



**DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES**

**OFFICE OF THE
COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC LANDS**
1111 WASHINGTON ST SE
MS 47001
OLYMPIA, WA 98504-7001

November 22, 2024

The Honorable Bernard Dean
Chief Clerk of the House
338B Legislative Building
Olympia, WA 98504

The Honorable Sarah Bannister
Secretary of the Senate
312 Legislative Building
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Chief Clerk Dean and Secretary Bannister:

Please accept the enclosed 2024 Small Forest Landowner Demographics legislative report, submitted on behalf of Department of Natural Resources (DNR), as required in RCW [76.13.110](#). The statute directs DNR to provide an update every four years on trends related to nonindustrial:

- Forests and woodlands;
- Watershed administrative units;
- Forest practices applications; and
- Recommendations on incentives.

In addition, the statute directs DNR to identify whether, how, and to what extent the following contributed to those trends:

- The Forest Practices Act and related rules;
- The Board of Natural Resources (Board) and Legislature implemented recommendations made in a previous report; and
- Implementation of or failure to implement those recommendations.

The report is due every four years by December 1st to the Board and Legislature. Should you have any questions, please contact me at 360-486-3469 or Brian.Considine@dnr.wa.gov.

Sincerely,

Brian Considine
Legislative Director
Office of the Commissioner of Public Lands

Enclosure: Legislative Report – 2024 Small Forest Landowner Demographics

cc:

Members of the Senate Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources, and Parks Committee

Members of the House Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee

Members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee

Members of the House Appropriations Committee

Members of the House Capital Budget Committee

Members of the Board of Natural Resources

Ruth Musgrave – Senior Policy Advisor, Natural Resources, Office of the Governor

A Report to the Legislature: Small Forest Landowner Demographic Report

September 2024



Prepared by
Washington State Department of Natural Resources
Office of the Commissioner of Public Lands, Hilary Franz
Tami Miketa
Forest Regulation Division
Small Forest Landowner Office
P.O. Box 47012
Olympia, WA 98504-7012
Phone: (360) 902-1415
Email: tami.miketa@dnr.wa.gov



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
1. Executive Summary	3
1.1 Results of the 2019 Demographic Information Analysis.....	4
1.2 Highlights from Surveys Conducted in the UW Report.....	5
1.3 Results of Small Forest Landowner Forest Practices Application Review	6
1.4 Small Forest Landowner Outreach and Education	6
1.5 2024 Recommendations	6
2. Introduction	9
2.1 Methods - 2019 Forestland Database Documentation	12
3. 2019 Results	12
3.1 Forest Landholding Acres and Number of Small Forest Landowners	12
3.2 20-acre Parcels and Residency Status.....	14
3.3 Watershed Administrative Units having Significant Small Forest Landowner Ownership	15
4. Small Forest Landowner Forest Practices Applications and Acres Harvested	17
4.1 Small Forest Landowner Acres Harvested	18
5. Summary of 2020 Recommendations and 2024 Status Update	20
5.1 Update of the Washington Forestland Database	20
5.2 Forestry Riparian Easement Program	20
5.3 Family Forest Fish Passage Program	22
5.4 Small Forest Landowner Regulation Assistance Program.....	23
5.5 Small Forest Landowner Road Assessment Surveys	24
5.6 Small Forest Landowner Office Outreach and Education	26
6. 2024 Recommendations	28

1. Executive Summary

The 2024 Small Forest Landowner Demographic Report builds on a report published by the School of Environmental and Forest Sciences at the University of Washington. This report, titled “*Washington’s Small Forest Landowners in 2020 Status, Trends, and Recommendations After 20 Years of Forests and Fish,*” (hereafter referred to as the UW Report) was published on January 11, 2021. The UW Report included updated small forest landowner demographic data, as well as trends and policy analyses. It also included recommendations to improve mitigation measures for small forest landowners and improve retention of working forestland held by small forest landowners. With currently appropriated funds, the Small Forest Landowner Office (SFLO) is working with UW to update the database before the next demographic report in 2028.

The UW Report found that an estimated 218,400 small forest landowners own approximately 2.9 million acres of private forestland in Washington. Of those small forest landowners, approximately 70 percent own holdings of 20 acres or less.

RCW 76.13.110 requires

(5) By December 1, 2002, the small forestland owner office shall provide a report to the board and the legislature containing:

(a) Estimates of the amounts of nonindustrial forests and woodlands in holdings of twenty acres or less, twenty-one to one hundred acres, one hundred to one thousand acres, and one thousand to five thousand acres, in western Washington and eastern Washington, and the number of persons having total nonindustrial forest and woodland holdings in those size ranges;

(b) Estimates of the number of parcels of nonindustrial forests and woodlands held in contiguous ownerships of twenty acres or less, and the percentages of those parcels containing improvements used: (i) As primary residences for half or more of most years; (ii) as vacation homes or other temporary residences for less than half of most years; and (iii) for other uses;

(c) The watershed administrative units in which significant portions of the riparian areas or total land area are nonindustrial forests and woodlands;

(d) Estimates of the number of forest practices applications and notifications filed per year for forest road construction, silvicultural activities to enhance timber growth, timber harvest not associated with conversion to non-forestland uses, with estimates of the number of acres of nonindustrial forests and woodlands on which forest practices are conducted under those applications and notifications; and

(e) Recommendations on ways the board and the legislature could provide more effective incentives to encourage continued management of nonindustrial forests and woodlands for forestry uses in ways that better protect salmon, other fish and wildlife, water quality, and other environmental values.

(6) By December 1, 2004, and every four years thereafter, the small forestland owner office shall provide to the board and the legislature an update of the report described in subsection (5) of this section, containing more recent information and describing:

(a) Trends in the items estimated under subsection (5)(a) through (d) of this section;

(b) Whether, how, and to what extent the forest practices act and rules contributed to those trends; and

(c) Whether, how, and to what extent: (i) The board and legislature implemented recommendations made in the previous report; and (ii) implementation of or failure to implement those recommendations affected those trends.

The data used in the UW Report and in this Demographic Report is from the Washington Forestland Database that was updated in 2019. The dataset has not been updated since that time. Consequently, recent trends cannot be analyzed in this report. However, we were able to show the estimates of the number of Forest Practices Applications and Notifications (FPA) filed per year with estimates of the number of acres on which forest practices are conducted by small forest landowners have been updated in this report.

