

Alaska Board of Forestry 2025 Annual Report to the Governor

A Review of the Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Act: Implementation and Effectiveness

March 2026

The Alaska Board of Forestry

The Board of Forestry provides a forum for forest practices issues and management of forests on state land. The Board monitors the implementation and effectiveness of the Forest Resources and Practices Act and reports its findings to the Legislature and Governor. Board members represent the following constituencies:

- ◆ DNR State Forester, Jeremy Douse, Chair
- ◆ Native Corporations, Nathan Lojewski
- ◆ Non-Governmental Forester, Keith Coulter
- ◆ Recreation, John Rusyniak
- ◆ Fish & Wildlife Biologist, Bill Morris
- ◆ Timber Industry, Eric Nichols
- ◆ Commercial Fishing, Vacant
- ◆ Mining, Denise Herzog
- ◆ Environmental Org., Brian Kovol

**2025 Report from the Board of Forestry to the Governor on the Forest
Resources and Practices Act (FRPA)
March 2026**

The Board of Forestry is pleased to submit our annual report to the Governor regarding the Forest Resources and Practices Act (FRPA) and forest management issues in Alaska. This letter presents our recommendations on the following topics:

1. Generating jobs
 - Southeast Alaska timber
 - Interior Alaska timber
 - Response to USDA Forest Service NOI
 - Local lumber grading effort
 - Statewide timber industry support
 - Meeting operational capacity
2. Wildfire and risk management
 - Hazardous fuels reduction
3. Forest Practices Act Effectiveness
 - Minimizing environmental impact of timber harvest
 - Funding Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) field presence
 - FRPA effectiveness
 - Filling vacant Board of Forestry position: Commercial Fishing

GENERATING JOBS

The Board commends the Division of Forestry & Fire Protection (DFFP) in their efforts to generate jobs for Alaskans, supporting the timber industry and protecting Alaskans from wildfire.

Southeast Alaska timber

As the U.S. Forest Service’s timber sales in the Tongass National Forest continue to fall well below planned levels, the State remains under significant pressure to offer timber sales to help maintain a viable supply for the Southeast Alaska timber industry. DFFP offers all the timber allowable under state statute with a small agency workforce in Southeast Alaska. As part of the Governor’s Timber Bridge program for the Southeast Alaskan industry, the State has seen a dramatic increase in State timber volume offered to support operators in the region, doubling the 10-year average in the past two years. DFFP remains committed to selling 14 million board feet of timber per year as long as possible. Additionally, the State is working under a Good Neighbor Authority Master Agreement with the Forest Service to offer timber sales on the Tongass National Forest. This year DFFP closed out one 10-year contract and still has one active contract near Ketchikan. DFFP is working on three additional GNA sales to be offered on the Tongass.

The Board recognizes that the U.S. Forest Service’s recent decrease in the number and volume of timber sales in the Tongass National Forest significantly limits the timber supply available to maintain a viable timber harvest industry in the region. The Board further encourages the State to work with the U.S. Forest Service to reverse this trend to generate job growth and promote economic activity in Southeast Alaska. Without an adequate timber supply, we risk losing our existing timber industry, the effects of which will be felt throughout Southeast Alaska. The State

and the Forest Service are developing a Shared Stewardship Agreement to increase forest management activity on the Tongass as well as the Chugach National Forests.

Interior Alaska timber

The Board recognizes that Interior Alaska's timber supply is largely supported by DFFP's management of the 1.8 million-acre Tanana Valley State Forest and other State lands, which together provide more than 70 percent of the region's timber. This consistent supply, managed under principles of multiple use and sustained yield, supports long-term availability of timber for Interior Alaska's forest products industry. The Board notes the importance of identifying and offering salvage timber damaged by insects, floods, fires, and windstorms, and supports adaptive prioritization to prevent the loss of usable timber and maintain economic value.

