

GRADES *at a* GLANCE

STATEWIDE FORESTRY ISSUES

COMMUNITY WILDFIRE RESILIENCE

WORK IN PROGRESS

DNR continues to develop community wildfire resilience work. For these efforts to respond effectively to local community needs, greater direct funding of community organizations is vital, as well as increased collaboration with community organizations and other agencies. Substantive changes to the Wildfire Ready Neighbors program are also needed. Additional funding secured via House Bill 1578 supports interagency collaboration as well as expanded post-fire recovery efforts. Since last year, some improvements have been made to problematic contracting processes.

PRESCRIBED FIRE

WORK IN PROGRESS

Strategic planning and investment in training have laid the groundwork for greater use of prescribed fire. However, the scale and pace of burning must increase significantly to have a meaningful impact on forest and community health. Continued work to address barriers for local-level training and burning are needed. Increased, dedicated funding and capacity can support this increase of prescribed fire.

20 YEAR FOREST HEALTH STRATEGIC PLAN

WORK IN PROGRESS

DNR continues to make progress on scientific analysis and acres treated. However, greater emphasis on prescribed fire and non-commercial thinning are needed to improve ecological health. A shift away from the prevalence of regeneration harvest as forest health treatments on state lands is also important. DNR has provided long-requested information about the agency's use of categorical exclusions. Moving forward, we hope to see the agency pursue effectiveness monitoring to understand how treatments impact wildfire behavior.

WEBSTER NURSERY AND SEED ORCHARDS

SUCCESS

Webster Nursery is a critical seedling and seed source for restoration and replanting. Recent investments from the legislature will expand production. The nursery produces a range of seed types to promote genetic diversity. Greater emphasis on research and production of climate-change adapted seed supply will become critical as climate change impacts worsen.

CARBON SEQUESTRATION & STORAGE IN FORESTS ACROSS WASHINGTON

NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

A statewide strategy to accelerate land and forest management practices that reduce carbon in the atmosphere persists as a gap in our state's climate response. This topic is aligned with DNR's core expertise in the management of forests across the landscape, which hold the greatest untapped potential for carbon sequestration in our state. The agency has not supported collaboration with other agencies to develop a natural and working lands carbon sequestration strategy. Nor has it leveraged past efforts like the Carbon Sequestration Advisory Group and Carbon Playbook to advance a science-based, statewide approach.

ISSUES ON STATE TRUST FOREST LANDS

GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT OF STATE LANDS FOR MULTIPLE BENEFITS

NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

In July 2022, the Washington State Supreme Court issued a unanimous ruling in the CNW v. Franz litigation brought forth by WCA and partners. The decision affirms DNR's authority to manage state lands for both monetary and non-monetary benefits, and clarifies that DNR is not obligated to manage for maximum revenue from timber harvest. To achieve this balance, DNR must consider both issues impacting the public, like climate change, and revenue for beneficiaries. To date, DNR has maintained the status quo in its approach to managing forestlands. The agency has not taken steps to incorporate managing for multiple benefits in the guiding Policy for Sustainable Forests nor in the Sustainable Harvest Calculation process. DNR's timber sale program does not reflect DNR's newly affirmed authority to manage for multiple goals.

OLDER FORESTS AND CRITICAL HABITAT ON STATE LANDS

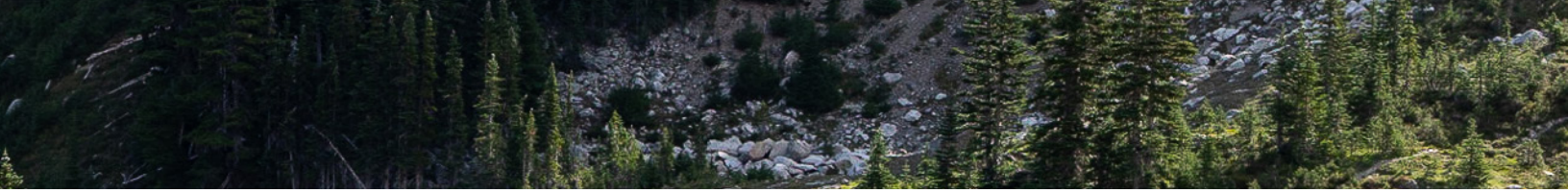
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

Mature, structurally complex forests are ecologically valuable and provide many ecosystem services that homogenous, young forests do not. Public concern continues to grow regarding the loss of these older forests on state lands—which, once logged, cannot be replaced within a human lifetime. Logging these older forests also releases significant carbon. Despite past commitments to explore solutions, DNR has neither utilized existing policies that justify the protection of older forests, nor developed new strategies to retain older forests on the landscape. Harvest of mature forests has continued unaltered.

