

Streams: Forestry board meets March 3 to approve draft rules

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sion, Pacific Rivers Council, The Wilderness Society, Oregon Natural Resources Council, Headwaters, Defenders of Wildlife, National Wildlife Federation, Oregon Shores Conservation Coalition and Forest Conservation Council. The Idaho Conservation League and the Westport (Wash.) Charterboat Association also signed the letter.

A spokesman for Roberts said Friday the governor had not seen a final draft of the letter and would have no comment. Ketcham said he sent an earlier version of the letter to Ann Squier, the governor's natural resources assistant, on Wednesday.

"The governor is entitled to do anything that she wants to, of course," said Janet McLennan, forestry board chairwoman. "We keep in touch with the governor as we go along, particularly on an issue as sensitive as this one."

The board's seven members are appointed by the governor.

State Forester Jim Brown said through a spokesman that he hadn't seen the letter's final draft but was committed to meeting the intent of the 1991 Legislature, which told the board to adopt new stream protection rules.

The board has scheduled a March 3 work session in Salem to approve draft rules that will be sent out for public hearings this spring. The final rule was due in September, but intensive pressure from timber industry representatives and small woodland owners prompted the department to revise and relax a more protective set of rules first proposed last summer.

"The Department of Forestry is looking at the minimum area they can protect and the maximum amount of timber they can deliver to the industry," asserted Bill Bakke, executive director of Oregon Trout.

McLennan said the board will base its decision on the best available science but will also take "reasonable economics" into consideration.

Ward Armstrong, executive director of the Oregon Forest Resources Alliance, said the scope of the new rules warranted intensive industry scrutiny.

"The reality is, we're at a very tense and difficult time in managing forest lands in Oregon today," he said. "This is a very serious debate about how forest lands are going to be managed in the future. What's at stake in riparian areas is management vs. nonmanagement."

If the rules are too strict, Armstrong said, they'll discourage the state's private timberland owners.

"Then you begin to set in motion a management prescription that makes owning land less and less attractive," he explained. "You tend to mine the timber that's there."

The latest draft rules have drawn strong criticism from some scientists and from state and federal agencies, including the Department of Environmental Quality, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.

Critics take issue with department proposals to reduce the width of streamside buffer zones; to allow a greater proportion of large conifers to be removed from buffers; to relax shade requirements, especially along streams in arid areas; and to require only temporary retention of the largest trees along streams.

"Once again, fish habitat is being sacrificed to keep logging costs low," Ted Strong, executive director of the Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, said

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in a Jan. 22 letter to Ted Lorensen, the forestry department's forest practices supervisor.

Because they ignore the relationship between fish productivity and the amount of large woody debris older forests deposit in streams, the proposed rules are "a clear recipe for degradation of fish habitat," Strong wrote.

The commission called for retaining all vegetation within 100 feet of perennial streams or within the entire floodplains of perennial streams, whichever is greater.

Last March, scientists at Oregon State University also recommended a 100-foot-wide no-harvest buffer along major fish-bearing streams.

Stan Gregory, associate professor of fisheries and wildlife at OSU's College of Agricultural Sciences, says that's the surest way to guarantee enough large trees will remain to provide shade for cooling, large woody debris for creating pools and riffles, roots for anchoring streambanks and nutrients to aid forest regeneration.

As the rules stand now, trees left standing near streams after one logging cycle could be cut down in the next cycle 40, 50 or 60 years later. That means few trees on private land would ever reach 100 years of age, though many scientists say that's the minimum age at which trees begin playing an essential role in stream health.

Most old trees along streams on private land have long since been logged, said Robert Beschta, professor of forest hydrology in the OSU College of Forestry. "We don't have pristine systems anymore on private land," he said. "The reality is, we'll never get them back."

The letter's signers said that at a minimum, the board should adopt the fish and wildlife proposal to leave twice as many conifers within buffers as the Forestry Department has proposed — 70 trees instead of 35 per 1,000 feet, for example, along the state's largest fish-bearing streams.

But McLennan said it would be "inappropriate" for the board to adopt standards proposed by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife or any other group without public review.

Even under the 70-tree proposal, habitat for sensitive coastal salmon stocks wouldn't be restored to natural conditions for 150 years, the Department of Fish and Wildlife concluded in a 1992 study. Under the Forestry Department's proposal, it's not clear that the state ever would achieve those standards.

Groups hit stream protection proposal

■ Environmentalists and commercial fishermen ask the governor to get involved to strengthen codes they feel are lax

By KATHIE DURBIN

of The Oregonian staff

Environmentalists and commercial fishermen are urging Gov. Barbara Roberts to take a direct hand in shaping new stream protection rules for state and private forest land.

In a letter delivered to the governor Friday, 18 conservation and fish protection groups asked Roberts to intervene in rulemaking by the Board of Forestry as it moves toward adopting draft standards for streamside logging next month.

Without her involvement, they said, the board is likely to succumb to timber industry pressure and adopt rules unsupported by the best available science. They contend the Department of Forestry's latest draft rules fall far short of what's needed to protect and begin restoring streams and riparian corridors hammered by logging, road-building and soil erosion.

"The situation is critical," the letter's signers said. "The board is poised to approve a set of draft rules which will violate state water quality standards, further reduce the productivity of Oregon's watersheds, and drive additional native salmon and trout populations toward extinction."

They accused the Department of Forestry of "altering substantive aspects of the rule proposals to satisfy (timber) industry interests" in its latest draft rules without offering any scientific rationale.

The 1991 Legislature directed the board to adopt a new stream classification and protection system "consistent with the health of the forest and the protection of fish and wildlife." Once adopted, the rules will govern logging in streamside corridors on 10.4 million acres of private land and 786,000 acres of state land across Oregon.

Paul Ketcham of Portland Audubon said the Department of Forestry retreated on a number of fronts in the December revision of its draft rules:

- It agreed to cut by half the required minimum width of streamside buffer zones if loggers can show they'll leave the required number of trees within the narrower buffer.
- It reduced shade requirements and added what the letter writers called "equivocating language" that requires retention of trees for shade only "whenever possible, and where necessary."
- It allowed logging that would result in water temperature increases of up to 2 degrees in fish-bearing streams, a standard some biologists consider dangerous to fish.
- It reduced the number and size of conifers to be retained on smaller fish-bearing streams.
- It allowed dead snags to be counted as live trees and no longer required loggers to leave dead snags along non-fish-bearing streams to provide for roosting birds, amphibians and other species.

The letter's signers included virtually all the state's major environmental and fisheries groups: the Portland Audubon Society, Audubon Society of Corvallis, Association of Northwest Steelheaders, Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations, Oregon Trout, Trout Unlimited, Oregon Salmon Commission, Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commis-

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