

DNR releases first report of compliance with forest practices rules on state and private forestlands

Local News

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Report finds most comply with rules, still room for improvement OLYMPIA - Random checks summarized in a new report from the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) indicate that private industrial forestland owners are in compliance with state logging and other forest practices rules most of the time, but gaps continue to occur. Harvesting trees within no-harvest zones and leaving too few trees near fish-bearing streams were among the most common causes of noncompliance with state forest practices rules, according to the new report. During the two-year period examined (2006-2007), compliance with forest practices rules was achieved 87 percent of the time for forest road activities (such as construction, improvement, or decommissioning of roads). It was achieved 75 percent of the time for other forest work (such as logging and adhering to required buffer zones) adjacent to streams. Compliance monitoring teams observed that when riparian infractions occurred, they often were the result of harvesting trees within prescribed inner or outer buffer zones. "The collaborative efforts of these scientists, experts, and landowners are giving us a better picture of the potential for resource damage when forest practices infractions occur," said Commissioner of Public Lands Peter Goldmark. "Not all infractions have the same impact on public resources, but we need to move toward full compliance."

During the compliance surveys, which were conducted on a random basis across the state, landowners, forest scientists, and foresters sometimes had difficulty understanding the precise meaning or exact requirements of certain forest practices rules. For example, compliance monitoring teams sometimes needed an entire day just to measure a riparian buffer zone -- the area of trees around various types of streams that loggers with approved forest practices applications are required to leave uncut as buffer zones. In fact, about 10 percent of the compliance inspections found loggers had left *more* trees around streams and other riparian areas than the rules required. The report, *Forest Practices Compliance Monitoring Summary Report, 2006-2007*, summarizes two-years of random assessments of compliance with state forest practices rules. The monitoring was conducted by more than 90 professional foresters, geologists and biologists from DNR, the Department of Ecology, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, several tribes and private natural resources consultants in survey teams of four or five members. Landowners were invited to attend the assessments. The study sample represented 174 randomly selected approved forest practices applications (FPAs). Landowners complete FPAs and submit them to DNR to convey their intent to harvest timber, build roads or other activities on non-federally owned forestland in Washington state. An application may include more than one type of activity. The FPAs studied included 289 riparian and 234 road activities related to forest work. In seven cases, the monitoring teams found the noncompliance at a site was serious enough to refer it to a DNR region office for possible enforcement consideration. The *Forest Practices Compliance Monitoring Summary Report* is available on the DNR website at: [http://www.dnr.wa.gov/Publications/fp ... compliance_monitoring.pdf](http://www.dnr.wa.gov/Publications/fp...compliance_monitoring.pdf)

Monitoring is collaborative effort The monitoring program is gathering information to strengthen implementation of the Forest Practices rules. The rules are intended to improve and protect riparian habitat on non-federal forestlands in Washington and are part of the state's salmon recovery

strategy. The monitoring information was not intended for specific enforcement actions, but rather to point out areas of need and to make improvements in forest practices education, application review and processing of applications. **DNR manages and protects natural resources** Administered by Commissioner of Public Lands Peter Goldmark, DNR manages more than 5.6 million acres of state-owned forest, range, commercial, agricultural, conservation, and aquatic lands. DNR also: § Administers Forest Practices rules and surface mine reclamation on state and private lands. § Gives technical assistance for forestry and mining. § Provides wildfire protection for 12.7 million acres of private and state-owned forestlands. Goldmark is Washington's 13th Commissioner of Public Lands since statehood in 1889 and the first commissioner from Eastern Washington.