

GRADES *at a* GLANCE

STATEWIDE FORESTRY ISSUES

COMMUNITY WILDFIRE RESILIENCE

WORK IN PROGRESS

DNR's relatively new community resilience work continued to evolve this year. DNR's new Community Wildfire Ambassadors pilot brings in community-based volunteer leadership. The agency is also supporting community wildfire protection plan updates and development and plans to engage communities in the development of wildfire hazard and risk mapping in early 2026. However, pass-through dollars to community organizations for wildfire work remained low through FY 2024.

BENEFICIAL FIRE

NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

DNR's prescribed fire program suffers from de-prioritization in agency resources. This has contributed to consistently low numbers of acres of broadcast burning completed on state lands, despite clear evidence for the need for orders of magnitude more burning to restore forest health. The CPL has set an ambitious goal of 100,000 acres of prescribed fire per year in the state, though the path to achieve this goal is not clear. DNR provided critical resources for workforce training and prescribed burn associations that enable more burning on private lands, although this support has been reduced due to budget cuts.

FOREST HEALTH STRATEGIC PLANS

WORK IN PROGRESS

The state continues to make good progress toward the forest health treatment goal for eastern and central Washington, with 1.1 million acres treated since the Forest Health Strategic Plan's inception in 2017. Opportunities remain to orient efforts towards the most ecologically beneficial treatments. Broadcast burning continues to be underutilized both on state trust lands and across eastern Washington, and regeneration harvests still comprise a significant portion of forest health treatments on state trust lands. DNR made progress this year in communicating about the impacts of treatments and began the development of a Western Washington Forest Health Strategic Plan that will be published in early 2026.

CARBON SEQUESTRATION AND STORAGE IN FORESTS ACROSS WASHINGTON

NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

DNR has not yet stepped into a role of promoting the natural climate solutions potential of forests statewide. Past agency publications and work groups have not translated into agency action. There is an opportunity for DNR to collaboratively advance a statewide strategy for enhancing carbon sequestration and storage on natural and working lands. In addition, agency expertise can better support small forest landowners on climate change mitigation through stewardship programming and forest carbon offsets.

ISSUES ON STATE TRUST FOREST LANDS

MANAGING STATE LANDS FOR PUBLIC BENEFITS

NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

DNR has not adopted frameworks or policies to quantify value on state lands beyond revenue generation, to identify the priorities of the public, or to account for climate impacts of timber sales. Commissioner Upthegrove's executive order conserving 77,000 acres for ecological value was a critical step forward. However, new thinking on public benefits has not yet extended to other state lands policies and practices. Two agency-led work groups focused on state lands—on ecosystem services and forest carbon—produced initial analysis that can guide diversification of benefits and revenue.

OLDER FORESTS & CRITICAL HABITATS ON STATE LANDS

WORK IN PROGRESS

On Commissioner Upthegrove's first day in office, he acted on his campaign commitment to end destruction of mature forests by declaring a 6-month pause on logging these forests. After developing a new model to identify structurally complex stands, a commissioner's order in August announced conservation of 77,000 acres of older and structurally complex forests. This released the remaining 30,000 acres of structurally complex forests for logging. The preliminary maps of the 77,000 acres contained significant issues, and DNR is proceeding with logging some older and structurally complex forests. Model refinement, final selection of the 77,000 acres, and planned management of these acres is pending.

SUSTAINABLE HARVEST CALCULATIONS

NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

The 2025- 2034 SHCs for Westside and Eastside trust lands are significantly delayed. The SHC methodology needs process updates to incorporate the impacts of climate change as well as manage tradeoffs between timber revenue and ecological and social values. Minimal public information about progress has been shared in the past year. Although DNR leadership has conveyed openness to new approaches, public information indicates an intention to continue the status quo of optimizing economic value.



★ TRUST LAND TRANSFER (TLT) SUCCESS

2025 marked an effective re-launch of TLT after a multiyear pause to implement programmatic improvements. The agency recruited a strong list of proposed projects. This included numerous projects proposed by Tribal governments, utilizing a new program rule that makes Tribes eligible to receive land from TLT. DNR prioritized the \$30 million legislative request to fund the full slate of projects in the agency's legislative agenda. This was critical to the \$17 million ultimately appropriated by the legislature.

ISSUES ON PRIVATE FOREST LANDS

★ ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM (AMP) ADMINISTRATION WORK IN PROGRESS

DNR completed 9 of 11 State Auditor's Office recommendations for improvement of the AMP and secured full funding for the AMP. Structured Decision Making was adopted to strengthen policy decisions. However, inadequate onboarding of new Forest Practices Board members and limited context during water typing rulemaking undermined science-based outcomes. Collaboration among caucuses remains strained, and DNR's leadership on conflict resolution and stewardship of rulemaking has been inconsistent.

★ WATER TYPING NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

After decades of delay, the Forest Practices Board (FPB) adopted a final rule for identifying fish bearing vs. non-fish bearing streams that fails to meet core objectives. The rule shifts numeric criteria into guidance, weakening enforceability and allowing landowners to choose among a menu of standards with different levels of protection. DNR did not support this approach but did not steer the FPB toward an effective and implementable rule. A DNR filing error further delayed rule implementation.

★ PROTECTING STREAM TEMPERATURE IN HEADWATER STREAMS AND CLEAN WATER ACT ASSURANCES SUCCESS

After more than two decades of study and negotiation, a new riparian buffer rule on perennial, non-fish bearing streams (Type Np) was approved in a 7-5 vote. DNR voted to approve the motion. This rule achieves science-based changes to meet the state's water quality standards in the forested landscape and demonstrates that the Adaptive Management Program can function as intended.

AQUATICS

★ ISSUES ON AQUATIC LANDS SUCCESS

DNR continued to reduce pollution and to improve habitat on state-owned aquatic lands. DNR removed thousands of tires and creosoted pilings from important underwater habitat and the work continued to ramp up. Derelict vessel programs removed hundreds of vessels. The turn-in program helped prevent vessels from becoming derelict, saving state dollars in the long run. DNR actively protected kelp by prohibiting future leasing of beds important to Tribal interests.

CLEAN ENERGY

★ CLEAN ENERGY WORK IN PROGRESS

DNR has signed no new clean energy leases in two years. Just 95 MW of capacity exists on public lands. The agency is shifting from maximizing leases to prioritizing inclusive, environmentally reviewed development, which reduces risk but slows timelines. No leases include community benefits agreements or equity metrics, though interagency collaboration remains strong through participation in the Clean Energy Siting Council and related reforms.