The Board further notes that an active timber sale program, supported through local area offices in Fairbanks, Delta Junction, Tok, and Glenallen, provides harvest opportunities that sustain employment for local loggers and provide raw material for commercial timber and fuelwood processors. The Board supports the continued use of adaptive sale design to reflect dynamic market conditions and respond to disturbance-driven salvage needs. Active forest management in the Interior also provides broader benefits and services to Alaskans, including the development and maintenance of an extensive forest infrastructure network that supports access, wildfire response, and long-term stewardship.

Response to USDA Forest Service NOI to initiate the assessment phase of the land management plan of the Tongass National Forest. Recently, DFFP was asked to develop comments for the State's submission to the U.S. Forest Service on their Notice of Intent to initiate the assessment phase of the land management plan revision of the Tongass National Forest (89 FR 32393). The NOI describes the process to assess social, ecological and economic conditions within the planning area. The Forest Service is statutorily required by 16 U.S.C. §539d to "seek to provide a supply of timber from the Tongass National Forest which (1) meets the annual market demand for timber from such forest and (2) meets the market demand from such forest for each planning cycle." It is in the interest of the State for the Forest Service to comply with this statutory requirement and for it to be identified in the upcoming planning process. The Board recommends DFFP continue to track this plan revision and provide input to the Forest Service.

Local lumber grading effort

Despite historically high demand for locally sourced dimension lumber, many Alaskan sawmills have historically been unable to sell structural lumber for residential construction due to the cost and limited access associated with traditional lumber grading systems. Passage of Senate Bill 87 in 2023 and subsequent program implementation have begun to address these constraints, creating new opportunities for Alaska sawmills to supply graded lumber for in-state construction.

The Alaska Lumber Grading program (ALG), developed by DFFP in coordination with the University of Alaska Fairbanks Cooperative Extension Service, continued with implementation in 2025. The program supports small and medium-sized sawmill operators by providing training and certification that allows locally produced dimension lumber to be used in residential construction. Early implementation indicates strong demand from operators, Tribes, and rural communities, with the program supporting local employment, encouraging investment in small-scale milling operations, and increasing utilization of Alaska timber resources. Since the training program was implemented, 183 Alaskans have been trained and certified in the Alaska Lumber

Grading program. The Board strongly supports continued implementation of the ALG program, including expanded training opportunities in areas such as lumber drying and mill operations, as well as ongoing coordination with municipalities to support adoption of ALG lumber within local building codes.

Statewide timber industry support

The Board recognizes the Governor’s interest in and efforts to revitalize the timber industry in Alaska and offers strong support for those efforts, while emphasizing the importance of preserving the water quality and fish habitat protections of the Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Act.

Meeting operational capacity

The Board commends the Governor’s support and the Legislature’s actions to increase and maintain staffing capacity within DFFP. Recent funding decisions have helped stabilize funding for key forestry positions, ensuring foresters are retained and positioned to support forest management, while allowing timber sale receipts to be directed toward road maintenance and other active management work on State forest and forest classified lands. Additional staffing in forestry, engineering, and administrative support positions has strengthened the State’s ability to plan projects, maintain access, and respond to increased forestry and fire activity across Alaska.

With adequate staff, the Division is better able to meet the industry’s demand for timber statewide and provide the consistency needed for operators to plan and invest. Recent additions to the Fire Program, coupled with improvements to firefighter wages and benefits implemented with strong support from the Governor, have significantly improved recruitment and retention of State wildland firefighters. These actions have strengthened initial attack capability and enhanced public safety for Alaskans. The Board notes recent improvements in recruitment and supports sustained investment in competitive wages, benefits, and staffing levels to preserve this progress and provide long-term stability for Alaska’s timber industry and the communities that depend on effective wildfire protection.

WILDFIRE AND RISK MANAGEMENT

The Division’s Forestry and Fire Protection programs remain closely integrated supporting Alaska’s unique wildfire model. While the programs have distinct missions, they continue to share staff, equipment, and operational capacity, resulting in efficiencies and cost savings. Heavy equipment used during the fire season are also used to maintain forest access, implement hazardous fuels reduction projects, and support forest health and resilience work. As wildfire conditions in Alaska continue to grow more complex, this integrated approach allows the State to prioritize preparedness, mitigation, and rapid initial attack.

