



NEWS RELEASE

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Agencies audit water quality law compliance on logging jobs

(BOISE) – A recently completed audit shows logging operations examined on private, state, and federal lands in Idaho overall were 96 percent compliant in applying laws designed to protect water quality.

The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) finalized the [Idaho 2016 Interagency Forest Practices Water Quality Audit](#), a quadrennial assessment conducted in collaboration with the Idaho Department of Lands (IDL), to determine whether the administrative rules under the Idaho Forest Practices Act (FPA) were correctly applied on forest management activities across ownerships.

The Idaho FPA ([Idaho Code 38-13](#)) and corresponding administrative rules ([IDAPA 20.02.01](#)) ensure the health of forest soil, water, vegetation, wildlife, and aquatic habitat is maintained during the growing and harvesting of forest trees in Idaho. The scientifically-based FPA rules have evolved over time through a public process and have undergone review by the Environmental Protection Agency and DEQ so they are in line with the federal Clean Water Act as well as Idaho state water quality standards.

A team of inspectors from DEQ and IDL spent 10 weeks between May and October 2016 traveling the state to visit 62 timber sales on private, state, and federal lands. The team inspected skid trails, roads, culverts, stream crossings, distribution of logging slash, and any erosion-control practices present to determine if FPA rules were correctly applied.

The team observed 2,717 instances in which FPA rules were applicable. There were 2,620 instances where logging-related activity met or exceeded requirements of the FPA rules. Most of the sites had no FPA rule violations at all. More than half of the total FPA rule violations occurred on less than 10 percent of the timber sales examined.

The team determined there was 97 percent FPA rule compliance on operations on federal lands and private industrial forest lands, 96 percent compliance on operations on state-owned forests, and 95 percent compliance on operations on private nonindustrial forests.

The quadrennial audits show that since 1984 compliance with FPA rules has improved by 14 percent across ownerships. The 2016 audit is the ninth quadrennial audit conducted by DEQ and IDL. The 2016 audit was the first to examine compliance with the updated FPA Streamside Tree Retention Rule, or “Shade Rule,” which took effect in 2014 and deals with harvesting of trees near fish-bearing streams. Idaho spent more than 10 years working with multiple partners to create the Shade Rule.

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