



LOGGING IN PIERCE COUNTY

Logging in Pierce County is regulated by the State Forest Practices Act (RCW 76.09) and Rules (WAC 222) and by Title 18H, Pierce County Development Regulations – Forest Practices. This handout provides general information regarding rules and permitting procedures for logging property in unincorporated Pierce County.

Class II and Class III Forest Practices Permits (\$100 application fee) – Issued by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for commercial logging operations (non-conversion activities), involving clear cutting and/or thinning. No public notice. A 6-Year Development Moratorium is imposed on the proposed harvest area for all Class II and Class III forest practices permits, unless an approved Conversion Option Harvest Plan (COHP) has first been obtained from Pierce County.

Class IV-General Forest Practices Permits Issued by the Pierce County Planning and Land Services Department (PALS) in association with development (conversion) activities. Required when logging operation, which would otherwise be classified as a Class II or Class III forest practice takes place on:

1. Land in an Urban Growth Area (UGA); or
2. in association with the development (conversion) of forest land to a non-forestry use.
Examples include, but are not limited to, agricultural, residential, commercial, and/or industrial development.

The following items must be completed before a Class IV-General forest practices permit application may be approved by Pierce County:

- ✓ The proposed forest practices activities must undergo an environmental review by Pierce County, in accordance with the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). An environmental determination (DNS, MDNS), which concludes the environmental review process, will not be issued until any and all studies required by Title 18E, Critical Areas (wetlands, streams, wildlife habitat) have been reviewed and approved). In many instances, however, environmental review of the overall development/project has already taken place, or is underway. In these instances, an additional environmental review for the logging is not required;
- ✓ A Site Development permit addressing clearing or written documentation that a Site Development permit is not required must be issued by Pierce County. *No more than 35% of the volume of merchantable timber may be harvested when the proposed clearing and forest practices are not associated with an application for land division or subdivision, use permit, commercial building permit, or single- or two-family residential building permit. The 35% percent cap no longer applies when the appropriate development permit application(s) has been submitted; and
- ✓ Any pending development permit application, such as a preliminary plat, short plat, use permit, commercial building permit, or single or two-family residential building permit that is associated with the project must be approved/issued.

6-Year Development Moratorium – A 6-year development moratorium prohibits Pierce County from accepting applications for the development of land, such as a Building permit, Site Development permit, Short Plat, and Preliminary Plat, on land subject to the moratorium. The 6-year development moratorium applies only to the area indicated to be harvested in the forest practices permit. The 6-year development moratorium extends to the entire parcel when it has been determined that logging activities meeting the definition of a Class II, III, or IV forest practice have occurred on a parcel without an approved Class II, III, or IV forest practices permit. (Subsection 18H.30.020.C.3 of Title 18H)

Lifting a 6-Year Development Moratorium - Title 18H provides two ways to request relief from a 6-year development moratorium:

1. **Single Family Dwelling Exception** - Used to allow development of a single-family residence, accessory structures/uses, driveway, well, and septic system on an undivided area up to 2 acres in size. You must wait until the approved forest practices permit expires before submitting an application for a SFDE when the harvest was permitted through an FPA. You must wait at least two years from the date the moratorium was imposed when the harvest was unpermitted. All impacts to Critical Areas must be mitigated and reforestation must either be bonded or completed (except where reforestation was not required by the forest practices permit) to obtain approval. No public notice or hearing.

2. **Request for Removal of Development Moratorium** - Used to lift a development moratorium from the entire parcel. All impacts to Critical Areas must be mitigated and reforestation must either be bonded or completed (except where reforestation was not required by the forest practices permit) to obtain approval. Public notice, public hearing and Hearing Examiner approval required. No waiting period for submittal.

Conversion Option Harvest Plans (COHP)

A Conversion Option Harvest Plan (COHP) is approved by Pierce County in conjunction with a Class II or III forest practices operation and is designed to preserve the forest landowners' option to convert (develop) that forestland to a non-commercial forest use, as well as exempt the forest landowner from the 6-year development moratorium associated with Class II and III forest practices permits. A COHP application must comply with all applicable Pierce County Codes, including, but not limited to Title 18E, Development Regulations – Critical Areas (Wetland, Fish and Wildlife Habitat Areas, Landslide Hazard Areas, and Erosion Hazard Areas) and Title 18H, Development Regulations – Forest Practices. The COHP must first be approved by Pierce County before submitting an application to the DNR for a Class II or Class III forest practices permit.

“Danger/Hazard” Tree Removal – The removal of “Danger Trees” under the DNR “tree length and-a-half” policy must comply with Pierce County Code, Title 18E, Critical Areas, when the activity occurs in an area regulated by Title 18E, Critical Areas. These areas include Wetlands, Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas, Landslide Hazard Areas, and Erosion Hazard Areas. A Habitat Assessment and/or a Hazard Tree Removal Report may be required by Title 18E for the proposed activity. The removal of “Danger Trees” within “Open Space Areas” or “Natural Buffer Areas” in residential or commercial developments is subject to the conditions of approval established for that development. (See Pierce County Code, Subsection 18H.20.040 of Title 18H)

- Contact the Forest Practices Section of the DNR in Enumclaw at 360-825-1631 for information on the State Forest Practices Rules, or visit their website at <https://www.dnr.wa.gov/programs-and-services/forest-practices>

- Information on the Forest Tax Program and Forest Excise Tax is available by contacting the Washington State Department of Revenue at 1-800-548-8829 or <http://dor.wa.gov/> (Search under Timber).

- Contact Adonais Clark, Senior Planner, at 253-798-7165 or Ray Hoffmann, Associate Planner, at 253-798-2788 with the Pierce County Planning and Land Services Department for information on Title 18H.

Please note that while every effort is made to assure the accuracy of the information contained in this brochure it is not warranted for accuracy. This document is not intended to address all aspects or regulatory requirements for a project and should serve as a starting point for your investigation. For detailed information on a particular project, permit, or code requirement refer directly to applicable file and/or code/regulatory documents or contact the appropriate division of staff.