

Federal forest roads

Aging roads in federal forests impact water quality and fish passage. Since many of these forests are at higher elevations, the downstream effects can be significant. The national Legacy Roads and Trails Remediation Initiative provides funding for work in federal forests to reduce these downstream impacts. Since 2008, this program has made significant progress in restoring fish habitat and improving or removing U.S. Forest Service roads. In Washington, 2009 Legacy Roads investments of \$7.1 million restored or enhanced 63 miles of fish habitat, improved or maintained 733 miles of roads, and decommissioned 160 miles of road. Increased fish passage work on private lands would leverage federal Legacy Roads investments toward integrated watershed outcomes.

Lasting investments, such as this bridge, benefit the economy and the environment.
(Department of Natural Resources photo)



Conclusion

Washington State is creating jobs in rural areas, putting people to work and supporting local communities. Our state is already well-positioned to capitalize on the unique economic opportunities surrounding the growing green sector with an expanded jobs in the woods program.

A modest \$15.5 million federal investment will strengthen weak links in rural county road programs, enable public, tribal, and private partners to accelerate the pace of work on small family forestlands, bring county roads and stream crossings up to standards, and continue to identify and prioritize roads and fish passage barriers for repair or removal. This investment would immediately create desperately needed, well-paying rural jobs for contractors, loggers, construction workers, and engineers. Perhaps even more importantly, these projects are an investment in long-term jobs by supporting the sustainability of working private forestlands.

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Jobs in the woods stimulate local economies, provide passage for threatened and endangered salmon, and protect clean water. (Department of Natural Resources photo).

- ✳ **Washington State has made an unprecedented commitment to restoring Pacific salmon populations while maintaining economically viable forest industries.**
- ✳ **The hardships of today's economy threaten our state and the core environmental values shared among the people of Washington.**
- ✳ **We can create immediate jobs with lasting benefit and avoid economic and environmental harm.**
- ✳ **A targeted \$15.5 million federal supplement to state and private investments would help meet restoration goals and keep forest economies viable.**



Washington State Environment and Economy:

Jobs in the Woods Through Proven Programs

Washington State is creating jobs in rural areas that will put people to work immediately. Our statewide unemployment rate is 9 percent but in our rural counties, it is as high as 16.5 percent. To get our economy moving, we need to create jobs. The state is seeking a modest \$15.5 million in federal funding to complement ongoing work in Washington's forested watersheds and support local economies and jobs in rural counties. For every \$100,000 invested in fish passage projects, 1.57 jobs are created for the three-month construction season. An additional \$15.5 million in federal funding would create about 500 new direct and indirect jobs

Since 2000, Washington state agencies, land managers, and private landowners have invested over \$192 million in repairing forest roads to protect and restore salmon habitat. More than 3,000 barriers to fish migration have been removed or repaired, restoring 2,200 miles of historic habitat.

Family forest owners and county governments are especially strained by difficult economic conditions. To meet forest and salmon restoration goals, federal assistance is vital to supplement investments in family forest landowners and county forest roads. A proven, accountable and collaboratively-run state program – the Family Forest Fish Passage Program (FFFPP) – would be used to deliver federal investments where they're needed most.

Washington's public values

For generations, forestry and fishing have been the foundation of the Pacific Northwest's economy, environment and culture – recognized by important federal Indian treaties. Forests and salmon are inseparable and signature icons of the Evergreen State and the entire Pacific Northwest.

Washington State works hard to protect its forests – and to keep them working. Collaboration between state, federal, tribal and local governments, non-profit organizations, and private forest landowners guides forestry so that diverse public interests are best met while keeping the forest industry economically strong. Our public values are clear:

- ✳ Create green jobs and economic opportunities in rural communities.
- ✳ Rebuild salmon populations to harvestable levels.
- ✳ Honor and implement Indian treaty fishing rights.
- ✳ Sustain our forest industry and encourage renewable green products.
- ✳ Improve water quality in forested watersheds by reducing sediment delivery to streams and spawning areas.
- ✳ Minimize flooding and resulting downstream harm.