The Small Forest Landowner Office is working on a partnership with the School of Environmental and Forest Sciences at the University of Washington to update the Washington State Forestland Database every 4 years to successfully and accurately complete this legislative requirement.

1.1 Results of the 2019 Demographic Information Analysis

The results of the University of Washington's analysis relative to the questions outlined above show that:

Small forest landowners own approximately 2.88 million forested acres in Washington

- 1.46 million acres in western Washington, and
- 1.42 million acres in eastern Washington

There were approximately 218,480 small forest landowners across Washington state,

- 164,996 landowners in western Washington, and
- 53,484 landowners in eastern Washington.

There were approximately 161,805 parcels of 20 acres or less (70 percent to total parcel acreage), of which 60 percent had some level of "improvement" on them. The data could not provide certainty regarding the types of improvements on various lands. It is likely that many of these improvements are not residence-related and include improvements such as roads, gates, and sheds.

Out of a total of 846 Watershed Administrative Units (WAUs), 36 WAUs statewide (4%) contain a significant proportion of small forest landowner forestlands. Fifty percent or greater is used to identify “significant” portions of total land area.

1.2 Highlights from Surveys Conducted in the UW Report

There are numerous highlights from the UW Report, with each highlight focusing on a different facet of the small forest landowner community. Several of the survey highlights draw a direct correlation to the legislative questions in this report. These highlights are listed below.

- The most important aspects of ownership for small forest landowners, on average, are beauty and scenery, provision of wildlife habitat and environmental benefits, and privacy and personal attachment.
- Issues identified in the surveys as having the most impacts on small forest landowners include property taxes, wildfire, and the development of nearby lands for residential purposes.
- Small forest landowners who have a sole focus on income and investment from their forests may constitute a minority of ownerships, but they tend to own more of the state’s small forestland.
- The impacts of the state’s riparian regulations vary across small forest landowners, but the more forest land a person owns and if they have submitted an FPA in the past 20 years, their response is more negative in their assessment of the financial impact of the regulations, the regulations’ intended environmental impacts, and the extent to which the state has adequately addressed the impacts of the regulations.
- There is, however, no significant association between general regulatory concern and past reported forestland sales. Stronger assessment of perceived challenges to “Ownership in the Future” (lack of a willing heir and development pressure) is associated with actual future (residential) conversion.
- Many Washington small forest landowners think about timber income AND good environmental conditions on their lands instead of timber income OR having good environmental conditions on their forests.

1.3 Results of Small Forest Landowner Forest Practices Application Review

The number of small forest landowner FPAs submitted over the last four years shows that the submission level has been decreasing each year both by small forest landowners and the total number of FPAs submitted.

Date	Total FPAs	Total SFL FPAs	Percent of Total FPAs
2021	4,194	1,887	45%
2022	3,599	1,286	36%
2023	3,479	1,184	34%
Through July 2024	1,963	719	37%

There was a decrease in the number of small forest landowner FPAs submitted from 2021 through July 2024 compared to those submitted from 2017 through 2020. From 2017 through 2020, small forest landowners submitted 6,740 FPAs. For the recent reporting period, small forest landowners submitted 5,076 FPAs, which is 25% less FPAs than the previous four years. On average, small forest landowners submit approximately 38% of the total number of FPAs statewide.

From 2021 through July of 2024, small forest landowners harvested 175,923 acres which is a slight decrease from the previous reporting period in which they harvested 186,344 acres. Additionally, the total harvest acres statewide decreased significantly from 997,835 acres during the last reporting period to 613,061 acres for this reporting period.

1.4 Small Forest Landowner Outreach and Education

The SFLO conducts outreach, education, and training efforts designed to educate and inform small forest landowners on the management of their land and the various technical and financial assistance programs available to them. The SFLO's Community Outreach and Environmental Education Specialist has expanded the outreach and promotion of educational activities increasing the awareness of assistance available to small forest landowners.

1.5 2024 Recommendations

A number of previous recommendations have been successfully supported during this reporting period. However, to ensure they remain supported into the next reporting period, they are reiterated below.

Continue to update the Washington Forestland Database every four years.

With currently appropriated funds, the Small Forest Landowner Office is working with UW on an agreement to update the database before the next Demographic Report, and with available funding, it will continue to be updated prior to each reporting period.

Continue to support policies that prevent the conversion and loss of private forestlands.

Support governmental and legislative policies that incentivize retention of existing private forests. [DNR's 2020 Forest Action Plan](#) identifies that forest conversion, or loss of forests, not only increases the costs and risks of fire suppression, but also results in loss of wildlife habitat, affects water quality, and reduces the forestland base that is necessary to support milling infrastructure and forest industry jobs. As well, [DNR's Plan for Climate Resilience](#) identifies forest conversion as a risk to climate resilience.

The UW Report and stakeholder groups have indicated that one of the prevailing desires of small forest landowners is education in terms of forest health and regulation. Landowner survey results included in the UW Report showed that small forest landowners who are interested in learning more about the care, management, or protection of their forestlands tend to also believe that the public benefits their forests provide are important and overwhelmingly want to keep their forest land forested. Assistance for small forest landowners who want to learn about the care, management, or protection of their lands enables owners who are motivated to keep their lands forested into the future. Although most landowners who receive assistance services are already interested in the care of their lands, a great majority of owners who are interested in outreach services have not yet received them. During this reporting period, the SFLO created and hired a Community Outreach and Environmental Education Specialist, and DNR created the Service Forestry Program in which Service Foresters are now located in every DNR region to assist small forest landowners in meeting their land management objectives. Additionally, the Small Forest Landowner Office expanded its Small Forest Landowner Regulation Assistance Program and now has a Regulation Assistance Forester located in every DNR region. Finally, the Small Forest Landowner Office created and hired a Fish & Wildlife Biologist to help small forest landowners with stream typing, determining fish presence, and creating wildlife habitat.

Continue to help small forest landowners and support salmon recovery by providing additional funding for the Family Forest Fish Passage Program.

