

State amends reforestation regulations

DNR has adopted amendments to the Forest Resources and Practices Act (FRPA) regulations governing reforestation on commercial operations. The amendments will go into effect on March 9, 2017.

The FRPA is designed to protect fish habitat and water quality, ensure prompt reforestation, and help the timber and fishing industries provide long-term jobs. FRPA and its regulations balance economic concerns for the timber industry with needs for water quality, habitat protection, and sustainability.

The proposed amendments to the FRPA reforestation regulations in 11 AAC 95.235-.385 are the product of a three-year process to assess effectiveness of the current standards in interior and southcentral Alaska, summarize relevant research, and review proposals with stakeholders and the Board of Forestry.

The amendments:

- Incorporate information from recent scientific research on the timing of natural reforestation processes, seedling growth and survival, and response of native and non-native trees to changing climate conditions.
- Provide more flexibility for landowners to use a broader mix of seed sources and tree species to better adapt to changes in site conditions.
- Allow a longer period for reforestation where site indicators show that natural regeneration is likely to be successful.
- Provide more flexibility in the distribution of reforestation within harvest areas to reflect natural conditions and benefit wildlife.
- Allow landowners to use new remote sensing technology rather than expensive ground surveys to assess forest conditions following insect infestations, wildfire, or other disturbances and to assess reforestation success following timber harvests.
- Prohibit planting of known invasive tree species.

These changes will help maintain productive forests, reduce landowner costs, benefit wildlife habitat, and lessen the risk of spread of invasive tree species.