Understanding the Private Forest Accord

Amphibians

Importance: Stream dwelling amphibians have been largely ignored under Oregon's current Forest Practices Act. Stream dwelling amphibians tend to occur higher-up in the stream network than federally protected fish species and therefore, fish-focused protections are not necessarily sufficient to protect stream dwelling amphibians.

Two amphibian species, Columbia torrent salamanders (*Rhyacotriton kezeri*) and Cascade torrent salamanders (*Rhyacotriton cascadae*), are currently proposed for listing under the federal Endangered Species Act (listing decision expected within 2 years). Four other species, Southern Torrent Salamander (*Rhyacotriton variegatus*), Coastal Giant Salamander (*Dicamptodon tenebrosus*), Cope's Giant Salamander (*Dicamptodon copei*), and Coastal Tailed Frog (*Ascaphus truei*), are not currently proposed for listing but face varying degrees of threat.

Current Law/System: Current Oregon Forest Practices largely ignore stream dwelling amphibians and the habitat on which they depend.

Proposed Changes:
Negotiating parties were able to reach agreement to support HCP coverage for five of the six species under discussion during the accords. However, negotiating parties agreed that the state would not seek an HCP for the Cascade torrent salamander. The protections that were negotiated will benefit all six species, but protections will have to be extended further within the range of the Cascade torrent salamander in order for the State to seek coverage under Section 11 of the ESA.

- Term: The term of the HCP for amphibians will be 25 years, half the length of the HCP proposed for fish species. Limited research related to stream dwelling amphibians made it prudent to limit the length of the HCP so the adequacy of protections can be revisited sooner.
- Riparian Buffers: expansion of riparian buffers throughout the stream network will benefit stream dwelling amphibians. However, the most significant protections for amphibians are the buffering that will occur on small non-fish bearing perennial (Np) streams. Stream buffers that will benefit stream dwelling amphibians include the following:
    - Large fish streams: 110' no harvest
    - Medium fish streams: 110' no harvest
    - Small fish streams: 100' no harvest
    - Large no-fish steams: 75' no harvest
    - Medium non-fish streams: 75' no harvest
    - Small perennial streams:
        - Np streams flowing into salmon/ steelhead/ bull trout streams: 75' no harvest for 500 feet and then 50' no harvest for 650' (1150' total)
        - Np streams flowing into other fish bearing streams: 75' no harvest for 600 feet.

    - Additional protections for stream adjacent seeps, springs and wetlands
    - 35’ equipment limitation zones with retention of shrubs and up to 6’ diameter trees on unbuffered Np streams
- Protection of some landslide initiation sites and torrent debris channels, 35’ equipment limitation zones along seasonal streams, enlarged culvert standards and expanded protections for wetlands will provide additional protections for stream dwelling amphibians including some over-ridge connectivity for stream dwelling amphibians
- Adaptive management and effectiveness monitoring: Monitoring strategies will prioritize stream dwelling amphibians. Recommendations include $1.5 million/ year in funding to research the following topics: presence, spatial distribution, abundance, detectability and connectivity.

Discussion: The Private Forest Accord will provide significant new benefits for stream dwelling amphibians including protections higher in the stream network.