

## Position Statements: Washington DNR Trust Land Management

### Position

The Washington State Society of American Foresters (WSSAF) supports the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in its efforts to build and maintain a highly professional, well-trained work force at all levels. WSSAF supports DNR's enlightened forest resource management, including development and implementation of the Habitat Conservation Plan, Policies for Sustainable Forestry, and landscape planning.

WSSAF further supports DNR's efforts in forward-looking stewardship including continued revenue generation. This direction ensures active land management and investment returns will remain attractive to beneficiaries, and will ensure that a trust land base will be retained by the state. Washington's trust lands are too important to the trust beneficiaries, the public, the state's rural economy, and the forest products industry to lose.

### Issue

Washington State was gifted at statehood with several million acres of forest and agricultural land by the federal government. Another substantial body of lands was returned to the state via tax defaults. Washington State created a series of trusts for the purpose of generating revenues for affected counties. The DNR is charged with managing all trust lands and has returned a total of \$6.56 billion since 1965 to the Department and trust beneficiaries. Over \$5 billion went directly to beneficiaries and \$1.5 billion went to fund DNR's land management activities.

### Background

A unanimous Washington State Supreme Court decision in 1983 (*Skamania County v State of Washington*) affirmed the "trust mandate," that requires trust lands to produce revenue for specific trust beneficiaries. Several attempts to overturn that mandate have been denied by the courts, mainly on the strength of the *Skamania* decision. Also see position statement *Active Management to Achieve and Maintain Healthy Forests*.

Adopted by the Washington State Society of American Foresters (WSSAF) on November 17, 2008. This statement will expire on November 16, 2013, unless after thorough review it is renewed by the WSSAF Executive Committee.