



Forests & Fish Agreement

Science-Based Forest Management for Salmon Recovery

The Forests & Fish Agreement protects over 60,000 miles of streams across 9 million acres of private and state forestland through buffers, road upgrades, and harvest limits. Developed by tribes, landowners, agencies, and counties, it was the first program in the U.S. to meet both ESA and CWA standards. Roughly 15% of Western Washington's working forest base was set aside under the agreement, with future changes guided by science and Adaptive Management. Monitoring shows forest practices protect these resource objectives.

Four Co-equal Goals of the Forests & Fish Report

Washington's 1999 Forests & Fish Report established a science-based framework for forest practices that protect salmon, clean water, and the working forest economy. These goals were codified in state law through the Forests & Fish Law (ESHB 2091) and guide Washington's Forest Practices Rules and 50-year Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), ensuring compliance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the Clean Water Act (CWA).

1. Meet the Requirements of the Endangered Species Act (ESA)

Forest practices must not jeopardize the survival of listed salmon, bull trout, and stream associated amphibians. This goal requires conserving and restoring aquatic and riparian habitat to support long-term species viability. Actions include protecting streamside buffers, reducing impacts from roads, and ensuring fish passage.

2. Meet the Requirements of the Clean Water Act (CWA)

Water quality must support beneficial uses like aquatic life and recreation. Forest practices must comply with Washington's water quality standards. This is achieved by implementing best management practices (BMPs), meeting strict numeric criteria derived to protect aquatic life and habitat, and, if forest practices significantly impair resource objectives, further refining the rules through a science-driven adaptive management program.

3. Support a Harvestable Supply of Salmon

The Report seeks to recover salmon to levels that support tribal, commercial, and recreational harvest. Forest practices must protect the conditions salmon need to thrive—clean, cold water; stable stream channels; and intact riparian areas—so that populations can recover and be sustainably fished in the future.

4. Keep Forestry Economically Viable

The long-term success of forest conservation depends on keeping working forests working. The Report complies with Washington's 1974 Forest Practices Act which aims to *"maintain a viable forest products industry to support the state's economy, forest landowners, and forest-dependent communities"* (RCW 76.09.010(2)(c)). This helps prevent forest conversion to development and ensures landowners have the certainty and flexibility needed to invest in sustainable forest management.

Salmon Recovery and Protection of Water Quality is a Shared Responsibility

Forest landowners have [removed](#) 9,200 fish barriers, reopened 6,500 miles of habitat, and achieved 99.5% compliance for roads, 97.3% for wetlands, and 98.4% for non-fish stream protections (DNR 2022–2023). Under the 2001 Forests & Fish Law, landowners set aside **764,000 acres—15–20% of commercially productive timberland**—at a cost of \$2.36 billion, in exchange for regulatory predictability and science-based Adaptive Management tied to significant water quality harm. **On June 6, 2025, the Forest Practices Board voted to advance only one rule proposal that will take more than 200,000 acres of private forestland, \$1 billion of trees, and an additional 4–5% of Washington's commercially viable forestland. This violates the Forests & Fish Law.** This cumulative loss threatens forest sector infrastructure, reduces timber supply, eliminates jobs, and increases pressure to convert working forest lands, especially rural family-owned forests, into non-forestry uses. With estimated economic losses of \$5–\$8 billion over 45 years, **the Board must develop alternatives that are science based and less costly.**