Continuing and increasing the funding for the Family Forest Fish Passage Program (FFFPP) restores habitat, including improving conditions on forest lands to support salmon recovery. The FFFPP works with and is supported by conservation districts, regional fisheries enhancement groups, tribes and local fish-related nonprofit organizations, and increases the value of the small forest landowners' land.

Continue to help small forest landowners and support riparian protection by providing additional funding for the Forestry Riparian Easement Program.

In 2024, the legislature passed SSB5667 which made some major changes to the Forestry Riparian Easement Program (FREP). Those changes were:

- Reducing the length of time that the easements are effective from 50 years to 40 years.
- Increasing the compensation for qualifying timber to the amount of 90% of the value of the qualifying timber determined by the small forest landowner office, up from 50%.
- Increasing the compensation for qualifying timber located on potentially unstable slopes or landforms from a maximum of \$50,000 to \$150,000.

Expand designated forestland taxation rules

Expand the Designated Forestland (DFL) taxation rules to include forest health and wildfire resilience best practices as qualifying criteria so that small forest landowners become eligible for favorable taxation rates for engaging in those activities. Stakeholder feedback described in the UW Report indicates that DFL enrollment not only provides property tax relief and support to existing landowners but also appears to have an additional positive effect in terms of forest retention across the state.

Continue to tailor outreach efforts to the needs of specific small forest landowner segments.

The UW Report showed the most effective measures that can be taken to help keep small forest land and their owners as a part of the landscape are additional, secure resources for outreach, education, and technical assistance for small forest landowners, and the authors recommended an increase in the number of stewardship or technical foresters to assist landowners. From the surveys conducted in the UW Report, landowners stated the need for a forester or individual who would walk with the landowner on their land to provide information, advice, and other recommendations.

The SFLO Community Outreach and Environmental Education Specialist has expanded the outreach and the promotion of educational activities thus increasing the awareness of assistance available to small forest landowners. Since her hire in January 2022, the Community Outreach and Environmental Education Specialist attended over 160 virtual and in-person outreach and educational events statewide to promote DNR's technical and financial programs available to small forest landowners.

2. Introduction

The 2020 Small Forest Landowner Demographic Report was written to fulfill the requirements of Revised Code of Washington [\(RCW\) 76.13.110](#). This RCW requires the Small Forest Landowner Office to provide a report to the Forest Practices Board and the legislature containing the following information:

(5) (a) Estimates of the amounts of nonindustrial forests and woodlands in holdings of twenty acres or less, twenty-one to one hundred acres, one hundred to one thousand acres, and one thousand to five thousand acres, in western Washington and eastern Washington, and the number of persons having total nonindustrial forest and woodland holdings in those size ranges;

(b) Estimates of the number of parcels of nonindustrial forests and woodlands held in contiguous ownerships of twenty acres or less, and the percentages of those parcels containing improvements used: (i) As primary residences for half or more of most years; (ii) as vacation homes or other temporary residences for less than half of most years; and (iii) for other uses;

(c) The watershed administrative units in which significant portions of the riparian areas or total land area are nonindustrial forests and woodlands;

(d) Estimates of the number of forest practices applications and notifications filed per year for forest road construction, silvicultural activities to enhance timber growth, timber harvest not associated with conversion to non-forest land uses, with estimates of the number of acres of nonindustrial forests and woodlands on which forest practices are conducted under those applications and notifications; and

(e) Recommendations on ways the board and the legislature could provide more effective incentives to encourage continued management of nonindustrial forests and woodlands for forestry uses in ways that better protect salmon, other fish and wildlife, water quality, and other environmental values.

(6) By December 1, 2004, and every four years thereafter, the small forestland owner office shall provide to the board and the legislature an update of the report described in subsection (5) of this section, containing more recent information and describing:

(a) Trends in the items estimated under subsection (5) (a) through (d) of this section;

(b) Whether, how, and to what extent the forest practices act and rules contributed to those trends; and

(c) Whether, how, and to what extent: (i) The board and legislature implemented recommendations made in the previous report; and (ii) implementation of or failure to implement those recommendations affected those trends.

This 2024 Demographic Report includes information reported to the legislature in the legislatively mandated report “*Washington’s Small Forest Landowners in 2020 Status, Trends, and Recommendations After 20 Years of Forests and Fish*” (UW Report) which was published on January 11, 2021. In 2019, the legislature, via ESB 5330, tasked the School of Environmental and Forest Sciences, within the College of the Environment at the University of Washington, to address a set of questions which broadly deal with the status of Washington’s small forest landowners and their lands, including, the status of their forestlands; relevant trends, regulatory impacts, state policies and programs regarding their forestlands; and recommendations to help encourage “continued management of nonindustrial forests for forestry uses, including traditional timber harvest uses, open space uses, or as a part of developing carbon market schemes”. While ESB 5330 asked a specific set of questions, its overall focus lies in obtaining a broader understanding of small forest landowners and their forestlands and how the state can engage in cost-effective actions to help support small forest landowners with the stewardship of their forestlands.

When collecting data/information in order to answer the above questions for the UW Report, the University of Washington contacted a broad variety of stakeholders to help answer the legislature’s questions and to perform needed analysis. The report’s analysis used trends analysis, regulatory impact analysis, and other data to provide recommendations on ways the Forest Practices Board and the legislature could provide more effective incentives to encourage continued management of nonindustrial forests for forestry uses, including traditional timber harvest uses, open space uses, or as part of developing carbon market ventures. The report includes recommendations to improve mitigation measures for small forest landowners and improve retention of working forestland held by small forest landowners.

The UW Report answered the following questions:

- Has the number of small forestland owners increased or decreased?
- Has the acreage held by small forest landowners increased or decreased?
- Of the land no longer owned by small forest landowners, what percentage was converted to non-forest use, became industrial forestland, trust land, or some other use?
- Determine which factors contributed to small forestland owners selling their land.
- Recommend actions the legislature can take to help keep forestland working
- Assess the effectiveness and implementation of the programs created in RCW 76.13.100(2) which described programs to assist small forestland owners and mitigate the disproportionate economic impact.
- The assessment included evaluating the effectiveness of the Small Forest Landowner Office:

- Does it have adequate resources and authority to successfully address landowner concern?
- Has it received adequate funding to implement fully the duties as assigned through RCW 76.13.110?
- Does the structure of the Forestry Riparian Easement Program adequately address the economic impact to small forestland owners? Has funding kept up with need? Has the lack of funding resulted in the loss of riparian habitat?
- Has the Family Forest Fish Passage Program addressed the economic impact to landowners and fish passage barriers adequately?