MANAGING FOR CARBON AND CLIMATE ON STATE LANDS

NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

DNR has not taken steps to promote carbon storage and sequestration on the lands the agency manages, despite including this as a goal in its 2022-2025 Strategic Plan. DNR has not developed a policy to guide management for carbon on state lands. Progress has stalled in the development of the 10,000-acre carbon offset project announced last year. DNR put forward legislation intended to allow the sale of ecosystem services on state lands, but the bill in its final state would have prevented improved forest management projects—the only forest carbon project type with a proven track record to date.



EASTERN WASHINGTON SUSTAINABLE HARVEST CALCULATION (SHC) WORK IN PROGRESS

The Eastern Washington SHC sets DNR’s timber harvest goals for the next decade (2025-2034) on DNR-managed lands east of the Cascade Crest. Climate change will continue to increase the severity of drought, heat, and wildfire, which will negatively impact forest health and productivity, as well as community health. Addressing these growing risks will require new methods of assessment, such as multi-optimization modeling. While DNR has made several public presentations about aspects under consideration, it is not yet clear if or how DNR will incorporate climate threats and management for multiple benefits in the SHC.

TRUST LAND TRANSFER SUCCESS

After several years of working with stakeholders and conservation organizations to make improvements to the important Trust Land Transfer program, DNR successfully passed a bill to strengthen the program and secured \$19.5 million from the legislature to permanently protect 4,425 acres of ecologically valuable lands across Washington.

OLYMPIC EXPERIMENTAL STATE FOREST NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

Independent monitoring by OFCO shows expansion of forest roads, inadequate mapping of hydrologic features and unstable slopes, and the continued spread of invasive species in the OESF. There are opportunities to expand the Type-3 (T3) Watershed Experiment to consider variables in non-fish bearing streams and adjacent old growth forests.

ISSUES ON PRIVATE FOREST LANDS

PROTECTING STREAM TEMPERATURE IN HEADWATER STREAMS AND CLEAN WATER ACT ASSURANCES NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

The process to update rules for riparian buffers on non-fish bearing streams was stalled and disrupted this year. New rules are needed to address Adaptive Management Program science demonstrating that current forest practices for logging along headwater streams are not maintaining cool, clean water required by state law and by the federal Clean Water Act. DNR enabled delays in this process: First, at the last minute, DNR changed its position to be the sole state agency not to support the proposal developed by the Department of Ecology, Tribes, and the conservation community. Later, DNR allowed litigation threats from the timber industry to divert the process.

WATER TYPING WORK IN PROGRESS

For the past 25 years, forest practices regulations have operated under an interim water typing rule that does not provide adequate protection for fish. While the process to create a permanent water typing rule has long been mired in delay, the process has advanced incrementally this year. DNR was directed to begin rulemaking analysis. A workgroup was convened to continue to develop rule language after a 4-year hiatus.

ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM (AMP) GOVERNANCE & ADMINISTRATION NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

DNR plays a dual role in the AMP: as both a participant and an administrator. In DNR’s role as administrator, the agency has initiated, and then largely abandoned, several efforts to address growing participant tensions and to improve AMP functioning. Meetings of the principals were stopped without explanation. Progress is mixed on DNR’s plan to address recommendations from the State Auditor’s Office. Additionally, The AMP was created specifically as an alternative to litigation as the driving force behind forest practices. DNR’s acquiescence to litigation threats in August sets a precedent that risks harming the effectiveness and credibility of the AMP moving forward.

AQUATICS AND CLEAN ENERGY

STATE AQUATIC LANDS SUCCESS

DNR successfully passed a new law that expands the agency’s authority to remove derelict structures and that expedites the judicial process for derelict vessel recovery. The agency secured funding to pursue kelp restoration and to maintain a monitoring network to track aquatic conditions over time. DNR also appropriately denied extensions of aquatic shoreline leases that would permit companies to raise non-native fish species in Puget Sound. To protect native salmon, it also issued an executive order prohibiting commercial finfish net pen aquaculture on state-owned aquatic lands.

RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECT REVIEW AND SITING WORK IN PROGRESS

DNR’s work and approach to establishing leases for wind, solar, and geothermal continues to develop. As the agency makes progress towards the goal of creating 1,000 megawatts of renewable energy production in a way that promotes the greatest environmental, social, and economic good, more progress is required to implement Tribal consultation, to uphold Tribal sovereignty, and to ensure public engagement. As part of this work, it will be important to continue to apply lessons learned for how to best use a public mapping tool for identifying potential renewable energy sites.