

Board boosts no-logging buffers

PORTLAND (AP) — Forest officials have voted to expand no-logging buffers along streams on private timberland in western Oregon to keep water cool enough for salmon.

The Oregon Board of Forestry adopted the rules on Thursday, despite protests from logging interests. Riparian zone buffers would increase to 80 feet on medium-sized streams and 60 feet on small streams, with the option to not cut any trees or to do thinning on part of the buffer.

The new rules won't apply in the Siskiyou region, which was left out of the buffer expansion.

Currently trees must be left uncut 20 feet from streams on private timberland — though some additional feet are required where a number of trees must be maintained.

Removing too many trees leads streams to warm up, which can harm cold-water fish like salmon, steelhead, and bull trout. Logging near streams also eliminates downed logs, which help create deep pools for salmon to

escape predators and hide from the heat.

The bigger the no-logging buffers, the more shade, but the greater the economic impact on timberland owners.

Conservationists for years have been trying to get the board to boost the current buffers of 20 feet to 100 feet in order to meet the cold water standard. In recent years, record hot temperatures and drought have killed fish.

Earlier this year, federal regulators ruled that Oregon logging rules do not sufficiently protect fish and water in western Oregon from pollution caused by clear-cutting too close to streams, runoff from old logging roads, and other problems.

The Board of Forestry considered two proposals. One would have increased no-cut buffer zones to 90 feet, while the other would have left buffers unchanged, but would have require approaches such as thinning, sun-sided buffers or staggering harvests. The newly adopted rules were a compromise between the two.

"We feel it's a modest step

in the right direction, but we're concerned it doesn't go far enough," said Bob Van Dyk with the Wild Salmon Center. Van Dyk said the new small stream buffers still won't meet legal requirements to protect cold water for salmon.

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Timber companies said the buffer increase would have big economic effects and is too expensive for loggers. Kristina McNitt, president of the Oregon Forest Industries Council, said the organization sees the new logging restrictions as political and arbitrary. The group represents private timberland owners.

"There is no evidence that modern forest practices harm fish," McNitt said in a statement.

Musical on tap...



PHOTO BY JERRY BALDOCK

The Sisters High School music department is performing the hilarious Broadway musical "Urinetown" Thursday through Sunday in the SHS auditorium. Tickets are only available at the door. There are over 90 students involved in making this show a success.

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