

Forestland Preservation

FACT SHEET

Who may Apply?

- Cities
- Counties
- Nonprofit nature conservancies
- Washington State Conservation Commission

Types of Projects Funded

Purchase of conservation easements and associated restoration of forestland. The purchase of the conservation easement must include purchase and extinguishment of all development rights.

How Much are the Grants?

Up to \$350,000.

Funding for habitat improvement or restoration activities can be up to half the acquisition costs.

When Can I Apply?

- Pre-applications due May 1, 2019
- Final applications due June 4, 2019
- Learn more at the March 7 Webinar at www.rco.wa.gov/doc_pages/press/2019/193.shtml

Funding

Funding comes through the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program from the sale of general obligation bonds.

Recreation and Conservation Office

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Conserving Washington's Working Forests

Washington's forests are some of the most productive in the world, providing wood and other products to meet society's needs. They do far more than provide wood for our homes however. They also help keep water clean for people, fish, and farms; provide habitat for wildlife; give us places for outdoor recreation; and even absorb carbon dioxide to help minimize climate change.

They also are important to our economy. Washington is the second largest lumber producer in the nation.¹ More than 1,700 forest products-related businesses call Washington home, supporting 101,000 workers and gross business income of about \$28 billion a year.²

Purpose

Washington's growing population has put incredible pressure on the state's forests, especially private forest lands. From 1978-2001, 700,000 acres of forestland were converted to suburban development, rights-of-ways, and agriculture.³ The loss of these forestlands not only threatens to diminish a reliable source of wood products, but threatens to impair important habitat for fish and other wildlife.

More than 40 percent of Washington's forests are privately owned.⁴ Many of these tree farms have been held by families for generations. Forest landowners, large and small, face a variety of challenges from changing market conditions, regulatory uncertainty, costs associated with managing and restoring forests, and pressure to convert lands to non-forest uses. These landowners often point to the need for a process to receive reasonable compensation in exchange for conserving this rural legacy as an important tool in keeping their working forests profitable and productive.

To help conserve working forests, the Washington Legislature in 2016 added a new category to the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program and set aside 1 percent of the program's allotment to fund the acquisition of easements on working forestlands.

Forestland preservation grants must be used to protect forestland for the growth and harvest of timber for commercial purposes. Funding also may be used to restore fish and other wildlife habitat in those protected forests.

Eligible Forests

To be eligible for protection, forests must be enrolled in a county's open space or forestland property tax program. Forestland is defined as any contiguous 5 or more acres that are devoted primarily for the growth and harvest of



Courtesy of Ken Miller

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commercial timber. Forestland owners who want to receive the benefits of this program must work with a project sponsor (local government, land trust, or the Washington State Conservation Commission), which submits the application.

What do Forest Owners Receive?

- Compensation in exchange for development rights (permanent)
- Compensation for other less-than-fee-title real property rights, such as water rights or carbon credit, through conservation easements
- Funding for design and construction of habitat improvement and restoration projects, such as stream crossings, fencing, in-stream habitat improvements, native plantings, invasive plant removals, and culvert replacements.

What Must I Contribute?

Except for the State Conservation Commission, project sponsors, not the landowners, must match the grant with their own resources, which can include cash, bonds, conservation futures, prison labor, donations, grants, local impact fees, or the use of staff, equipment, and materials.

How are Projects Judged?

A committee of people with experience in forestland management and conservation score the project based on the following criteria:

- **Viability of the Site:** What is the viability of the site for commercial timber production?
- **Forestland Stewardship:** What stewardship practices beyond the Forest Practices Act are in place that support timber production or provide ecological benefits?
- **Threat to the Land:** What is the likelihood the land will be converted to some other use than forestland if it is not protected?
- **Community Values:** How will protecting the land for timber production provide benefits to the community? Do the community and area Native American tribes support the project?
- **Multiple Benefits:** Does the project include recreational uses that are compatible with habitat conservation? Does the project include resource uses or management practices that are compatible with conservation and provide the ability to achieve additional conservation benefits?

Funded Projects



The Columbia Land Trust is using a \$350,000 grant to conserve about 360 acres of forestland on the East Fork Lewis River and Rock Creek in northeastern Clark County.



Forterra is using a \$350,000 grant to conserve 816 acres of working forests, wetlands, and nearly 2 miles of Puget Sound shoreline in Mason County. The easement will extinguish the development rights and expand the no-cut buffers on the salmon-bearing streams and the marine shoreline, permanently protecting the working forest and the land's environmental benefits.

¹Washington Forest Protection Association Web site, www.wfpa.org/news-resources/facts/, accessed February 19, 2019

²Washington State Department of Commerce Web site, www.commerce.wa.gov/growing-the-economy/key-sectors/forest-products/, accessed February 19, 2019

³*Forest Land Conversion in Washington State*, Washington Department of Natural Resources Web site, http://file.dnr.wa.gov/publications/em_fwflanduse.pdf, p. 60, accessed February 19, 2019

⁴Ara Erickson, "Private Forest Landownership in Washington State," University of Washington College of Forest Resources Northwest Environmental Forum, November 2005, p. 3, <https://digital.lib.washington.edu/researchworks/bitstream/handle/1773/2233/tp1.pdf>, accessed February 19, 2019