

To: Timber Fish and Wildlife Policy Committee Members

From: Alec Brown, Chair, Small Forestland Owner Prescriptions Technical Workgroup

RE: Conclusion of Workgroup and Path Forward

---

At the December 2019 Timber Fish and Wildlife Policy Committee (Policy) meeting a technical workgroup was formed to evaluate potential site specific prescriptions for small forest landowners. Specifically, the group was to "...evaluate under what, if any, site-specific conditions a 75 foot and 50 foot buffer, respectively, would be acceptable as a prescription for Type F streams; and under what, if any, site-specific conditions a 25 foot buffer would acceptable for Type Np streams." As scheduled, the workgroup has completed its work and is delivering this report on their proceedings

The workgroup was chaired by one Policy member, Alec Brown, and three technical experts: Steve Barnowe-Meyer, Washington Farm Forestry Association (WFFA), Marc Engel, Washington Department of Natural Resources, and Don Nauer, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. In addition to the formal membership Brandon Austin, Washington Department of Ecology, and Ken Miller, Washington Farm and Forestry, attended most meetings and provided input to the group.

The workgroup met seven times throughout February to May. The first few meetings were spent understanding the charge and reviewing previously approved alternate plans. Reviewing alternate plans with the technical experts was a useful exercise for all. However, it was agreed that due to the small sample size of approved plans there was limited ability to extrapolate site specific prescriptions.

In the final three meetings the workgroup quickly focused its efforts on the locations and prescriptions in which it was felt that smaller buffers would meet equal and overall effectiveness to the Forest Practices rules. These prescriptions centered on smaller buffers for even-aged management, hardwood conversions, and commercial thinnings. The conversations were open and productive with members productively listening to one another's ideas and concerns.

The workgroup is to deliver two products.

1. Technical recommendation(s) for those documented site-specific conditions, if any, which meet the objectives in Section IV to allow for 75- or 50-foot and 25-foot wide RMZ buffer prescriptions acceptable for fish habitat and non-fish habitat streams, respectively, on small forest landowner lands in western Washington;
2. Schedule L-1 functional objectives and performance targets for the six riparian functions, project goals, and intended outcomes to inform a subsequent CMER process for the development of a monitoring and evaluation study. Monitoring and evaluation component may include pre-existing stand conditions to qualify, windthrow, reforestation, canopy response, residual tree species, diameter-breast-height, and tree spacing. This should also include a clear articulation of what information is needed from an evaluation to inform Policy's future decision-making *and* what those decisions may be.

Unfortunately, the workgroup was unable to come to consensus recommendations on site-specific conditions. As such, neither of the deliverables are contained in this report. However, the workgroup seeks to inform Policy of their areas of consensus and non-consensus and recommend a path forward.

Broadly, the workgroup members agreed conditions exist in which even-aged management, conifer restoration, and commercial thinning prescriptions can meet the effectiveness of the Forest Practices rules. It was not possible in the allotted time to agree to the site-specific conditions which exist throughout all of western Washington for all three management options. However, there was agreement the stream width, stand type, and site class should be considered when developing site-specific conditions. Further, the group members agreed to defer review of type Np prescriptions while the Adaptive Management Program is considering changes to those rules.

Members did find their **ideas** converging towards a proposal in the cases of conifer restoration and commercial thinning. The workgroup believes bringing this progress to the second small forestland owner workgroup set to begin shortly will set that group for success.

There was less consensus surrounding prescriptions for even-aged management. Members agreed both fixed and variable widths should be considered. Additionally, all members agreed 75 feet could be considered as a buffer width. There remains considerable disagreement over the size of buffers that can be adopted to meet the equal and overall effectiveness standard of the rule. This can be seen in attachment 1 that displays the original WFFA proposal, and two proposals from the workgroup, against the currently adopted fixed width template. Attachment 2 is a memo from the state caucuses expressing their recommendations to Policy in relation to even-aged management. These are submitted to Policy for your consideration.

The workgroup discussed three paths Policy could take to further evaluate even-aged management prescriptions but none were adopted as a recommendation. Policy could make even-aged management discussion a secondary goal of the next workgroup, leave these issues for a potential dispute resolution, or these could jointly be undertaken as a hybridized approach.