*Before: a failing culvert.
After: a bridge and fish-friendly woody debris are placed in a small, privately owned forest in the Chehalis area
(Department of Natural Resources photos)*

Challenges of today's economy

Small family landowners rarely have an even flow timber harvest schedule and revenue to support road maintenance work. The burden of the economic downturn – and the 62 percent drop in housing starts in Washington since the start of the recession – now puts the pace of road repair and abandonment at risk – a risk that is borne by fish and other public resources found in Washington's working forests.

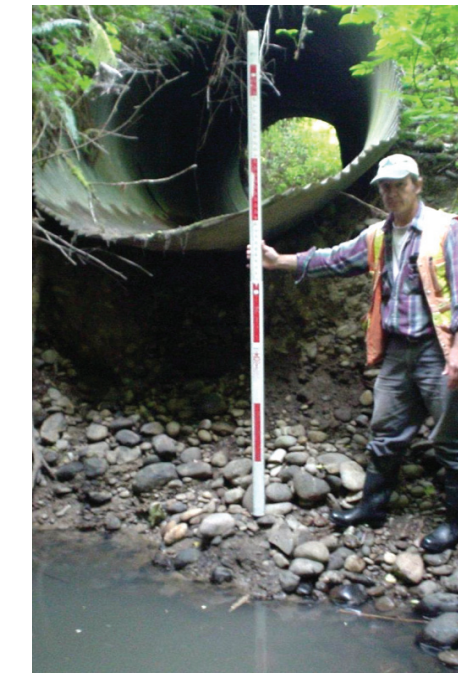
Washington does not want to lose ground – and it wants to put people to work.

About half of Washington's commercial forest lands are in small tracts owned by family landowners. Thousands of fish-bearing streams flow through these forest lands and provide high-value prime fish habitat. The state Family Forest Fish Passage Program provides financial assistance to small family forest landowners and is one of the critical links in a comprehensive approach to forest road management.

Forest landowners also depend on an extensive network of rural county roads for access to their lands. Counties are facing decreasing budgets for road projects; but unmaintained county roads can block fish passage. Focused investments to remove fish passage barriers on county roads will complement state, tribal, private and federal investments toward achieving the state's goals.

Modest investment would put people to work as soon as funding is available

Of the additional \$15.5 million in annual funding Washington State is seeking, \$7.5 million would accelerate the Family Forest Fish Passage Program per year, and \$8 million could focus on county forest road repairs and maintenance. This contribution of federal funding will enable the state and its partners to implement high-value forest road projects within an existing cost-effective administrative system. These projects will bring family-wage jobs to rural communities.



Common example of a culvert that blocks fish passage in one of Washington's privately owned small forests.

(Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office photo)

Proven program, proven results

The successful Family Forest Fish Passage Program has a proven track record in repairing fish passage barriers on small, family-owned forest parcels. The cost-share program provides public funds to prioritize and implement projects on small private forest lands with a landowner's match. Projects are assessed and prioritized based a "worst first" strategy. This work is done through partnerships with conservation districts, Tribes, salmon enhancement groups and other project sponsors.

Since its inception in 2003, the program completed nearly 200 projects, opening more than 400 miles of stream habitat previously inaccessible to fish. The state has invested over \$17 million in this program, yet faces a backlog of over 400 project applications – a waiting list that grows by 50 to 80 applications each year.

A typical project to replace a culvert with a bridge costs \$87,750. During the 2009 construction season, 30 projects created 50 jobs. Current funding allows for 30 projects annually that can open up 53 miles of stream habitat a year. To meet both current and anticipated needs, the only constraint is funding. An additional \$7.5 million for the Family Forest Fish Passage Program will support 90 more fish passage projects that will open an estimated 160 miles of stream habitat – tripling the number of completed high value projects.