August 12, 2025

Patricia Anderson
Washington Forest Practices Board
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RE: Reinitiate Adaptive Management Process for Proposed Np Buffer Rule

Ms. Anderson:

The American Forest Resource Council (AFRC) is concerned with the WSR 25-13-101 rulemaking for non-fish bearing streams (Type Np) for private forestlands in western Washington. The proposed rule lacks scientific credibility, legal justification, and economic fairness. It will harm our communities and environment. We respectfully ask that you reinitiate the adaptive management process with the proper resource objective for steam temperature – instead of a misapplied temperature standard - and consider other lower-cost, science-based alternatives – as required by law.

AFRC represents forest product manufacturers in the West and focuses on the management of public forests, including those managed by the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) state trust lands. AFRC's member companies, many of them family owned, produce the renewable, carbon friendly wood products our society needs under the highest environmental and labor standards in the world. AFRC is based in Portland, Oregon and has offices in Eugene, and Olympia, Washington.

The proposed Type Np rule will result in the estimated loss of approximately 235,000 acres of working forests and an annual reduction of between 67-112 million board feet of timber volume. This reduction in timber volume will harm local mills and comes as timber harvest volumes are already declining in Oregon and Washington:

- Harvest reductions on private lands in Oregon due to the 2020 wildfires and the new Private Forest Accords.

- Harvest declines from Oregon's state forests due to a proposed Habitat Conservation Plan with the federal government.
- DNR lands are also projected to see a volume reduction in the current decade under DNR's Sustainable Harvest Calculation.
- Commissioner of Public Lands Dave Upthegrove has "paused" dozens of DNR timber sales as he considers policy changes that may further reduce harvest levels from DNR lands.

These reductions in timber volumes are a serious threat to the milling and forest contractor infrastructure that relies on timber volume from Oregon and Washington, including mills that are important to treat at-risk forests east of the Cascades. The new Type Np rule further threatens this infrastructure.

Washington should take pride in having some of the strongest environmental standards for sustainable timber harvesting. These standards help protect water quality, wildlife habitats, and old growth forests while also balancing revenue generation, recreational opportunities, and other public benefits from DNR state trust lands. Unfortunately, shutting down more private working forests simply shifts our demand for wood products to countries with inferior environmental and labor standards, including China and Russia. This is not environmental leadership.

AFRC is concerned that the Department of Ecology misguided the rulemaking process by wrongly treating 0.3°C as a hard prohibition, rather than a goal, and effectively blocked lower-cost, science-based alternatives that should have been evaluated.

We respectfully ask that you reinitiate the adaptive management process with the proper resource objective for steam temperature – instead of a misapplied temperature standard - and consider other lower-cost, science-based alternatives – as required by law. We also include by reference the August 12, 2025 comments from the Washington Forest Products Coalition, which AFRC joined.

Sincerely,

Heath Heikkila, Director
Government Affairs