

MEMORANDUM

September 28, 2015

TO: Adrian Miller, TFW Policy Co-Chair

FROM: Hans Berge, Adaptive Management Program Administrator

SUBJECT: Recommendations for response to Off-Channel Habitat Proposal Initiation

On 9 September 2015 I received a Proposal Initiation (PI) from you seeking a recommendation to define and develop guidance for delineating off-channel habitat (OCH) associated with Type F Waters. As provided in Board Manual Section 22, the proposal contained all of the necessary detailed information required for consideration in the Adaptive Management Program.

The first step in the AMP evaluation of the PI is to determine the applicability to the AMP by assessing management and resource implications. After reviewing the elements of the proposal and comparing those with steps for consideration contained on page 8 of Board Manual Section 22, it is clear that this proposal fits the criteria and will inform rules, guidance, and/or a DNR product.

In Board Manual Section 22, the process for the AMP specifically identifies two tracks for proposal development: scientific or policy (Board Manual M22-9 and 10). From the Board Manual, the following direction is given:

*“The **science track** evaluates currently available science, collects new information through research and monitoring, and synthesizes the best available information into a technical summary for Policy consideration.”*

*“Proposals seeking to change or clarify policies or change the way existing science is implemented in the rules are directed toward the **policy track**.”*

After carefully reviewing the OCH proposal, it is clear that a two part approach is necessary to address all of the elements contained this proposal. First, a “science track” is necessary to set the context in understanding the technical components included in identifying and protecting OCH for Type F waters as intended in the Forests and Fish Report (1999) and described in WAC-222-16-031(2)(e). Second, a “policy track” is necessary to evaluate the language used in WAC-222-16-031 to insure that it accurately defines and provides appropriate guidance in identifying OCH.

My recommendations to address the requests contained in the PI are broken out by task in the following steps with proposed timelines and approximate costs needed to address each component.

1. **Track:** Policy

Task: Review for clarity the existing language describing OCH in the forest practices rule, WAC 222-16-031 (please see OCH language in WAC 222-16-031(2)(e) and OCH description in Appendix A).

Recommendation: Form a subcommittee of TFW Policy to review the language and identify if modification for clarity or intent is necessary. This task, once initiated, could be accomplished in 2 months. The product for this work should be a presentation to the full TFW Policy Committee.

2. **Track:** Science

Task: Collect and review current literature and protocols used to define processes for identifying OCH.

Task: Determine if OCH is being omitted from FPAs under the existing definition used to define OCH in the interim water typing system rule, and, if yes, describe these habitats in a manner that would facilitate coverage.

Task: Review the existing definitions of bankfull width and bankfull depth in the forest practices rules and the FFR, and determine if using bankfull elevation in the definition would be more beneficial than bankfull depth in the determination of OCH. The rule currently defines bankfull width as ‘The measurement of the lateral extent of the water surface elevation perpendicular to the channel at bankfull depth’.

Task: Review the OCH description developed during Policy field site visits to determine if this description meets the definition of OCH and adequately covers off channel habitat as currently described in rule, WAC 222-16-031. The site visits found “*Off Channel Habitat consists of waters connected to and draining into Type S and F waters by inundation at bank full elevation of the Type S or F water and encompassed by that area of inundation at bank full width and elevation.*”

Task: Define the flood return interval that defines 95% of OCH and the field methods delineate that flood return interval.

Recommendation: Form a technical group with expertise in fluvial processes and aquatic ecology to address these technical topics. This group would take up to 6 months to fully complete these tasks and would require approximately \$40,000 of budget to assemble a panel with demonstrated expertise. The final product would be a report and presentation for TFW Policy.

3. **Track:** Policy/Science

Task: Meet Board motion requirement to perform field reviews of approved Forest Practices Applications and water type modification forms that are relevant to OCH.

Recommendation: Assemble a technical subgroup of TFW stakeholders to review FPAs and WTMF’s relevant to OCH. This task should take 3 months and the final product would be a memo and presentation to TFW Policy.