

# Revisions to the Policy on Definition of Sustainability for the Sustainable Harvest Calculation Proposed for Adoption

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# DEFINITION OF SUSTAINABILITY FOR THE SUSTAINABLE HARVEST CALCULATION

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## **DISCUSSION:**

State law defines sustained yield as “management of the forest to provide harvesting on a continuing basis without major prolonged curtailment or cessation of harvest” (RCW 79.10.310). A common law duty of the state as trustee is to not favor either present or future trust beneficiaries over each other. Sustained yield management helps accomplish this duty.

Within that broad statutory direction, various interpretations of sustained yield management are possible. Differences in interpretation may relate to the size of areas subject to separate calculations of sustainable yield of timber, for example, either the state trust ownership as a whole or smaller areas; the degree of variability of timber harvest over time; and the aspect of forest management to be the primary focus of sustainability, such as area or volume of timber harvested or retained, or revenue earned.

In the past, DNR has divided the forestland base into separate sustainable harvest units based on county boundaries, DNR’s administrative regions, and several separately treated areas. In addition, DNR has set the variability of harvest over time based on a nondeclining even-flow objective. DNR has calculated sustainable yield based on timber volume. The Board of Natural Resources has expressed a desire for a more flexible system as the basis for the sustainable harvest calculation.

*(Lands formerly know as Forest Board Transfer and Forest Board Purchase are now defined in RCW 79.02.010(10) as “State Forest Lands.” For purposes of this policy, former Forest Board Transfer lands will be called “State Forest Trust Lands,” and former Forest Board Purchase Lands will be called “State Forest Purchase Lands”.)*

## **POLICY:**

- **The department will calculate, and the Board of Natural Resources will adopt, a separate long-term decadal sustainable harvest level for each of several distinct sustainable harvest units. The department will express the sustainable harvest level for a given unit as mean annual timber volume for a planning decade.**
- **In Western Washington, the sustainable harvest units (a total of 20) are as follows:**
  - **The Olympic Experimental State Forest, regardless of trust.**
  - **The Capitol State Forest, regardless of trust.**

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- Each of the 17 county beneficiaries of State Forest Trust lands separately (excluding those lands in the Olympic Experimental State Forest or Capitol State Forest).
  - All of the federally granted trusts and State Forest Purchase lands in Western Washington together, with the exception of the Olympic Experimental State Forest and Capitol State Forest.
- For Eastern Washington, sustainable harvest units will be determined as part of the Eastern Washington sustainable harvest calculation.
  - In order to ensure intergenerational equity among beneficiaries, the department shall limit the change in harvest volume between decades when calculating the sustainable harvest level. For each sustainable harvest unit, the harvest level will be calculated such that the mean annual sustainable harvest level does not change by more than 25 percent from the preceding decade. This policy applies to future decades within the calculation. Harvest level change between past sustainable harvest levels set by the Board of Natural Resources and the planning decade harvest level is not limited by the policy.
  - In order to take advantage of shorter-term operational or market opportunities, the harvest level for any year within a planning decade may be up to 25 percent above or below the mean annual sustainable harvest level for the planning decade adopted by the Board of Natural Resources. Short-term fluctuation in harvest levels shall not curtail attainment of the decadal sustainable harvest level.
  - The department will analyze the financial characteristics of forest stands in order to optimize the economic value of forest stands and timber production over time, in calculating the sustainable harvest level, in planning and scheduling timber harvests, in making investments in forest growth, and in searching for the least-cost methods of achieving other forest management objectives.

**IMPLEMENTATION:**

Forest Resources Division Manager and Region Managers

Approval Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Approved By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Month-Day-Year Name of Signer  
 Title of Signer

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## **SEE ALSO**

Policy for Sustainable Forests, July 2006

## **REVISION HISTORY**

Date	Comments/ Summary of changes
TBD	Revision of the 4 <sup>th</sup> and 5 <sup>th</sup> policy bullets related to between decade and within decade harvest level variation.