Hazardous fuels reduction

Wildfire risks in Alaska are becoming increasingly challenging, with fire seasons beginning earlier, lasting longer, and exhibiting greater intensity and complexity than in years past. Ensuring that our communities are prepared has never been more critical. The Board remains committed to supporting proactive hazardous fuel reduction as a core component of the State’s wildfire response strategy and to advancing efforts in building fire-resilient communities.

Recent fire seasons have demonstrated the tangible value of hazardous fuel reduction investments. In 2023 and 2025, firefighters were able to use several existing fuel breaks to guide

strategic management decisions and contain portions of multiple fires near the Haystack and Himalaya subdivisions in Fairbanks. One example is the Leuthold Fuel Break, initiated in 2023, which provided tactical advantages beyond a containment line on the 2025 Himalaya Fire by serving as an anchor point, safety zone, and staging area for firefighters. The fuel break also contributed to providing for safe and timely evacuation of Haystack subdivision residents.

These projects are designed to safeguard the lives and property of Alaskans and to protect the State's essential infrastructure and natural resources, including timber, which form the foundation for stable industry, development, and investment. Over the past five years, this work has relied upon CIP allocations and a variety of grant sources. Given the demonstrated effectiveness of hazardous fuel reduction in protecting communities, the Board recommends continued investment in this critical program. Each dollar invested in hazardous fuel reduction protects an estimated \$500 to \$1,000 in public and private property, improvements, and critical infrastructure that keep Alaska strong and functioning.

FOREST PRACTICES ACT EFFECTIVENESS

Minimizing environmental impact of timber harvest

The Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Act (FRPA, AS 41.17) governs how commercial timber harvesting, reforestation, and timber access occur on State, private, and municipal land. The Act is designed to protect fish habitat and water quality and ensure prompt reforestation while providing for an economically viable timber industry.

The FRPA balances economic concerns for the timber industry with water quality and habitat protection needs. The FRPA framework provides certainty and credibility for landowners, operators, and the public, and establishes one-stop shopping for compliance with State and federal clean water standards. The FRPA does not issue a permit for activities but relies on commercial forest operator's submittal of a notice of activities via the detailed plan of operations (DPO). DNR is the lead agency and coordinates activities with ADF&G and DEC, and the agencies must act upon the DPO within 30 days. The FRPA depends on a suite of best management practices (BMPs), field inspections by state agency staff and proactive educational efforts to achieve compliance. When required, appropriate enforcement tools are provided by the Act to ensure resources are protected. The net effect of these steps is to create an efficient, practical approach to help timber and fishing industries continue to provide long-term jobs in support of communities throughout the state.

When properly implemented, FRPA helps the timber and fishing industries to operate profitably and efficiently while protecting fish habitat and water quality. Continued effectiveness depends on sufficient funding for the resource agencies to carry out their respective duties, as well as ongoing evaluation and implementation of the Act to ensure it continues to function as intended.

Funding DEC field presence

Because of reductions in funding allocations to the Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) Division of Water (DOW), DOW staff have not been able to participate in field monitoring in recent years. DEC currently funds approximately 0.25 full time equivalent of time for FPRA engagement with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency 319 grant funds. The EPA has expressed an intent to grant funds in the federal FY27 budget. As federal funding is by no means certain, DEC is working to identify other funding opportunities.

Alaska continues to lack the in-field presence of one of the three key agencies responsible for ensuring compliance with and effectiveness of the Forest Practices Act. The Board of Forestry strongly recommends the State provide funding of .25 full time equivalent to support part of a water quality position to DOW to allow DEC to once again participate in FRPA field monitoring.

Collaboration among all three agencies helps ensure the successful continuation of the Alaska timber and fishing industries and supports a stronger Alaska economy. As noted elsewhere in this report, the continuation of sustainable timber management practices adds value to Alaska timber while protecting water quality and stream functions that support commercial and sport fisheries.

