

2025 Fall Report to the Board of Forestry

**Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
Division of Water**

January 2026



I. Overview

The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) appreciates the opportunity to present to the Board of Forestry (Board) its 2025 annual report on the effectiveness of the Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Act (FRPA) and application of FRPA regulations pertaining to state water quality objectives.

DEC's roles in application of the FRPA water quality objectives for forest operations are: (1) ensure state water quality standards (18 AAC 70) are met; and (2) ensure projects are not causing "degradation of water quality" as defined in 11 AAC 95.900.

The FRPA and regulations specify and require the proper application of Best Management Practices (BMPs) to meet the FRPA water quality objectives. Determining the effectiveness of BMPs occurs primarily through: (1) state resource agency staff conducting formal compliance monitoring and field inspections of timber harvest operations; (2) operators performing routine self-monitoring; and (3) the collection, analysis, and reporting of water quality and fish habitat monitoring data from comprehensive BMP effectiveness projects. Under the authority of the federal Clean Water Act (CWA), DEC is involved in similar activities on U.S. Forest Service (USFS) lands.

II. FRPA Implementation on Private, Municipal, and Trust Lands

As required by the FRPA Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Division of Forestry (DOF), Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and DEC were provided Detailed Plans of Operation (DPOs) on all land ownerships. DEC performed summary reviews focused on the forest practices activities that may affect drinking water sources and public health to ensure that those activities comply with the requirements of the Alaska Drinking Water and Water Quality Regulations. DNR-DOF, ADFG-Habitat Division, and DEC Division of Water conducted reviews and inspections which have proven valuable to ensuring that FRPA BMPs are properly implemented and are effective at protecting water quality.

DEC did not attend in-person compliance monitoring inspections this year but did review FRPA inspection reports as provided by DNR/ADF&G.

III. FRPA Implementation on State Lands

DEC reviewed draft Forest Land Use Management Plans for the Haines, Susitna Valley, and Tanana State Forests, Preliminary Best Interest Findings, FRPA inspection reports and DPOs on state lands as received for potential to affect drinking water sources and public health and provided comments and/or engaged with DNR and ADF&G staff as warranted.

IV. FRPA Implementation on Federal Lands

The USFS continues to make progress on water quality issues by implementing the Tongass National Forest tasks identified in the Alaska Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Strategy (2021), and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the USFS and DEC (1992). The MOU establishes the USFS as the agency responsible for monitoring and protecting water quality on National Forest System lands in Alaska and describes specific DEC and USFS activities to

accomplish that policy directive. The USFS has continued to accept input from DEC on improving its annual program for monitoring the implementation of BMPs and Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines for the protection of water quality and fish habitat.

Tongass Land Management Plan (TLMP) commits the USFS to monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of water quality and fish habitat-related BMPs (found in the USFS Region 10 Soil & Water Conservation Handbook and the USFS National Core BMPs) and Standards and Guidelines (specified in TLMP). DEC continues to work with the USFS to ensure implementation and effectiveness of the BMPs and Standards and Guidelines.

V. Budget and Staffing

DEC currently funds approximately 0.25 FTE of time for FPRA engagement. This position has historically been funded by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency 319 grant funds. 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.

DEC generally focuses its reviews on those forestry actions that may affect public health; however, DEC does comment on potential impacts to aquatic life and habitat as warranted. DEC's scope of work related to forest practices is focused on ensuring the implementation of forestry BMPs via timber harvest plan reviews and a limited number of field inspections on state, municipal, federal, and private lands. DEC's involvement in Forest Practices centers on the following Forest Resources & Practices Act (FRPA) statutes:

AS 41.17.041(e), which states *"The division shall serve as staff to the board. The department, the Department of Fish and Game, and the Department of Environmental Conservation shall provide technical staffing and information as needed by the board;"*

AS 41.17.047(c), which states, in part, *"The board, working with the department, the Department of Environmental Conservation, the Department of Fish and Game, other affected agencies, and the forest-dependent industries, shall conduct an annual survey of research needs related to forest practices;"* and

AS 41.17.047(d), which states, in part, *"The state forester, the Department of Fish and Game, and the Department of Environmental Conservation shall each present an annual report, independently, to the board on the effectiveness of this chapter, the regulations, and best management practices adopted under this chapter that protect the resources for which they have statutory responsibility, and shall make recommendations for changes to correct procedural or substantial problems."*

DEC supports the following FRPA tasks.

- Act as water quality policy experts for questions that arise from the BOF, DNR, and ADF&G related to the federal Clean Water Act and DEC statutory and regulatory responsibilities.
- Participate in the review and inspection of forest practices activities on all land ownerships that may affect public sources of drinking water and other protected uses to ensure that those activities comply with Alaska regulations.

- Participate in BOF meetings and present DEC's annual report to the BOF on the effectiveness of the Act and Regulations in protecting water quality.
- Participate in the interagency Forest Practices Effectiveness Monitoring work group.
- Participate in the Tongass National Forest annual BMP implementation and effectiveness monitoring as resources allow.

As a cooperating agency DEC is anticipating review of Environmental Impact Statement being developed by USFS in support the Tongass Plan Revision effort in 2026-2027.

VI. DEC observations on the effectiveness of the FRPA in protecting water quality

State agencies rely primarily upon plan reviews and field inspections to evaluate the success or failure of forestry BMPs. Information and new knowledge from these efforts, and from forest practices effectiveness monitoring projects have, and will continue to, provided the basis for future recommendations on any improvements to the FRPA and its supporting regulations. DEC continues to believe that, when properly implemented, the BMPs of the Forest Practices Regulations are effective at protecting water quality.

DEC did not participate in the Best Management Practices Evaluation with USFS and ADF&G in 2025 as USFS-proposed locations did not have a demonstrative relationship with the protection of drinking water sources or public health.

DEC serves as a content expert on the BOF Forest Roads Working Group. DEC participation included research and development of agency comments and attendance at working group meetings pertaining to the classification and maintenance of forest roads.

VIII. Tasks and Initiatives for Calendar Years 2025-2026

In addition to the standard FRPA implementation tasks on state, private, and federal lands, the department remains engaged on the following tasks::

- Continued participation in the Forest Roads Work Group
- Continue to work with state and federal agency staff to prioritize and review BMP effectiveness monitoring.
- Continue site inspections of LTF sites authorized under the APDES general permit for in-water sorting of logs.
- Take part in FRPA inspections, with specific attention to stormwater/sediment management BMPs in areas that may impact public drinking water sources, public health, or at the request of partner agency staff.