Small forest landowners play a key role in protecting water quality, providing diverse habitats for fish and wildlife, providing raw materials for timber products and other forest goods and services, as well as sustaining valuable ecological functions across the landscape. Small forest landowners tend to be situated as the first band of forestland that borders urban growth areas and thus are subjected to significant conversion pressure. Increasing land prices, real estate taxes, and economic hardships are making Washington's small forest landowners more vulnerable to threats of forest conversion and fragmentation as well. Since the passage of Washington State House Bill 2091, otherwise known as the Salmon Recovery Act, the legislature has had an interest in quantifying the numbers, acres and other characteristics of small forest landowners and their lands. This information is crucial to help understand the changing forest land base and the potential implications to the state's economy, the ecological values on the landscape, the availability of fish and wildlife habitat, and other benefits to the citizens of Washington.

Important Note: The data used in the UW Report is from the Washington Forestland Database that was updated in 2019 and has not been updated since that time. Consequently, recent trends cannot be analyzed in this report. However, estimates of the number of FPAs filed per year with estimates of the number of acres of nonindustrial forests and woodlands on which forest practices are conducted have been updated in this report.

2.1 Methods - 2019 Forestland Database Documentation

This Demographic Report uses the 2019 Washington Forestland Database which was used for the UW Report. The University of Washington acquired parcel geometry and attribute data from each county assessor’s office. Data included site address, owner name, mailing address, property value, land use code, and transaction (e.g. sale, inheritance, etc.) type and date. Multiple owners, land use codes, and transactions could be associated with a parcel. Duplicate tabular data was identified and precluded from the database. Spatial data was normalized by identifying duplicate and multipart polygons. The county parcel layer was then intersected with several datasets to summarize parcel attributes. First, forest cover was estimated for each parcel from the USGS National Land Cover Database (NLCD). They then used two criteria to identify parcels for the Forestland Database: private owners with at least 2 acres of parcel AND 1 acre of forest cover OR land use code 87, 88, 92, 95 AND less than 2,500 acres in W WA OR less than 9,990 acres in E WA.

3. 2019 Results

3.1 Forest Landholding Acres and Number of Small Forest Landowners

RCW 76.13.110(5)(a) *(Provide) estimates of the amounts of nonindustrial forests and woodlands in holdings of twenty acres or less, twenty-one to one hundred acres, one hundred to one thousand acres, and one thousand to five thousand acres, in western Washington and eastern Washington, and the number of persons having total nonindustrial forest and woodland holdings in those size ranges.*

Table 1. Total acres owned by small forest landowners in specific landholding size class increments in western and eastern Washington in 2019

Landholding Size Class (Acres)	SFL Forest Acres in Western Washington	SFL Forest Acres in Eastern Washington	Total SFL Statewide Forest Acres
2-20	492,574	145,682	638,256
21-100	446,825	432,082	878,907
101-1000	402,282	608,948	1,011,230
1001-5000	82,705	233,611	316,316
5001+	0	39,409	39,409
Total	1,424,386	1,459,732	2,884,118

The data shows that small forest landowners own over 2.88 million forested acres in Washington. Of this acreage, the data shows that small forest landowner acreage is split almost evenly between western and eastern Washington containing about 1.4 million acres each.

Table 2. Change in Small Forest Landowner Forest Acres by Owner Size Class from 2007 to 2019.

Size Class	Forest Acres 2007	Forest Acres 2019	Change
<20	666,847	638,256	-28,591
20-100	907,128	878,907	-28,221
100-1000	1,071,265	1,011,229	-60,036
1000-5000	310,608	316,317	5,709
5000+	31,590	39,409	7,819
All Classes	2,987,438	2,884,118	-103,320

From 2007 to 2019, small forest landowner forest acres decreased from 2.99 million acres to 2.88 million acres (-103,000), which is roughly twice the area of the City of Seattle. Small forest landowner acreage declined in both Eastern and Western Washington, with decline in parcel area greater in Eastern Washington (-115,000 vs -94,000) while forestland loss was greater in Western Washington (-70,000 vs -33,000). The acreage in the small forest landowner size class from 100 to 1000 acres declined by 60,000 acres. The two smallest owner size classes declined by approximately 28,000 acres. In contrast, forest acres in the two largest size classes increased by 13,500 acres. (Table 2).

Table 3. Number of small forest landowners in specific landholding size class increments in western and eastern Washington in 2019.

Landholding Size Class (Acres)	Total Number of Small Forest Landowners in Western Washington	Total Number of Small Forest Landowners in Eastern Washington	Total Statewide Number of Small Forest Landowners
2-20	131,663	26,775	158,438
21-100	27,231	19,376	46,607
101-1000	5,774	6,402	12,176
1001-5000	328	874	1,202
5001+	0	57	57
Total	164,996	53,484	218,480

The number of small forest landowners increased from 201,000 in 2007 to 218,480 in 2019. The number of small forest landowners increased in 32 counties. The largest increases occurred in King (+6,000), Whatcom (+2,700), and Spokane counties (+1,300). Seven counties had fewer

owners in 2019 than 2007, including Clark (-860) and Okanogan (-120) counties. By size class, the number of owners with 20 to 100 acres increased the most (+9,700). Statewide, the number of owners in each size class increased substantially (Table 4). The number of acres owned by small forest landowners decreased from 3,235,371 in 2007 to 2,884,118 in 2019.

Table 4. Change in number of small forest landowners in specific landholding size class increments between 2007 and 2019.

Size Class	Number of Owners 2007	Number of Owners 2019	Change
<20	155,305	158,438	3,133
21-100	36,926	46,607	9,681
101-1000	8,290	12,176	3,886
1001-5000	648	1,202	554
5001+	24	57	33
Total	200,895*	218,480*	17,287*

* Total owners statewide are less than the sum of classes as some parcels with multiple owners are duplicated in class counts.

