

Programmatic Plan for Management of King County-owned Working Forest Properties

August 2003

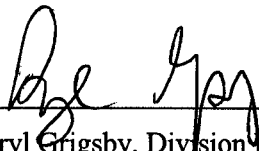


King County

Department of Natural Resources and Parks

Water and Land Resources Division

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Daryl Grigsby, Division Director

King County Water and Land Resources Division

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

This document outlines key policies and goals for managing working forests in the King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks land inventory as required by item six of the King County Executive Order: Implementation of Forest Policies (PUT-18). This document also provides direction for land managers when developing Forest Stewardship Plans for each working forest.

1.2 Existing King County Working Forest Lands

1.2.1 King County is the most populous county in Washington, with over two million residents. Development pressure has resulted in a rapid decline in forested acreage.

1.2.2 In recognition of the values provided by forestland, King County has determined that four properties in its resource lands inventory should be managed as working forestland: Sugarloaf Mountain Forest, Taylor Mountain Forest, Mitchell Hill Connector Forest, and Ring Hill Forest. These properties are low-elevation forests ranging in size from approximately 300 acres to nearly 1900 acres. They are second or third growth forests and the stand ages range from recent plantations to nearly 100 years. Forest health varies widely within and among sites.

1.2.3 The lands were acquired to create contiguous tracts of forested property in the Rural Forest Focus Areas and the Forest Production District (FPD), to retain lands in active forestry, to protect areas from development, and/or to provide a buffer between commercial forestland and adjacent residential development.

1.2.4 King County acquired these properties with funds from the federal Forest Legacy program, King County Arts and Natural Resources bonds, REET, and the rural forest category of the King County Transfer of Development Rights program.

1.2.5 If additional lands are added to the working forest inventory, they will be managed in accordance with this Programmatic Plan and a specific Forest Stewardship Plan.

2.0 GOALS FOR KING COUNTY-OWNED WORKING FORESTS

King County will manage its working forest properties to sustain and enhance environmental benefits, demonstrate progressive forest management and research, and provide revenue for a self-supported management program. When managing working forests, King County land managers will **balance sustainable¹ timber production with conservation and restoration of resources, and with public use** (2002, King County Executive Order PUT-18). Managing this balance will be most effective over time if done in the context of the surrounding regional landscape of each working forestland.

3.0 FOREST MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

The following guidelines will direct the management of forestlands owned by King County to assure that they meet the above goals. King County land managers will follow these guidelines in their management actions.

3.1 Timber Production

3.1.1 Meet Washington State Forest Practice Act standards to protect water quality, riparian habitat, and other non-timber values of the forest, and to reduce the invasion of non-native vegetation into newly disturbed areas.

3.1.2 Design timber harvests to make effective use of existing access and minimize the impacts of new and existing roads.

3.1.3 Maintain the long-term timber production capability of the site by maintaining and/or improving forest health.

3.1.4 Before commercial harvest or thinning, analyze the economic costs and benefits. The cost-benefit analysis should include: project planning and design, volume and value estimates by species; the extraction costs, including logging, trucking, permits, road building/maintenance/decommissioning, culvert fish passage assessment/removal/replacement, and reforestation. This analysis should also determine if the timing is appropriate. If the analysis concludes that harvesting costs exceed revenue generation and the overall ecological health of the forest will not be materially improved, harvesting will not be pursued until a future time when these conditions can be met.

3.1.5 Develop an efficient mechanism for contracting forest practices, including harvest.

¹ “Sustainable” is defined for the purposes of this Programmatic Plan as: *maintaining healthy forests through silvicultural practices that sustain or improve ecological, economic, and social functions.*

3.1.6 Dedicate revenue from harvests for the management of working forest properties (King County Executive Order PUT-18).

3.1.7 Use a multidisciplinary team approach to implement forest practices. The team may include the expertise of County, State or private ecologists, hydrologists and other professionals in addition to silviculturists and foresters.

3.2 Conservation and Restoration of Resources

3.2.1 Protect, and where possible, enhance and restore sensitive areas, ecological and cultural resources, and fish and wildlife habitats.

3.2.2 Consider cumulative impacts on ecological resources within the context of surrounding land uses.

3.2.3 Manage to create a native vegetation community for each working forest site that includes a range of tree species and age diversity.

3.2.4 Meet the requirements of federal and state laws and other legal requirements to identify and protect endangered, threatened, sensitive, candidate species, and species of concern, and their habitats.

3.3 Public Use

3.3.1 Provide opportunities for education and appropriate recreation.

3.3.1.1 Where it does not conflict with sustainable timber production and conservation of resources, provide public access and opportunities for recreation on working forest properties.

3.3.1.2 Public access may be closed, restricted or limited to protect public safety during a timber harvest; to prevent theft, vandalism and garbage dumping; to protect soils, water quality, plants and animals; or to meet other objectives identified in the individual Forest Stewardship Plan.

3.3.1.3 Appropriate recreation may include: hiking, mountain biking, horseback-riding, picnicking, bird watching, orienteering, and recreation opportunities that require only limited development (e.g., access, parking lot, trail-building and trail improvements). Allowed recreation will be determined for each site based on sensitivity of the site and potential conflicts with other uses.

