



## *Wahkiakum Board of County Commissioners*

*District No. 1 Commissioner: Lee Tischer*

*District No. 2 Commissioner: Daniel L. Cothren*

*District No. 3 Commissioner: Gene Strong, Chair*

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**August 5, 2025**

Forest Practices Board  
Attn: Patricia Anderson, Rules Coordinator  
PO Box 47012  
Olympia, WA 98504-7012

[Forest.practicesboard@dnr.wa.gov](mailto:Forest.practicesboard@dnr.wa.gov)

**Subject: Start Over on Type Np – Let Science Guide Policy and Stop Hurting Rural Communities**

Dear Forest Practices Board:

On behalf of Wahkiakum County - a timber-dependent county with fewer than 5,000 residents – we are writing to express our strong opposition to the proposed expansion of riparian buffers for Type Np streams. The proposed rule bypasses the state's Adaptive Management Program, which was specifically created to ensure forest policy is based on rigorous, peer-reviewed science—not assumptions, political pressure or agency overreach.

Our county's identity, economy, and budget are deeply rooted in forestry and natural resource stewardship. Timber harvest revenues are not just important—they are essential, providing more support to our local government than either property taxes or sales tax. When state policy limits timber production, it threatens our ability to maintain roads, fund public safety, and provide basic services to our residents.

The consequences of this rule are substantial: more than 200,000 acres of productive forestland removed from harvest, 112 million board feet lost annually, and an estimated \$5–8 billion in economic harm. These impacts will fall disproportionately on rural communities like Wahkiakum County. The rule will cost thousands of rural jobs without any demonstrated benefit to fish, water quality, or wildlife. Available science shows that the current forest practices rules already meet water quality standards.

Wahkiakum County has long felt the economic impacts of restricted forestland due to endangered species protections. A significant portion of our timber base is already encumbered, limiting our ability to generate local revenue. As a result, we have had to regularly request offset funding from the Washington State Legislature just to maintain essential services. Now in the second half of 2025, rising costs and stagnant revenues have forced us to make difficult choices—including laying off employees in nearly every department, including law enforcement. Adding new regulatory burdens, like the proposed Type Np buffer rule, would only compound this severe financial crisis that we are currently experiencing.

We urge the Forest Practices Board, Department of Natural Resources, and Department of Ecology to reject this proposal and return to the Adaptive Management Program. Rural counties like Wahkiakum need policy shaped by sound science—not political theater.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Gene Strong', with a stylized, cursive script.

Gene Strong, Chair  
Wahkiakum County Board of Commissioners