3.2 20-acre Parcels and Residency Status

RCW 76.13.110(5)(b) *(Provide) estimates of the number of parcels of nonindustrial forests and woodlands held in contiguous ownerships of twenty acres or less, and the percentages of those parcels containing improvements used: (i) As primary residences for half or more of most years; (ii) as vacation homes or other temporary residences for less than half of most years; and (iii) for other uses.*

The number of small forest landowners cannot be broken out by land use class. Table 5 shows the number of parcels by land use class and changes between 2007 and 2019. The largest share of parcels was Residential land use. The number of small forest landowner parcels in Residential increased by 12,000 between 2007 and 2019. ForestOrNatural and Agriculture decreased by 4,000 and 2,100 parcels, respectively.

Table 5. Changes in the Number of Parcels by Land Use Class from 2007 to 2019.

Land Use Class	Number of Parcels 2007	Number of Parcels 2019	Change
Agriculture	21,361	19,260	-2,101
Developed	1,663	1,727	64
ForestOrNatural	110,358	106,319	-4,039
None	1,385	620	-765
Other	2,102	2,052	-50
Residential	119,675	131,808	12,133
All Land Use Classes	256,544	261,786	5,242

3.3 Watershed Administrative Units having Significant¹ Small Forest Landowner Ownership

RCW 76.13.110(5)(c) (*Identify*) the watershed administrative units in which significant portions of the riparian areas or total land area are nonindustrial forests and woodlands.

Table 6. WAUs containing 50% or greater small forest landowner acreage.

WAU NAME	County	Total WAU Acres	Total Small Forest Landowner Forested Acres	Percent Small Forest Landowner Forest Land in WAU
Beaver Creek	Spokane/Stevens	46,677	26,985	57%
Cedar Creek/Chelatchie Creek	Clark	35,532	20,307	57%
Chewiliken Creek	Okanogan	16,784	9,283	55%
Coppei Creek	Walla Walla	22,117	16,889	76%
Curlew Creek	Ferry	23,298	12,441	53%
Deadman Creek /Peone Creek	Spokane	53,673	29,181	54%
Deer Lake	Stevens	47,886	27,229	57%
Dragoon Creek	Stevens/Spokane	59,914	32,252	54%
George Creek	Asotin	21,729	12,154	56%
Grouse Creek	Stevens	25,179	15,167	60%

¹ For this analysis, 50% or greater is used to identify “significant” portions of total land area.

WAU NAME	County	Total WAU Acres	Total Small Forest Landowner Forested Acres	Percent Small Forest Landowner Forest Land in WAU
Haller Creek	Stevens	88,821	46,040	52%
Harris Creek	King	23,500	11,730	50%
Jordan	Snohomish	15,278	9,684	63%
Klickitat	Klickitat	30,966	16,275	53%
Kooskooskie	Walla Walla	18,198	12,982	71%
Little Deep Creek	Spokane	31,992	18,152	57%
Little Spokane/Deer Creek	Spokane	46,039	27,912	61%
Lower Long Lake	Spokane/Lincoln/Stevens	45,737	24,575	53%
Lower Newaukum	Lewis	44,834	22,555	50%
Lower Pilchuck River	Snohomish	44,912	25,249	56%
Lower Swauk Creek	Kittitas	11,744	6,582	56%
Matheson Rd Creek	Spokane	138	120	87%

Middle Rock Creek	Klickitat	48,529	24,155	50%
Mill Ck/Clugston Ck	Stevens	49,796	26,392	53%
Otter Creek	????	91,626	61,330	67%
Patit Creek	Columbia	26,499	15,890	60%
Pine Creek	Okanogan	26,856	15,139	56%
Pend Oreille/Deer Creek	Pend Oreille	30,211	17,666	58%
Quillisascut Creek	Stevens	23,784	12,494	53%
Stensgar Creek	Stevens	35,709	19,271	54%
Tanwax Creek	Pierce	23,794	15,955	67%
Thompson Creek	Spokane	29,780	15,348	52%
Upper Long Lake	Spokane/Stevens	33,716	18,195	54%
West Branch	Pend Oreille	65,157	33,092	51%
Yelm Creek	Thurston/Pierce	59,426	29,916	50%
Yacolt	Clark	54,997	30,232	55%

A total of 36 WAUs contain 50 percent or more acreage of small forest landowner ownership.

4. Small Forest Landowner Forest Practices Applications and Acres Harvested

Table 7: Small Forest Landowner Forest Practices Applications Received from 2021 to July 2024

a. FPAs Received: 2021

Area	Total FPAs	Total FPAs (SFLO only)	Percent FPAs Being SFLOs
Western Washington	3,142	1,262	40%
Eastern Washington	1,052	625	59%
Total	4,194	1,887	45%

b. FPAs Received: 2022

Area	Total FPAs	Total FPAs (SFLO only)	Percent FPAs being SFLOs
Western Washington	2,757	923	33%
Eastern Washington	842	363	43%
Total	3,599	1,286	36%

c. FPAs Received: 2023

Area	Total FPAs	Total FPAs (SFLO only)	Percent FPAs being SFLOs
Western Washington	2,600	677	26%
Eastern Washington	933	561	60%
Total	3,533	1,238	35%

d. FPAs Received: 2024 (through July 2024)

Area	Total FPAs	Total FPAs (SFLO only)	Percent FPAs being SFLOs
Western Washington	1,438	433	30%
Eastern Washington	525	286	54%
Total	1,963	719	37%

As shown in Tables 7 a-d, FPA submissions by small forest landowners decreased each year from 2021 to July of 2024. The total number of applications submitted by small forest landowners from 2021 to July 2024 was 5,076, which was approximately 38 percent of the 13,235 total FPAs submitted.

However, there was an increase in the number of small forest landowner FPAs submitted for the recent reporting period compared to those submitted from 2017 through 2020. From the last reporting period, small forest landowners submitted 3,896 FPAs. For this reporting period, small forest landowners submitted 5,076 FPAs, which is a 25% increase in FPAs submitted. This shows that there are a higher number of small forest landowners submitting FPA's than the last reporting period. This coincides with increasing staffing in the Small Forest Landowner Regulation Assistance Program, as well as a marked increase in outreach activities by the SFLO Community Outreach and Environmental Education Specialist during this reporting period. Conversely, the total number of FPAs submitted this recent period decreased since the last reporting period. Total FPAs submitted this period (2021-July 2024) was 13,235 FPAs. Total FPAs submitted last reporting period (2017-2020) was 18,988 FPA.