3.3.1.4 Assure that any trails and roads being used for public use are not damaging public resources. Decommission trails that cause damage to sensitive areas. When possible, make trail and road maps available to the public.

3.3.1.5 When possible, provide interpretive information on each site as appropriate, including signs, maps, etc. that describe the features of the site, sustainable forestry practices, and the King County Forestry Program.

3.3.1.6 Work with community groups and individuals to help monitor, maintain, and steward working forest properties.

3.3.1.7 Consider recreation use when planning the location of a timber harvest. When forest practices occur near recreational areas, post signs to educate, protect and inform visitors.

3.3.2 Provide opportunities for research and forestry demonstration.

3.3.2.1 Make sites available for forestry education.

3.3.2.2 Offer working forests as research sites for the University of Washington, Washington State University, Green River Community College and other academic institutions to pursue mutually beneficial opportunities.

3.3.2.3 Use forest practices as opportunities for educating the general public and landowners about sustainable forestry through workshops, tours, signs, and/or press releases.

3.4 Adjacent Landowners and Surrounding Landscapes

Consider the broader landscape and adjacent landowners in planning for and managing working forest sites.

3.4.1 Consider land uses and forest management strategies on neighboring properties and the surrounding landscape when preparing a Forest Stewardship Plan. Stay apprised of surrounding management activities.

3.4.2 Consider impacts to adjacent landowners and the surrounding landscape when developing a Forest Stewardship Plan. Encourage landowner participation in the planning process.

3.4.3 Inform adjacent landowners when going forward with forest practice or site development activities that will affect them.

3.4.4 Consider sharing resources and cooperating on forest practice activities with adjacent landowners to improve operational and economic feasibility of these practices.

3.5 New Initiatives

Continue to seek out new information, think creatively and implement new initiatives.

3.5.1 Continue to evaluate the benefits of a forest certification program and consider seeking green certification for county-owned forestland.

3.5.2 Research and consider developing a marketing program to market local wood, or other activities to increase the market value of resources from the sites.

3.5.3 Adapt management to reflect evolving forestry research. Consult with WADNR and private landowners to discuss and share innovative forest management techniques, research and findings.

3.6 Forest Stewardship Plans for Working Forest Properties

For each working forest site, the Department of Natural Resources and Parks will develop a Forest Stewardship Plan. Each plan will be reviewed and approved by the Manager of the Water and Land Resources Division. The plans will follow the guidelines in this document and will include all the elements of Public Rule 819 (Forest Stewardship Plans), Section 6.3.

3.6.1 Forest Stewardship Plans and their subsequent updates should include:

3.6.1.1 A vision (i.e. long-term goals, and objectives) for each working forest site for the next 50 years including a statement of how the three primary goals mandated through the Executive Order (PUT-18) will be balanced on that particular forest property and what tradeoffs may occur between them;

3.6.1.2 A description of funding sources and other administrative constraints that may limit potential management approaches for the property;

3.6.1.3 Forest inventory data, including mapped sensitive areas and significant habitat features, collected with protocols consistent with industry standards and separated into management units;

3.6.1.4 Short and long-term maintenance and capital improvement needs and budgets;

3.6.1.5 An assessment of sustainable timber production, growth and yield projections (harvest volume) and potential revenue (income/cost estimates);

3.6.1.6 An assessment of ecological resources, forest stand health, forest habitat functions, and natural resource restoration opportunities;

3.6.1.7 Area of forest land and net area of forest land available for timber production minus riparian and sensitive areas;

3.6.1.8 Value of investment, including forestry regeneration;

3.6.1.9 Level, type, and location of recreation use;

3.6.1.10 Desired development of education programs and potential budget requirements; and

3.6.1.11 A list of management practices and time frames to address the identified goals, objectives, and priorities for at least the next 20 years.

3.6.2 Planners should seek input from King County foresters, basin stewards, Parks staff, ecologists, wildlife biologists, and hydrologists. Supplemental assistance and input from State and private agencies should be utilized as needed.

3.6.3 Plans should be updated every ten years. Plans can be amended at any time if significant new conditions or technologies arise.

3.6.4 Plan updates and monitoring indicators should be flexible and based on adaptive management principles.

3.7 Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plan (RMAP) for Working Forest Properties

3.7.1 Develop and implement Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plans (RMAP) for each working forest site in accordance with WAC 222-24 and Section 3 of Washington State Forest Practices Board Manual

3.7.1.1 As part of the RMAP process, an assessment of roads and culverts and their impacts on ecological resources and habitat functions, including an assessment of sediment impacts and impacts to fish passage will be completed.

3.7.1.2 Road planning should be integrated with forest management and recreation planning.

3.7.1.3 Design timber harvests to make effective use of existing access and minimize the construction of new roads.

3.7.1.4 Timber harvest revenue will be used to help fund RMAP requirements.

3.7.2 The County will seek capital budget appropriation and grant funding to help finance RMAP requirements.