

STATE OF ALASKA

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DIVISION OF FORESTRY

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Helping Keep Your Fish Abundant and Water Clean - The State Forest Resources and Practices Act

The next time you enjoy a day of fishing or a glass of pure water, remember that the Forest Resources and Practices Act (FRPA) is doing its part to safeguard Alaska's resources. At recent public forums, some members of the public made uninformed and misleading statements that FRPA does not protect Alaska's fish habitat and water quality. There is no evidence to support these assertions. On the contrary, FRPA is working well.

FRPA and its regulations are specifically designed to protect fish habitat and water quality. FRPA establishes best management practices (BMPs) for forestry on state, municipal, and private lands statewide. The BMPs include mandatory riparian buffers on anadromous fish streams, mandatory reforestation requirements, and requirements for timber harvesting, road construction, and road maintenance.

FRPA is dynamic, adaptive, and has BMPs that are based on sound science. The BMPs have been developed through an interdisciplinary process with scientific and technical review panels, and implementation committees that include stakeholders. The Board of Forestry oversees the review process. Using this process, FRPA and its regulations have been modified three times since 1990 to reflect improved scientific understanding of forest and aquatic ecosystems.

The Departments of Natural Resources, Fish and Game, and Environmental Conservation all participate in the Act's implementation. Professionals from the three agencies conduct inspections, implementation monitoring, and road condition surveys to verify that FRPA is implemented properly and is effective. Multi-stakeholder effectiveness monitoring has been done continuously since 1992 and has demonstrated FRPA is working to protect anadromous fish habitat.

Board of Forestry members represent fisheries, wildlife, recreation, mining, Native Corporation, professional forestry, forest industry, and environmental interests. The Board also welcomes public input at all meetings. The Board annually evaluates FRPA's effectiveness and reports its findings to the Governor. In mid-March the Board reviewed monitoring data and reports from all three agencies, and unanimously determined that the Act is effective in protecting fish habitat and water quality.

Private landowners also contribute to FRPA's success. To protect fish habitat and water quality, harvest operations on private land have left standing timber worth millions of dollars in riparian buffers without compensation.

Suggesting that FRPA is not effective or enforced is unfair to the agencies, Board members, and landowners who work hard to protect important public resources. Instead, raise a glass of clean Alaska water and toast to the benefits that you receive from Alaska's Forest Resources and Practices Act.

John (Chris) Maisch C.F., State Forester

(Mr. Maisch is a certified forester and has served as the Alaska's State Forester overseeing the Alaska Division of Forestry since 2005. The state Forester serves as the chairman of the Alaska Board of Forestry and is an ex officio member).

"Develop, Conserve, and Enhance Natural Resources for Present and Future Alaskans."