4.1 Small Forest Landowner Acres Harvested

Table 8. Small Forest Landowner Acres Harvested from 2021 through July 2024

DNR Region of Application	2021	2022	2023	July 2024	Total Acres
Southeast	1,727	2,966	3,769	4,679	13,141
Northeast	42,049	14,948	29,240	14,318	100,555
Total Eastern WA	43,776	17,914	33,009	18,997	113,696
South Puget Sound	6,802	4,442	4,686	1,643	17,573
Olympic	1,842	2,463	441	2,043	6,789
Northwest	4,886	3,026	2,658	1,723	12,293
Pacific Cascade	10,866	8,253	6,094	3,371	28,584
Total Western WA	24,396	18,184	13,879	8,780	65,239
Grand Total Statewide	68,172	36,098	46,888	27,777	178,935

Table 8 shows the small forest landowner acres harvested from 2021 through July 2024 which was a total of 178,935 acres and is a decrease from the last reporting period of 186,344 acres

Table 9. Total acres harvested from 2021 through July 2024

DNR Region of Application	2021	2022	2023	July 2024	Total Acres
Southeast	14,808	20,635	14,762	8,269	54,719
Northeast	67,740	37,297	47,109	25,665	177,811
Total Eastern WA	82,548	57,932	61,871	33,934	236,285
South Puget Sound	23,245	20,581	25,322	11,157	80,305
Olympic	23,633	25,273	23,531	11,523	83,960
Northwest	15,602	15,566	13,515	8,771	53,454
Pacific Cascade	45,915	42,557	48,836	25,504	162,812
Total Western WA	108,395	103,977	111,204	56,955	380,531
Grand Total Statewide	190,943	161,909	173,075	90,889	616,816

Table 9 shows the total acres harvested from 2021 through July 2024, which was 616,816 acres. Of these, small forest landowners harvested 178,935 acres, approximately 29% percent of the total acres harvested during this reporting period.

5. Summary of 2020 Recommendations and 2024 Status Update

RCW 76.13.110(5)(e) Recommendations on ways the board and the legislature could provide more effective incentives to encourage continued management of nonindustrial forests and woodlands for forestry uses in ways that better protect salmon, other fish and wildlife, water quality, and other environmental values.

The following information summarizes each recommendation made in the 2020 Demographic Report and a corresponding 2024 status update.

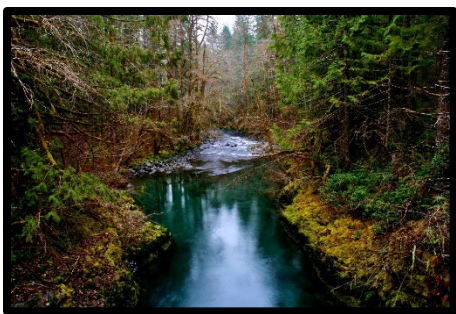
5.1 Update of the Washington Forestland Database

Provide funding to update the 2007 Washington State Forestland Database. This recommendation is critical to provide pertinent information on small forest landowner demographics for the future legislative decisions and reports. Without this update, the status of small forestland and landowners will be unknown and future reports will not be able to provide any new information.

2024 Status Update

The Small Forest Landowner Office is working on a partnership with the School of Environmental and Forest Sciences at the University of Washington to update the Washington State Forestland Database every 4 years to successfully and accurately complete this legislative requirement.

5.2 Forestry Riparian Easement Program



Forest Practices riparian buffer rules and unstable slope rules were updated and adopted in 2001. The Forestry Riparian Easement Program (FREP) was created, in part, to address a disproportionate financial impact these rules had on small forest landowners (RCW 76.13.120). FREP compensates eligible small forest landowners for trees required to be retained in riparian areas to protect fish habitat and water quality, as well as for timber required to be retained on adjacent unstable slopes. In exchange for a direct payment, willing landowners grant a 40-year conservation easement to the state. Landowners still own the property and retain full access but cannot cut or remove the acquired timber during the easement period.

The most straightforward and direct way to keep forest land forested is to legally prevent the conversion of land in forestry or open space use from being converted to non-forestry uses with the voluntary consent of the landowner. This is often done through the purchase of development rights, or conservation easements that specify what kinds of land use are legally allowed on a particular property. Forest riparian easements have a number of benefits, they retain small forest landowners on working forestlands and provide benefits to the citizens of Washington by aiding in the restoration of threatened and endangered fish stocks; cleaning-up and restoring Puget Sound; providing financial support for family forest landowners, which will help maintain their economic vitality, and reduce the risks of conversion of forest lands; and providing jobs related to the conservation easements and forestry consultants.

2024 Status Update

In 2024, the legislature passed SSB5667 which made some major changes to FREP. Those changes were:

- Reducing the length of time that the easements are effective from 50 years to 40 years.
- Increasing the compensation for qualifying timber to the amount of 90% of value of the qualifying timber determined by the Small Forest Landowner Office up from 50%.
- Increasing the compensation for qualifying timber located on potentially unstable slopes or landforms from a maximum of \$50,000 to \$150,000.

The number of easements purchased from FY2021 through FY2024 was 86 easements, which was similar in number to the previous four years which was 82.

There was little change in the number of FREP applications received between the two reporting periods. From FY2021 through FY2024 there was an average of 32 new FREP applications received per year. However, with the increase in compensation for trees required to be left in riparian zones, the SFLO predicts the number of applications received will increase to 37 applications per year.

Funding for FREP substantially increased during this reporting period. For FY2023-25, FREP received \$20.2 million; for FY2021-23 the program received \$1.1 million and in FY2019-21, the program received \$3.5 million. The number of landowners on the FREP waiting list is decreasing with the use of these additional funds during this reporting period. As of July 31, 2024, the waiting list was down to 73 landowners. The average time between when a landowner submits a FREP application and when the landowner is compensated is now approximately 2 years.

