

Key messages about the ODF RipStream project

- Full project title - ODF Private Forests Riparian Function and Stream Temperature study (RipStream)
- RipStream started in 2002; project study area is 33 sites (18 private land, 15 State Forest) on medium and small Type F [fish-bearing] streams throughout the Coast Range. The findings of RipStream are not applicable to Eastern Oregon. Findings may be applicable to the west side of the Cascades and southwest Oregon.
- Main objective – evaluate the effectiveness of forest practices rules/strategies at protecting stream temperatures and promote riparian structure. RipStream looks at a stream reach, not a paired watershed study for two years pre-harvest and five years post-harvest. Years of data collection have occurred in documenting stream temperature, shade, channel morphology and riparian vegetation
- Good example of collaborative research – Oregon Department of Forestry, private forest landowners, OSU, USFS, ODFW, DEQ, Oregon Headwaters Research Cooperative and EPA all working together for common benefit and expanded knowledge base.
- This research uses effective science and the best available science. We have worked to control as many variables as possible, with considerable work placed on controls (including pre- and post-harvest sample controls), international and domestic peer review and extensive external evaluation of the findings.
- Two DEQ water quality temperature standards were tested as part of this study: (1) numeric temperature thresholds that have been directly linked to harm to fish if exceeded and (2) the protecting cold water standard (PCW standard) which prohibits detectable (>0.3 degrees C) human-caused warming of streams.
- There was no evidence to support that harvesting RMAs on small and medium Type F streams directly harmed fish through exceedances of the numeric temperature standard on average across the landscape on either State or Private sites.
- Private site treatment reaches exceeded the DEQ 0.3 degree C change threshold (PCW standard) more frequently than background levels (e.g., at upstream control reaches).
- State Forest sites did not exceed the PCW standard more than background levels.

- Harvest activity led on average to a 0.7 C increase on private lands. Not all private sites increased in temperature, others increased by up to 2.5 C (4.5 F). State forest lands did not differ from background temperature change. A change in temperature was associated with a change in shade. In turn, shade was related to riparian basal area and tree height.
- The Board of Forestry determined at the January 2012 meeting that there is monitoring or research evidence to document the degradation of resources maintained (i.e., that there is evidence that forest practices conducted under existing regulations do not insure forest operations meet the state water quality standard for protecting cold water on small and medium fish streams). The Board also directed the Department to begin the rule analysis process that could lead to revision of the riparian protection standards to increase the maintenance and promotion of shade on small and medium fish streams.
- Further, the Board directed the Department to work with stakeholders to develop a plan for developing alternatives, including non-regulatory approaches, based on available scientific information. The rule analysis plan, or outline, will be presented to the Board at the April 2012 meeting.