

Understanding the Private Forest Accord

Riparian Conservation: Eastside

Importance: Riparian protections are the core of any freshwater conservation strategy. The primary goals for managing riparian areas are to provide habitat for riparian-associated species and key functions necessary to support at-risk salmonids and other aquatic species. Riparian trees shade streams, stabilize stream banks, supply large wood that contributes to creating high-quality habitat, and along with other vegetation filter sediment, nutrients, and other pollutants.

Current Law/System: Stream protections in the Oregon Forest Practices Act are much weaker than prescribed under similar laws for California and Washington. Compared to these states, Oregon protects less of the stream network, has generally smaller buffers, and allows more harvest in the buffers. Small streams without fish that flow all year (Non-Fish Perennial -- NP) are virtually unprotected in Oregon, though the SB 1602 provisions limited aerial spray in many cases.

Proposed Change: The new system enhances protection for the stream network east of the Cascade crest.

Fish Streams

- Buffer widths are 100 feet for large/medium streams and 75 feet for small streams.

Large and Medium Non-Fish Perennial Streams

- Buffer widths are 75 feet

Small Non-Fish Perennial Streams

At the upstream transition with a fish stream

- Buffer widths are 60 feet for the first 500 feet

Flowing into a fish stream

- Buffer widths are 30 feet for 250 feet

Otherwise

- Equipment limitation zone is 30 foot wide, requiring retention of sub-merchantable trees and all shrubs

Seasonal Streams

- Equipment limitation zone is 30 foot wide, requiring retention of sub-merchantable trees and all shrubs

Stream Adjacent Active Failures

- For (1) Steep slopes (>70%) adjacent to fish streams and actively failing and delivering sediment, or (2) Unstable slopes immediately adjacent to a fish stream where the toe of the unstable slope interacts directly with the erosive forces of a stream, 170' or slope break, whichever is less.

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Channel-adjacent seeps and springs:

- Extend the buffer width by 35 feet to encompass

Management

Inner zone: 30-foot no-harvest and equipment limitation

Outer zone: Harvest is allowed but must retain:

- 27 largest trees
- A minimum of 60 sq ft of basal area per acre from trees at least 8" dbh
- Naturally occurring fire resilient species such as ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, western larch, and available hardwoods
- Trees to be spatially distributed

Discussion: Widths of the riparian buffers are based on the height of site potential trees averaged across all site classes. Because site potential trees are typically taller west than east of the Cascade crest, buffers are narrower on the eastside. However, buffers for the eastside in the agreement are generally wider and cover more of the stream network than under current rules. Eastside buffer prescriptions are intended to fully protect stream banks in an inner zone, and although timber harvest is allowed in an outer zone to help address forest health concerns on the drier eastside, restrictions have been added for the number, basal area, size, species, and distribution of trees to be retained. Overall this strategy provides stronger protections for eastside streams than under the current OFPA and is similar to WA, differing primarily for buffers on non-fish perennial streams.