5.3 Family Forest Fish Passage Program



Family Forest Fish Passage Project – Before Family Forest Fish Passage Project - After

The legislature intended the Family Forest Fish Passage Program (FFFPP) to help alleviate the disproportionate financial impacts from forest practices laws and rules to small forest landowners. Forest Practices Rules (RCW 76.13.150) directs the state to provide financial assistance to small forest landowners for removal of fish passage barriers. To accomplish this, the state created this cost-share program to provide funding for 75 to 100 percent of the costs to remove fish passage barriers and replace them with passable structures.

Providing additional funding for the Family Forest Fish Passage Program is an effective use of public funding because of the benefits of restoring habitat and improving conditions on forest lands to support salmon recovery. This program is implemented through DNR, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office. The program works with and is supported by conservation districts, regional fisheries enhancement groups, tribes, and local fish-related nonprofit organizations and increases the landowner's infrastructure value.

2024 Status Update:

With steady funding levels, the number of FFFPP projects completed from FY2021 through FY2024 was 47, which was slightly lower than the 56 that were completed during the prior four years. The reasons for this decrease are threefold. During this reporting period COVID-19 was a worldwide pandemic with many people staying home and not working. Thus, the FFFPP saw a shortage of staff to complete these projects. This reporting period also saw a severe decrease in the availability of materials; thus, projects did not get completed in a timely manner. And finally, many projects required an increase in permitting which delayed the progress of project completion.

Additionally:

- An average of 70 applications per year were received during this reporting period.
- The number of landowners on the FFFPP waiting list has steadily increased over this reporting period. As of June 30, 2024, there were 1,338 landowners awaiting funding. This is an increase of 88 landowners on the current list compared to the number on the waiting list at the end of the last reporting period.
- Funding for FFFPP remained steady for the current period compared to the prior period. Approximately \$5 million were appropriated in each of the last six biennial budgets. For FY2023-25 FFFPP received \$7.8 million which was an increase from previous biennia.

5.4 Small Forest Landowner Regulation Assistance Program



The SFLO has expanded with the creation of a new Small Forest Landowner Regulation Assistance Program. A new Regulation Assistance Program Manager position was created along with six new positions that are located across the state.

The small forest landowner regulation assistance foresters assist small forest landowners in understanding the Forest Practices Rules, timber harvest systems, small forest landowner alternate plan templates, 20-acre exempt harvest rules, long-term applications, low-impact harvest activities, road construction techniques, and any other Forest Practices Rules-related issues. Regulation assistance staff also includes a statewide fish and wildlife biologist to assist with stream and wetland typing on small forest landowners' properties. The biologist is prepared to assist with permitting, expertise, and equipment to conduct electrofishing, as necessary, to determine water typing associated with landowner requests and FPAs.

5.5 Small Forest Landowner Road Assessment Surveys

In coordination with the Department of Ecology, western Washington tribes, and Washington Farm Forestry Association (WFFA), DNR developed a Small Forest Landowner Road Assessment Survey Project to evaluate forest roads on the properties of small forest landowners. DNR prepared a Clean Water Act milestone report on the status of compliance with the Forest Practices Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plan Rules, which includes documenting the conditions of small forest landowner roads and identifying fish passage barriers.

With input from Department of Ecology, it was determined that a sample size of 200 road assessments would be adequate to determine whether small forest landowners are complying with the Forest Practices road maintenance and abandonment rules. Most road segments assessed were frequently used by the landowner and were maintained using best management practices. Approximately 46 percent of the road segments assessed through May 15, 2024, were in under-40-acre parcels.

The Small Forest Landowner Road Assessment Survey is now complete. A total of 215 landowners volunteered to have their roads assessed. Forty-two of these were excluded from analysis due to an array of factors including no forest roads on the property, landowners changed their minds about allowing staff to assess their roads, survey respondents could not be reached by various communication efforts, or property sale/transfer. Of the eligible road assessments, 181 are completed (91% from the goal of 200) covering 7,316 miles of road over almost every county in the state that contains forestland. Table 10 below shows the number of small forest landowners who had their roads assessed and the total forestland acreage distribution. These assessments are intended to help determine if there are concerns with forest roads owned by small forest landowners complying with applicable Forest Practices Rules.

This information has been submitted in a report to the Department of Ecology and contributes to the Clean Water Act Milestone to “Prepare a summary report that assesses the progress of small forest landowners in bringing their roads into compliance with road best management practices, and any general risk to water quality posed by relying on the checklist RMAP process for small forest landowners” has been successfully completed.

Table 10. Total forestland acreage distribution of small forest landowners who had their roads assessed

Small Forest Landowner Acreage Ranges	Number of Small Forest Landowners who had
--	--

	Roads Assessed
0 - 6	12
7 - 20	42
21 - 39	30
40 - 100	43
>100	54
TOTAL	181

No Forest Practices Rule violations have been identified during the road assessment survey process. There were several segments that included fish barriers, and the landowners were either active in the FFFPP or the regulation assistance forester informed the landowner about the program. Through September 30, 2023, of 1,034 road segments assessed, 16 segments were found to have low sediment delivery potential, two segments were found to have medium or high sediment delivery potential, 36 segments showed de minimis delivery potential, and the remaining 901 segments showed no delivery potential. Of the 16 road segments with low delivery potential, the landowners were taking active steps to mitigate the potential delivery. The segments including medium and high delivery potential were orphaned roads with existing culverts; these segments only pose delivery potential if the road segments are re-opened.

In summary, field observations and analysis of the verifiable data are clear. The road assessments conducted by regulation assistance staff indicate that small forest landowners assessed in this survey are, by vast majority, proactively complying with the Forest Practices Rules road maintenance requirements.

5.6 Small Forest Landowner Office Outreach and Education



The SFLO conducts outreach, education, and training efforts designed to educate and inform small forest landowners on the management of their land and the various technical and financial assistance programs available to them. The SFLO Community Outreach and Environmental Education Specialist has expanded the outreach and the promotion of educational activities thus increasing the awareness of assistance available to small forest landowners. Since her hire in January 2022, the Community Outreach and Environmental Education Specialist attended over 160 virtual and in-person outreach and educational events statewide to promote DNR’s technical and financial programs available to small forest landowners.

