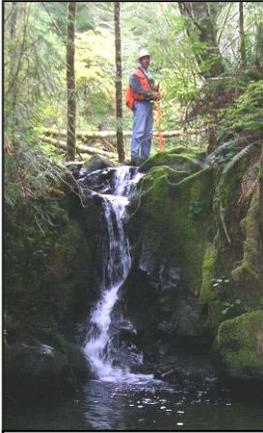


Forest and Fish Compliance Monitoring Program

Field Surveys



Flagging the Waterfall
(DNR photo)

Introduction

The Compliance Monitoring Program, created to evaluate how closely state forestry regulations are followed, has been up and running since 2006. To date, state and tribal foresters, biologists, and geologists have spent parts of four field seasons sliding down rain-slicked hill slopes, scrabbling upstream through hawthorn thickets, and dodging devil's club. They have left a trail of surveyor's string and brightly colored flagging behind them. In the process, they have measured the widths of streamside buffers, counted trees left in riparian zones, and looked for soil running off forest roads into streams and wetlands. What prompted all this earnest activity and what has been accomplished so far?

Problem

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Washington State's forest practice regulations went through a major overhaul, in large part responding to concerns about potential and actual damage to native fish populations and water quality from logging and forest roads. A significant number of salmon, bull trout, and steelhead stocks had been listed as endangered or threatened. Washington had also settled a lawsuit, which required the Department of Ecology (Ecology) to devise plans to bring the state's rivers, streams, and lakes into compliance with water quality standards. Many forested streams were too warm to meet temperature criteria during the summer.

The Forests and Fish Report (FFR) was issued in 1999 after long discussions and negotiation among state agencies, Indian tribes, environmentalists, and timber companies. The Forest Practices Board adopted new rules consistent with the recommendations in the FFR in 2001. Among other things, these rules directed the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to set up a cooperative program for monitoring compliance with state forestry regulations. DNR did so after conferring with many of the same groups who developed the FFR. The Compliance Monitoring Program (CMP) hit the woods in the spring of 2006.

Project goals

Compliance monitoring strives to provide a sound evaluation of whether forestry activities, conducted on state and private lands, meet both the forest practice rules and the requirements of forest practices applications (FPAs). Before the CMP, DNR's field foresters had a good feel for what was going right, and what was going wrong, in the individual districts they covered. What was lacking was a bigger picture, statewide assessment of compliance, one that could be used and understood by all the Forest and Fish cooperators. In particular, the monitoring and research group of the Forest and Fish program needed this information to inform studies designed to test whether the new rules actually protect water quality and fish habitat as well as everyone thought they would.

Milestones and outcomes

Field crews in each of the six DNR regions have collected data for the past four field seasons, 2006-2009. During this time, the crews have examined timber cutting and road building near streams and wetlands on approximately 400 FPAs statewide

(one hundred per year). DNR reports the results to the state's Forest Practices Board (Board) every two years. The 2006-2007 report is complete and has been filed with the Board. The 2008-2009 results are still being compiled and analyzed. Over the long term, when enough FPAs have been surveyed to provide reliable estimates, the CMP hopes to accurately describe compliance both statewide and for each DNR region.



Working with the "String Box"



Paperwork (DNR photo)

Project highlights

Spending a lot of time together walking along streams, scrambling up and down hillsides, and puzzling over the paperwork has tended to foster good working relationships among the agencies and tribes that are part of the CMP. While discussion of the results back on the tailgates of DNR's red pickup trucks is often lively, field crews generally come to consensus on what they have seen.

Partners

- Washington's Departments of Natural Resources, Fish and Wildlife, and Ecology.
- Indian tribes from across the state, including the Kalispell Tribe of Indians, Spokane Tribe, Colville Confederated Tribes, Yakama Indian Nation, Upper Skagit Tribe, Skagit System Co-Op, Lummi Nation, Nooksack Tribe, Tulalip Tribe, Stillaguamish Tribe, Muckleshoot Tribe, Puyallup Tribe, Squaxin Island Tribe, Quinault Nation, and Quileute Nation.
- Forest landowners may also attend surveys of their FPAs, if they choose, but they don't make compliance decisions.

Funding

The state Legislature allocates funds for compliance monitoring to DNR. DNR passes on a portion of the money to WDFW and Ecology. The tribes pay for their own field people.

For more information

For more information about the compliance-monitoring program, please see the program's web site at www.dnr.wa.gov/BusinessPermits/Topics/ComplianceandEnforcement/Pages/fp_cm_program.aspx or contact one of Ecology's Forest and Fish program field people.

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