

Forestland Element

Description

The Chehalis Basin Board and its stakeholders have expressed interest in understanding how Forest Practices Rules ([Title 222 WAC](#)) contribute to the protection of aquatic species and riparian habitat as well as the avoidance of potentially unstable slopes and landforms, both of which are critical to developing an effective and generally accepted Strategy for the Basin.

In addition, as part of the long-term strategy development process, the Board is also exploring a variety of voluntary land acquisition and conservation-based programs to meet their flood resiliency and aquatic species restoration objectives. The Chehalis Basin Board can maximize the benefit from their investment in these elements of the long-term strategy by including reforestation and afforestation initiatives, especially on forestland at risk of conversion to non-forested uses, to meet its objectives.

Potential Principles

- **Principle 1:** Forest Practices in Washington are developed under the direction of the [Forest Practices Board](#), an independent state agency established by the Forest Practices Act ([Chapter 76.09 RCW](#)). The [Forest Practices Adaptive Management Program](#) (AMP) – which includes non-industrial landowners, public agencies, counties, the forest industry, environmental community and tribal governments – develops science-based recommendations and technical information to help the Forest Practices Board determine if and when it is necessary or advisable to adjust the rules and guidance for the protection of aquatic resources to achieve the goals and objectives of the [Forests and Fish Report](#).
- **Principle 2:** Any proposed changes to Forest Practices rules, or studies to inform future rule changes, must follow the AMP process – which includes the [Timber/Fish/Wildlife \(TFW\) Policy](#) and [Cooperative Monitoring, Evaluation, and Research \(CMER\)](#) committees – and be approved by the Forest Practices Board.
- **Principle 3:** To inform an effective and generally accepted Strategy for the Basin, the Chehalis Basin Board needs to understand how Forest Practices Rules have evolved to both enhance protections for aquatic and riparian-dependent species/habitat and to ensure adequate information is considered to address slope stability on forestland in the Chehalis Basin.
- **Principle 4:** Regular communication between the Chehalis Basin Board and the Forest Practices Board would enhance general understanding of the state of the science around forest practices activities in the Chehalis Basin as well as building a common understanding of the rules and regulations that are currently in place.
- **Principle 5:** Conversion of forestland to non-forested uses may reduce protections for riparian habitats and threaten the resiliency of watersheds in the Chehalis Basin, while

afforestation and reforestation initiatives can help to increase resiliency in these watersheds.

Key Components

The Forest Practices Board has adopted numerous rule changes since the adoption of the Forest and Fish Report in 1999, to protect aquatic species and riparian habitat and to improve identification and avoidance of potentially unstable slopes and landforms¹. Additionally, CMER currently has workgroups focused on developing and overseeing studies in these areas that will help ensure these rules continue to evolve to reflect the current science.

The Chehalis Basin Board can take additional voluntary actions to complement the work of the Forest Practices Board to improve the resiliency of forestlands and watersheds in the Chehalis Basin as part of the long-term Strategy.

- **Forest stewardship programs:** The Chehalis Basin Board could propose a new program to fund voluntary actions on working forests, fallow agricultural lands, and/or forestland at risk of conversion in the Basin. Examples the board might consider include:
 - Incentives for reforestation/afforestation on vacant or agricultural land, or working timberland at risk of conversion, in order to encourage land uses that are more compatible with certain flood-prone areas.
 - Support for agroforestry to enhance the economic viability of forested and agricultural lands in the lower basin, support the region’s agricultural economy, and enhance tree canopy cover in key priority riparian-dependent habitats.
 - Conservation easements to increase protections for priority areas to meet both flood protection and aquatic species habitat goals.

Each of these initiatives, or all of them taken together, could be good candidates for state or federal funding requests.

- **Literature review:** The Chehalis Basin Board could engage with a third-party (either DNR, university, or contractor staff) to update DNR’s 2012 and 2016 reports on how modern forest practices influence watershed hydrology and riparian habitat. The literature review could focus on basin-specific questions about debris flows, baseflow, and peak flows, and would incorporate the latest science developed by CMER through the AMP process.
- **Strengthen Forest Practices Board - Chehalis Basin Board communication:** Several Chehalis Basin Board members and support staff already engage directly with the Forest Practices Board. The Chehalis Basin Board could encourage more cross-Board communication by setting aside time at meetings for regular updates from the Forest Practices Board, including status of CMER studies that are focused on questions relevant to the Chehalis Basin Strategy, and to provide advice about how to approach new questions and concerns related to Forest Practices as they arise.

¹ For a complete list, see the supporting materials included with this element.

Cost

Total estimated 30-Year Cost: \$500,000 to \$20,000,000.

The low end of this cost estimate assumes 2-3 updated literature reviews over the course of the 30-year timespan, and no additional actions. The high end assumes a voluntary forest stewardship program funded at approximately \$500,000/year, and at least one more in-depth study, potentially in coordination with the AMP if approved by the Forest Practices Board.

More Information

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See Forestland Element - Supplementary Information for further information regarding the current forest practices rules.

Refer to the [Forest Practices AMP](#) website for more details on the AMP process, TFW Policy and CMER Committees, and CMER Master Project Schedule.

See Appendix G of the [Chehalis Basin Flood Hazard Mitigation Alternatives Report](#) and [Appendix E](#) of the 2017 Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for more details about current and historic forest practices in the Chehalis Basin.