In addition to promoting programs externally, the SFLO and the Community Outreach and Environmental Education Specialist are implementing DNR’s Integrated Small Forest Landowner Service Program. The DNR Integrated Small Forest Landowner Service Program is a collaboration between DNR’s Forest Regulation, Forest Resilience, and Wildland Fire Management divisions and regions to deliver a cohesive landowner services program. This is accomplished by integrating existing landowner assistance programs to reach small forest landowners statewide more efficiently and effectively. Continued education training for DNR Integrated Small Forest Landowner Service Program staff included an expert panel webinar on subjects such as forest health, the Forestry Riparian Easement Program, fire ecology, and Forest Practices Rules. The SFLO Community Outreach and Environmental Education Specialist is responsible for managing the small forest landowner service requests that come through the Landowner Assistance Portal and SFLO “contact us” emails, phone calls, and intake forms to answers questions, share educational content, and connect landowners with their local DNR

staff and program resources.

With the roll out of the new DNR Integrated Small Forest Landowner Service Program, the Community Outreach and Environmental Education Specialist continues to update and create printed outreach materials. Educational outreach also happens through bi-monthly distribution of two educational e-newsletters, the Small Forest Landowner News and the Forest Stewardship Notes, with a growing list of more than 6,000 subscribers. Landowners can subscribe or catch up on previous editions at www.dnr.wa.gov/sflo or request by email to sflo@dnr.wa.gov.



6. 2024 Recommendations

Several recommendations have been successfully supported during this reporting period. However, to ensure they remain supported into the next reporting period, they are reiterated below.

1. Continue to fund the update of the 2019 Washington Forestland Database every 4 years.

With currently appropriated funds, the Small Forest Landowner Office is working with UW on an agreement to update the database before the next Demographic Report. With available funding, it will continue to be updated prior to each reporting period.

2. Continue to support policies that prevent the conversion and loss of private forestlands.

Support governmental and legislative policies that incentivize retention of existing private forests. [DNR's 2020 Forest Action Plan](#) identifies that forest conversion, or loss of forests, not only increases the costs and risks of fire suppression, but also results in loss of wildlife habitat, affects water quality, and reduces the forestland base that is necessary to support milling infrastructure and forest industry jobs. As well, [DNR's Plan for Climate Resilience](#) identifies forest conversion as a risk to climate resilience.

The UW Report and stakeholder groups have indicated that one of the prevailing desires of small forest landowners is education in terms of forest health and regulation. Landowner survey results included in the UW Report showed that small forest landowners who are interested in learning more about the care, management, or protection of their forestlands tend to also believe that the public benefits their forests provide are important and overwhelmingly want to keep their forest land forested. Assistance for small forest landowners who want to learn about the care, management, or protection of their lands enables owners who are motivated to keep their lands forested into the future. Although most landowners who receive assistance services are already interested in the care of their lands, a great majority of owners who are interested in outreach services have not yet received them. During this reporting period, the SFLO created and hired a Community Outreach and Environmental Education Specialist, and DNR created the Service Forestry Program where there are Service Foresters located in every DNR region to assist small forest landowners in meeting their land management objectives. Additionally, the Small Forest Landowner Office expanded its Small Forest Landowner Regulation Assistance Program and now has a Regulation Assistance Forester located in every DNR region. Finally, the Small Forest Landowner Office created and hired a Fish & Wildlife Biologist to help small forest landowners with stream typing, determining fish presence, and creating wildlife habitat.

3. Continue to help small forest landowners and support salmon recovery by providing additional funding for the Family Forest Fish Passage Program.

Continuing and increasing the funding for the Family Forest Fish Passage Program (FFFPP) restores habitat, including improving conditions on forest lands to support salmon recovery. FFFPP works with and is supported by conservation districts, regional fisheries enhancement groups, tribes and local fish-related nonprofit organizations and increases the value of the small forest landowners' land.

Funding appropriated for this program has not matched demand over time. The list of 1,338 qualifying projects is estimated to cost over \$100 million in total. For FY2025-27 the SFLO recommends a funding level for FFFPP of \$12 million to remove 38 high priority fish barriers. The SFLO also recommends the legislature provide funding for sufficient staff levels to adequately implement FFFPP. To correct all the FFFPP applications received from small forest landowners is estimated at over \$100 million.

Continue to help small forest landowners and support riparian protection by providing additional funding for the Forestry Riparian Easement Program.

Continuing funding for the Forestry Riparian Easement Program (FREP) and the increased benefits as a result of SSB 5667 supports riparian area protection and decreases the disproportional impacts to small forest landowners as a result of the Forest Practices rules.

With the support of the FY2023-25 funding the SFLO has eliminated the waiting list of FREP applications however predicts the number of applications will steadily increase as a result of SSB 5667. The SFLO recommends, in addition to the reappropriation request, a funding level for FREP of \$5 million to purchase approximately 40 easements in FY2025-27. The SFLO also recommends the legislature provide funding for sufficient staff levels to adequately implement FREP.

4. Expand designated forestland taxation rules.

Expand the Designated Forestland (DFL) taxation rules to include forest health and wildfire resilience best practices as qualifying criteria so that small forest landowners become eligible for favorable taxation rates for engaging in those activities. Stakeholder feedback described in the UW Report indicates that DFL enrollment not only provides property tax relief and support to existing landowners but also appears to have an additional positive effect in terms of forest retention across the state.

5. Continue to tailor outreach efforts to the needs of specific small forest landowner segments.

The UW Report showed the most effective measures that can be taken to help keep small forest lands and their owners as a part of the landscape are additional, secure resources for outreach, education, and technical assistance for small forest landowners. The authors recommended an increase in the number of stewardship or technical foresters to assist landowners. From the surveys conducted in the UW Report, landowners stated the need for a forester or individual who would walk with the landowner on their land to provide information, advice, and other recommendations.

The SFLO Community Outreach and Environmental Education Specialist has expanded the outreach and the promotion of educational activities thus increasing the awareness of assistance available to small forest landowners. Since her hire in January 2022, the Community Outreach and Environmental Education Specialist attended over 160 virtual and in-person outreach and educational events statewide to promote DNR's technical and financial programs available to small forest landowners.