Post-Disturbance Harvest Oregon Administrative Rules (OARS)

Effective: 3/1/2026

OAR 629-643-0000: Vegetation Retention Goals for Streams; Desired Future Conditions

(1) The purpose of this rule is to describe the vegetation retention measures for streams, the measures' purposes, and how the measures shall be implemented. The vegetation retention requirements for streams, as described in OAR 629-643-0100 through 629-643-0500, are designed to produce desired future conditions for the wide range of stand types, channel conditions, and disturbance regimes that exist in Oregon's forestlands.

(2) The desired future condition for streamside areas that require forested buffers is to grow and retain vegetation so that, over time, average conditions across the landscape become similar to the conditions of mature streamside stands. Oregon has a tremendous diversity of forest tree species and stand density along waters of the state. The age of mature streamside stands varies by tree species. Mature stands generally occur between 80 and 200 years of stand age. Hardwood stands and some conifer stands may become mature at an earlier age. Mature forests provide ample shade over the channel, an abundance of large wood in the channel, channel-influencing root masses along the edge of the high-water level, and regular inputs of nutrients through litter fall. Mature forests are generally composed of multi-aged trees of appropriate and varied density, native tree species well suited to the site, a mature understory, snags, and downed wood.

(3) For the forests specified in (2) above, the rule standards for desired future conditions and located in Western Oregon or the inner zone in Eastern Oregon can be developed by using normal conifer yield tables for the average upland stand consistent with the geographic region to estimate the conifer basal area for average unmanaged mature streamside stands (at age 120). For site specific vegetation retention prescriptions basal area targets, see the table in OAR 629-643-0400. These rule standards provide guidance for operators to implement site specific alternate plans to develop site specific vegetation prescriptions, described in OAR 629-643-0400.

(4) The desired future condition for streamside areas that do not require tree retention areas, as defined in OAR 629-643-0130, is to have sufficient streamside vegetation to support the functions and processes important to downstream fish use waters and domestic water use, and to provide habitat for amphibians and other wildlife across the landscape. Such functions and processes include but are not limited to:
   (a) Maintaining downstream cool water temperature and other water quality parameters;
   (b) Influencing sediment production;
   (c) Stabilizing banks; and
   (d) Contributing nutrients and organic matter.

(5) In many cases, the operator may achieve the desired future condition for streams by applying the standard vegetation retention and small forestland owner minimum option prescriptions as described in OAR 629-643-0100, 629-643-0105, 629-643-0120, 629-643-0125, 629-643-0130, 629-643-0135, 629-643-0141, 629-643-0142, 629-643-0143, and 629-643-0145. In other cases, the existing streamside vegetation may not be able to develop into the desired future condition in a timely manner. In these cases, the operator may apply an alternative vegetation retention prescription as described in OAR 629-643-0300 or develop a site-specific vegetation retention prescription as described in OAR 629-643-0400. For the purposes of these water protection rules, "in a timely manner" means that the trees within the riparian management area will substantially move towards the desired future condition more quickly than if the trees are left untreated.

OAR 629-643-0300: Alternative Vegetation Retention Prescriptions

(1) The purpose of this rule is to prescribe an alternative vegetation retention prescription for harvest units experiencing stand level mortality. This alternative prescription is intended to contribute to desired future conditions, provide tree retention, woody debris, bank stability and result in the re-establishment of live trees.

(2) For the purposes of this rule only, "stand level mortality" means a riparian management area or harvest unit with 50% or more dying or recently dead trees due to a catastrophic event such as wildfire, wind, ice, insect or disease damage.

(3) For the purposes of this rule only, "soil disturbance" means soil has been moved in a manner that alters water drainage patterns so that a new channel is formed within which water flows or is confined and has potential to move loosened or exposed soil or debris toward the stream.

(4) For harvest units in Western Oregon the operator may:

(a) For Type F and Type SSBT stream riparian management areas experiencing stand level mortality, harvest dying or recently dead trees outside 75 feet slope distance from the edge of the active channel or the channel migration zone (CMZ).

(A) The operator shall apply an ELZ at a distance of 75 feet from the edge of the active channel or the channel migration zone (CMZ) to the outer edge of the riparian management area.

i. Soil disturbance from cabled logs shall not exceed 20 percent of the total area of the ELZ.

ii. Soil disturbance from ground-based equipment shall not exceed 10 percent of the total area of the ELZ. Operators shall take corrective action(s) for soil disturbance from ground-based equipment. Corrective action(s) shall be designed to replace the equivalent of lost functions and be consistent with Forest Practices Technical Guidance.

(B) To encourage hardwood sprouting, the operator shall not apply chemicals within 75 feet slope distance from the edge of the active channel or the channel migration zone (CMZ) unless needed to address invasive species or noxious weed infestations and shall apply chemicals using targeted ground-based application. Chemical application in the remainder of the riparian management area is to be minimized to the greatest extent possible.

(C) To encourage less dense spacing, the operator may apply the minimum stocking standard described below rather than the productivity-based stocking standards described in OAR 629-610-0020(4) within the riparian management area.

i. 130 free to grow seedlings per acre; or

ii. 75 free to grow saplings and poles per acre; or

iii. 50 square feet of basal area per acre of free to grow trees 11-inches DBH and larger; or

iv. An equivalent combination of seedlings, saplings and poles, and larger trees as calculated in OAR 629-610-0020(7).

(b) For small Type Np stream riparian management areas experiencing stand level mortality, harvest dying or recently dead trees within the riparian management area. The operator shall apply an R-ELZ from the edge of the active channel in any area where tree removal occurs consistent with OAR 629-630-0700(6) and OAR 629-630-0800(8).

(c) For units experiencing stand level mortality that contain slope retention areas identified under OAR 629-630-0910(3), harvest dying or recently dead trees in the slope retention areas, if the slope retention area is not directly adjacent to designated debris flow traversal areas or Type F stream, Type SSBT stream, large or medium type Np stream riparian management areas. If the harvest unit contains one or more designated sediment source areas adjacent to a riparian management area or designated debris flow traversal area, the operator shall retain all trees in at least one of the slope retention areas.

(5) For harvest units containing Terminal Type Np stream riparian management areas experiencing stand level mortality in Eastern Oregon, the operator may harvest dying or recently dead trees within the outer zone of the riparian management area.

(6) The State Forester shall exempt small forestland owner harvest units experiencing stand level mortality from the watershed cap described in OAR 629-643-0140.

(7) Except as explicitly stated in this rule, all other forest practice rules apply.