FRPA Effectiveness

The Board reviewed the 2025 reports from the departments of Fish and Game, Environmental Conservation, and Natural Resources, and the 2025 compliance monitoring results (see attached reports). Compliance monitoring showed that operators statewide have high rates of compliance and are implementing the FRPA BMPs properly.

All three agencies reported that FRPA was effective in 2025 (Region I: Southeast/coastal Alaska; Region II: Interior/South of the Alaska Range; and Region III: Northern/Copper River). Region I averaged 4.3 out of 5.0 on 335 rated BMPs with 87% of the BMPs scoring 4.0 or greater. Region II averaged 5.0 on 14 rated BMPs with 100% of the BMPs scoring 4.0 or greater. Region III averaged 4.8 on 51 rated BMPs with 96% of the BMPs scoring 4.0 or greater.

In all regions, the BMPs which scored 3 or lower and therefore required corrective action were primarily related to disposal of petroleum products and road maintenance. Operators have rectified or are in the process of rectifying the deficiencies.

In 2025, the Division received and reviewed eight new timber harvest Detailed Plans of Operations (DPOs), six new reforestation/timber stand improvement DPOs, and 30 DPO renewals for operations on private and other (non-DNR) public lands. Statewide, the Division conducted ten inspections on private and other public lands, 72 inspections on State-managed timber sales, and 14 regeneration surveys on previously harvested DNR managed lands. No charging documents were issued by the Division in calendar year 2025.

DEC continues to believe that, when properly implemented, the BMPs of the Forest Practices regulations are effective at protecting water quality. DEC did not attend in-person compliance monitoring inspections in 2025 but did review FRPA inspection reports as provided by DNR and ADF&G. ADF&G considers FRPA and its regulations effective for maintaining fish habitat within the classified surface water types during forestry-related activities. DEC listed no impaired waters under Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act due to forestry activities on private and other public non-DNR lands regulated by FRPA.

In 2025, no formal FRPA training sessions were provided for agency staff, operators, or their contractors. The Division maintains a series of FRPA training modules on its public website. A training session for the Division's northern region staff is being scheduled for March 2026, with additional training needs for 2026 being evaluated.

The Board also notes continued interagency emphasis on forest road effectiveness and implementation under FRPA. In August 2025, the Board established a temporary Forest Roads Work Group, which met twice in October and November 2025 to clarify concerns and identify

research and information needs related to forest road effectiveness and implementation under FRPA.

Filling vacant Board of Forestry position

The Commercial Fishing representative seat on the Board was briefly filled in 2024 with Randy Bates, who brought extensive experience from the commercial fishing industry as well as prior leadership roles within DEC, ADF&G, and DNR. Mr. Bates was subsequently appointed by the Governor to serve as Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Conservation in May 2025, and the Board appreciates his continued service to the State in that capacity.

The Commercial Fishing seat is currently vacant. The Board continues to communicate the importance of filling this position to ensure balanced representation of interests affected by timber harvests statewide. The Board stands ready to support the appointment process as appropriate and notes that this seat has historically been challenging to fill due to the overlap between peak fishing seasons and Board meeting schedules.

CONCLUSION

The Board endorses the Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Act and its regulations as a practical and effective approach to protecting fish habitat and water quality, ensuring reforestation, and supporting Alaska’s economy through sustainable timber and fishing industries. We remain committed to the principles of fairness, equitable distribution of costs, enforceability, and professional management upon which FRPA is based.

Sincerely,



Jeremy Douse, State Forester
Chair, Alaska Board of Forestry

Alaska Board of Forestry

Nathan Lojewski, Alaska Native Corporations
Denise Herzog, Mining Organization
Brian Kovol, Environmental Organization
Bill Morris, Non-governmental Professional Fish/Wildlife Biologist
Eric Nichols, Forest Industry Trade Association
Keith Coulter, Non-governmental Professional Forester
John Rusyniak, Recreation Organization
Commercial Fisherman’s Organization, *Vacant*

Attachments

- 2025 ADF&G Report to the Board of Forestry
- 2025 DEC Report to the Board of Forestry
- 2025 DNR Report to the Board of Forestry