

DNR Forest Practices Voluntary Pre-Application Reviews for Potentially Unstable Landforms Frequently Asked Questions

What is a pre-application review?

Before submitting a Forest Practices Application (FPA), proponents may request a meeting with DNR Forest Practices staff to go over various aspects of their FPA concerning potentially unstable landforms. The goal is to ensure the FPA is complete, improve the quality of the supporting documentation in the FPA, potentially minimize requests for additional information, and increase the likelihood of a successful FPA review.

Is this a new thing?

No. DNR has been doing pre-application reviews for approximately 25 years. This is a renewed effort to encourage landowners to take advantage of this opportunity. Both FPA proposals and rules have become more complex in recent years, especially those regarding potentially unstable landforms. The Forest Practices program wants landowners to use pre-application reviews to enhance the final project proposal (submitted FPA) and reduce uncertainty for the landowner.

Why the focus on potentially unstable landforms?

Rules regarding potentially unstable landforms are often the biggest hurdle to successful proposals. Potentially unstable landforms could affect public resources or threaten public safety. Pre-application reviews help proponents confirm that they identified and buffered potentially unstable landforms to minimize the risk of reactivating them. Shortcomings discovered during a pre-application review can be corrected before the FPA is submitted. Thus, a successful FPA review is more likely.

How do I recognize potentially unstable landforms?

A number of telltale signs – things like pistol-butted trees, hummocky terrain, and cracks in soil – can indicate potentially unstable landforms. The Forest Practices Rules provide criteria for rule-identified landforms such as bedrock hollows. In addition, section 16 of the Forest Practices Board Manual contains guidelines to evaluate potentially unstable landforms. If you are unsure of how to recognize unstable landforms, it is a good idea to work with an experienced consultant (forester or geologist) when developing your proposal.

Do I have to do a pre-application review?

No. It is a voluntary process.

How do I get started with a pre-application review?

Contact your local DNR Forest Practices forester. If you do not know who that is, contact the DNR Region Office in your area to find out. During an initial conversation, the Forest Practices forester will determine the scope and timeframe for your pre-application review with you.

Doesn't DNR Forest Practices address all issues during the 30-day review of the FPA?

We do. However, we have found that the quality of FPAs improves when pre-application reviews are held. This makes the FPA review more efficient for all parties and increases the likelihood of success. If the pre-application review reveals the need for additional information, the proponent can obtain and submit information without the pressure of a looming deadline during the 30-day review period for submitted FPAs.

When a DNR Forest Practices forester and geologist conduct a pre-application review in and around potentially unstable landforms, hiring my own qualified expert or submitting a geotechnical report would be redundant, right?

No. Proponents are responsible for submitting complete information, identifying relevant features, correctly mapping them, and marking them in the field. DNR is responsible for reviewing the information and verifying that it is complete and adequate. A professional exchange between experts working for the proponent and DNR during the pre-application review is designed to verify the required information. DNR cannot perform work that is required from the proponent to present a complete proposal.

Who else participates in the pre-application review?

Other subject-matter experts can be included dependent on the issues at hand. Experts can be invited by the proponent or come from the Timber, Fish, and Wildlife community. Because the pre-application review process is informal in nature, participants should embrace a pragmatic approach and assemble a team that can address the relevant questions of a specific project.

Will you help me with the layout of my project?

No. Project layout is the sole responsibility of the proponent.

How do I prepare for a pre-application review?

Thorough preparation is the key to success. The better the preparation, the better the result. This is true for both documents and fieldwork. Good maps showing areas of potential concern, clear flagging of boundaries or road centerlines are examples of good preparation. The specific elements of a well-prepared pre-application review are as varied as the projects themselves and are determined on a case-by-case basis.

How long does it take to get a pre-application review done?

We strive to complete pre-application reviews within 30 days. Despite our best efforts, seasonal conditions such as fire and snow, or workload may delay our review. In many cases, especially for smaller or less-complex projects, we may get them done much faster. It is best to contact your local Forest Practices forester to get an idea of the anticipated timeframe.

If I implement everything we learn during the pre-application review process, will DNR approve my FPA?

The more in-depth and thorough the pre-application review, the higher the likelihood of a smooth FPA review and approval process. However, new information can possibly come to light during the review of the submitted FPA that will need to be addressed.

DNR Region Offices:

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