



SUMMARY

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Summary

This FEIS document was produced by the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR). This document is intended to satisfy the requirements of the Washington State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) for environmental review. The proposed action under review is the establishment of a sustainable harvest level for the fiscal year 2015 to 2024 planning decade for forested state trust land in western Washington.

Purpose, Need, and Objectives

Purpose: The purpose of the proposed action is to recalculate a sustainable harvest level consistent with DNR policies, including the *Policy for Sustainable Forests* (DNR 2006), the *State Trust Lands Habitat Conservation Plan* (1997 HCP; DNR 1997), and applicable local, state, and federal laws.

Need: The need to recalculate a sustainable harvest level arises from the following laws and policies:

- Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 79.10.320 requires DNR to “manage the state-owned lands under its jurisdiction which are primarily valuable for the purpose of growing forest crops on a sustained yield basis insofar as compatible with other statutory directives. To this end, the department shall periodically adjust the acreages designated for inclusion in the sustained yield management program and calculate a sustainable harvest level.”
- RCW 79.10.330 states that “[i]f an arrearage exists at the end of any planning decade, the department shall conduct an analysis of alternatives to determine the course of action regarding the arrearage which provides the greatest return to the trusts based upon economic conditions then existing and forecast, as well as impacts on the environment of harvesting the additional timber. The department shall offer for sale the arrearage in addition to the sustainable harvest level adopted by the board of natural resources for the next planning decade if the analysis determined doing so will provide the greatest return to the trusts.”
- The *Policy for Sustainable Forests* states that “[t]he department, with Board of Natural Resources approval, will recalculate the statewide sustainable harvest level, for Board of Natural Resources adoption no less frequently than every ten years.”

The objectives for the sustainable harvest calculation are:

- **Objective #1:** Coordinate with the Marbled Murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*) Long-Term Conservation Strategy (LTCS) environmental analysis so that the Board of Natural Resources can integrate the effects of the range of marbled murrelet LTCS alternatives on the sustainable harvest level and arrearage.
- **Objective #2:** Incorporate new information into an updated model to calculate the sustainable harvest level. New information includes changes in the land base, changes in forest inventory, information

concerning the prior decadal arrearage and its causes, changes in technology, and any updates from the finalized forest land plans for the Olympic Experimental State Forest and South Puget HCP planning units.

- **Objective #3:** Consider climate change as part of the affected environment, analyze climate change impacts and benefits of the alternatives, and identify possible mitigation measures that will reduce or eliminate any identified adverse environmental climate change impacts of the proposal.
- **Objective #4:** Ensure alternatives analyzed are reasonable, feasible, and consistent with DNR’s trust management obligations, existing DNR policies, and applicable state and federal laws.

The Alternatives

Six alternatives are analyzed in this final environmental impact statement (FEIS), including a no action alternative. DNR’s preferred alternative in this FEIS is Alternative 6. The alternatives represent a range of harvest levels based on different combinations of marbled murrelet LTCS options (the impacts of which are analyzed in the marbled murrelet LTCS FEIS), options for how to best address arrearage volume from the fiscal year 2005–2014 planning decade, and options for riparian thinning in the five western Washington HCP planning units, excluding the Olympic Experimental State Forest (OESF; Table S.1).

Table S.1. Summary of the Alternatives

Component	Alternative 1 (no action)	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4	Alternative 5	Alternative 6
Marbled murrelet LTCS alternative	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative D	Alternative E	Alternative F	HCP Amendment ¹
Arrearage	Assume no harvest of arrearage volume	Harvest 702 MMBF proportionally from sustainable harvest units with deficits over 5 years	Harvest 462 MMBF proportionally from sustainable harvest units with deficits over 10 years	Harvest 462 MMBF proportionally from sustainable harvest units with deficits in 1 year	Arrearage volume is incorporated into the inventory	Harvest 382 MMBF proportionally from sustainable harvest units with deficits over 10 years
Riparian thinning in the five west side planning units	Up to 10 percent of the riparian area	Up to 10 percent of the riparian area	Up to 1 percent of total upland harvest and thinning area in these planning units	Up to 1 percent of total upland harvest and thinning area in these planning units	Up to 1 percent of total upland harvest and thinning area in these planning units	Riparian volume not included when setting the sustainable harvest level

¹ The Amendment marbled murrelet LTCS presented in this FEIS differs from alternative H in the Long Term Conservation Strategy for the Marbled Murrelet FEIS (DNR 2019a). A description of the differences are provided in Chapter 1.

The alternatives result in differing harvest levels both in terms of harvest and thinning acres and volume (Table S.2.).

Table S.2. Average Annual Harvest and Thinning Area, and Volume

	Alternative 1 (no action)	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4	Alternative 5	Alternative 6
Average annual harvest acres	12,500	12,000	11,200	11,000	8,900	11,400
Average annual thinning acres	7,500	4,700	2,100	2,000	2,500	1,600
Average annual volume (including arrearage volume)	550	520	459	453	384	465

Summary of Potential Impacts to Elements of the Environment

Impacts evaluated in this FEIS relate primarily to the acres of harvest that occur under each alternative. The alternatives result in different timber harvest volumes for the decade.

■ Earth

Soil resources and areas subject to landslide hazards will continue to be protected by existing DNR regulations, policies, and procedures.

■ Climate

Climate change impacts are not expected to be exacerbated by any alternative within the planning decade. Carbon sequestration is expected to be greater than emissions under all alternatives.

■ Aquatic Resources

Reduced acres of thinning in alternatives 3 through 6 could delay some riparian areas meeting their restoration objectives. However, overall HCP objectives are expected to be met.

■ Vegetation

The proportion of structurally complex forest will increase under all alternatives. Protection of rare plants and ecosystems, old growth forests, and natural areas would not change under any alternative.

■ Wildlife

Wildlife would benefit from the development of structurally complex forest under all alternatives. All stand development stages will remain on DNR-managed land, providing habitat for a large number of species. Northern spotted owl will continue to be managed under the 1997 HCP (DNR 1997) and habitat will continue to increase in designated Spotted Owl Management Units (SOMUs). Consistent with the *Washington Environmental Council et al. v. Sutherland et al.*² settlement agreement that occurred during the previous decadal planning period (fiscal years 2005-2014), the action alternatives for the 2015-2024 planning decade include northern spotted owl conservation as defined in the HCP but not in the agreement. The no action alternative includes conservation measures defined in the agreement. No impacts to northern spotted owl are expected by this difference. Populations of other threatened and endangered species, and sensitive and regionally important wildlife will not be impacted by any of the alternatives.

■ Marbled Murrelet

This FEIS incorporates by reference the marbled murrelet LTCS FEIS (DNR 2019a). The lands included in this FEIS but outside the analysis area in the marbled murrelet LTCS FEIS are not expected to support marbled murrelets because they are beyond the range of the marbled murrelet.

The marbled murrelet LTCS FEIS analysis showed that for all alternatives, habitat losses in the short term (the first decade of the planning period, due to harvest of habitat outside of long-term forest cover) would be mitigated over time by the recruitment of additional habitat and an increase in interior habitat in strategic locations within long-term forest cover. When the acres of this habitat are adjusted for quality, the cumulative impacts expected on marbled murrelet habitat are exceeded by the mitigation expected under every proposed alternative except the marbled murrelet LTCS alternative (Alternative B) incorporated into Alternative 2 of this FEIS.

² Washington Environmental Council et al. v. Sutherland et al. Settlement Agreement (King County Superior Court No. 04-2-26461-8SEA, dismissed April 7, 2006).