



# Forest Facts

## STREAMSIDE PROTECTION

October 2012

Oregon's riparian (streamside) protection rules enacted in 1994 under the Forest Practices Act were the most comprehensive ever passed in the state. They were created after three years of considering science and policies that pertained to water protection and classification, beginning with the 1991 legislative session and Senate Bill 1125. The bill instructed the

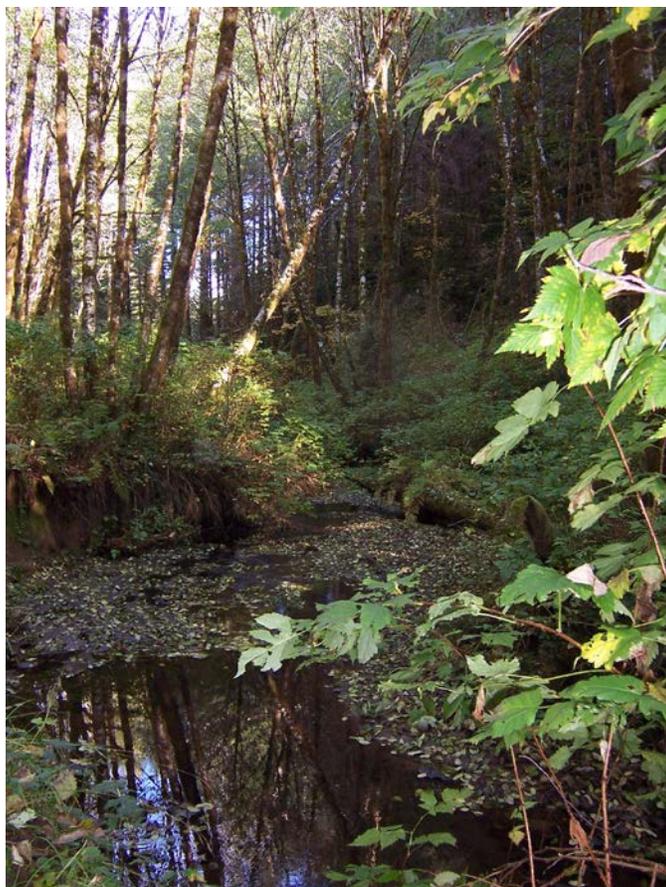
Board of Forestry and the Oregon Department of Forestry to revise stream protection rules so that fish in all Oregon streams would be equally protected. All private, state and local government forest landowners or operators conducting operations near streams, lakes, or wetlands must comply with the rules. The Senate Bill established a clear target for water quality by developing best management practices.

### **Rules allow flexibility in addressing needs**

To ensure that appropriate management practices are being used in the best ways possible to protect riparian areas on forestlands and improve stream habitat, these rules allow for flexibility in the way they are implemented. This flexibility also provides incentive for landowners to address restoration needs.

### **Four critical areas addressed by the riparian protection rules**

1. Maintaining live trees and vegetation along streams and other waters. This enhances biodiversity and improves fish habitat by providing cover, shade, adequate stream temperature levels, sediment reduction, snags and downed wood, nutrients, and bank protection.



2. Increasing large, mature wood along streams that, over time, will fall into streams and enhance fish habitat.

3. Maintaining adequate fish passage up and down the length of a stream, because ensuring that fish have opportunities to move along the length of streams is important for spawning, feeding and avoiding reaches of streams with high temperatures or low flows.

4. Stream and landscape variation. To provide the most appropriate protection to a variety of streams and waters, the riparian rules created nine different stream classifications and additional lake and wetland classifications.

### **Key rule components**

- All fish bearing streams have riparian management areas between 50 and 100 feet, which include vegetation and conifer trees. Within these areas, all fish bearing streams used for domestic water, as well as all other medium and large streams, require a 20-foot no-harvest buffer on each side of the stream. An exception to the rule, however, is when it is necessary to restore a stand of trees.
- The revised stream classification system contains nine classes, rather than just two under former rules. The system identifies seven geographic regions, as well as streams with fish or used for domestic use, and whether the stream is large, medium or small, based on water volume.

### **In addition**

- Rules related to harvest practices, road construction, stream crossings and fish passage have been strengthened considerably.
- There are now incentives for landowners to purposely place large woody debris in streams to enhance habitat, where appropriate.

- The volume of conifer trees retained along fish-bearing streams has substantially increased over those retained under previous rules. This helps ensure there are future opportunities for conifer trees to fall naturally into streams, and that stream structure and fish habitat continue to improve. The rules also allow for an increase in trees that are retained to provide shade, which helps maintain stream temperatures for aquatic life.
- The Department of Forestry uses physical habitat characteristics (stream steepness or watershed area, for example) to determine if a stream would have fish use. In some instances, the department (with the help of the Department of Fish and Wildlife) uses fish surveys to help refine the classifications.
- The Board of Forestry can adopt special protection rules for streams that aren't in compliance with state water quality standards or streams with threatened and endangered species. A monitoring program examines how the rules are working and provides opportunities to follow-up on potential problem areas and progress.

### **More information**

The rules were implemented in early summer of 1994, and Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) personnel work with cooperators, landowners and operators to help educate them on rule requirements.

More information can be obtained by contacting any ODF field office, or at:

<http://cms.oregon.gov/ODF/pages/index.aspx>.