amended the original AON that focused the program in Snohomish, King and Pierce Counties to be available more widely in other counties with eligible lands

Availability of federal funding for the Forest Legacy Program has increased along with the number of states with active Forest Legacy Programs. Initially five states were participants; in 2002 that number had grown to 37 states and currently there are 52 states and protectorates participating in the program.

#### National Forest Legacy Program Budget History

<u>Year</u>	<u>Millions of Dollars</u>
1992	4.9
1993	9.9
1994	7.0
1995	6.7
1996	3.0
1997	2.0
1998	4.0
1999	7.0
2000	30.0
2001	60.0
2002	65.0
2003	85.0
2004	71.0
2005	57.1
2006	60.1
2007	58.3
2008	61.0
2009	57.0
2010	79.4

Washington State, intends to focus limited resources where conservation planning and partnering with other organizations with similar goals provides the best benefits to protect forestlands and the associated uses.

### **Program Highlights**

Legacy funding has been essential for maximizing benefits to create landscapes that protect water quality, forest resources, wildlife habitat, scenic and social values on lands

that would otherwise revert to non-forest use. The success of the program is a function of the cooperative efforts between state, federal, county, city, private, and non-profit organizations that have collaborate on projects to protect and consolidate forest land.

## **See Washington State Forest Legacy Program Acquisitions on This Website**

Conversion of land from traditional forest use to industrial and residential use is changing the character and quality of life in American communities nationwide. Dollars appropriated to the Forest Legacy Program permanently protect scenic, cultural, timber, fish, wildlife, recreation and riparian resources for future generations.