

WAC 222-16-105 Cooperative habitat enhancement agreements. (1)

Purpose. A cooperative habitat enhancement agreement (CHEA) is intended to remove disincentives for landowners who create, enhance, or maintain habitat for the northern spotted owl or marbled murrelet by providing them with protection against future spotted owl or marbled murrelet rules caused by their enhancement activities. A CHEA is an agreement between the department and a landowner, developed in cooperation with the department of fish and wildlife, for the purpose of creating, enhancing, or maintaining northern spotted owl habitat and/or marbled murrelet habitat. The agreement will apply only to forest land identified by the landowner:

(a) For northern spotted owls, outside of the median home range circles of northern spotted owl site centers in existence at the time of implementation.

(b) For marbled murrelets, any current unoccupied or potential future habitat.

(2) **Authority.** Outside of the median home range circles of northern spotted owls or an occupied marbled murrelet site, the department, in consultation with the department of fish and wildlife, may enter into agreements with nonfederal landowners to create, enhance, or maintain habitat that the northern spotted owl and/or the marbled murrelet can be expected to utilize. During the term of these agreements, forest practices covered by the agreements shall not be classified as Class IV - Special on the basis of critical habitat (state) or critical habitat (federal) for the northern spotted owl or the marbled murrelet. This does not preclude classification as Class IV - Special because of the presence of other factors listed in WAC 222-16-050(1).

(3) **Baseline.**

(a) Each agreement shall identify a baseline level of habitat, and the department shall not permit forest practices that reduce the habitat below the baseline during the term of the agreement.

(b) For northern spotted owls, the baseline may range from zero habitat to the overall levels of suitable spotted owl habitat and dispersal habitat that existed across the land in question at the time the agreement is entered into.

(c) For marbled murrelets, the baseline may range from zero habitat to the overall levels of suitable marbled murrelet habitat that existed across the land in question at the time the agreement is entered into.

(d) The department shall determine, working with the landowner and in consultation with the department of fish and wildlife, the appropriate baseline, taking into consideration:

(i) The size of the landowner's ownership and the ability of the landowner to maintain habitat conditions across the landscape in question over time;

(ii) The overall benefits of the agreement to the northern spotted owl or marbled murrelet including both the proposed measures to create, enhance, or maintain habitat and the proposed baseline levels; and

(iii) The term of the agreement.

(4) **Form and content of CHEAs.**

(a) The department shall, in consultation with the department of fish and wildlife, have the authority to define the form and content of CHEAs. The form and content may vary among agreements, but each must provide sufficient information for the department, the public, and other reviewers to understand and evaluate the agreement against the standards established under this section.

(b) For northern spotted owls, in addition to the elements required by the department, each agreement shall include a plan to avoid harvesting, road construction, or the aerial application of pesticides, between March 1 and August 31, on the seventy acres of highest quality suitable spotted owl habitat surrounding any known northern spotted owl site centers on lands covered by the agreement.

(5) **Approval of a CHEA.** Upon receipt of a CHEA, the department shall circulate the agreement to the department of fish and wildlife, affected Indian tribes, local governmental entities, other forest landowners in the SOSEA (if the CHEA is in a SOSEA), and the public for review and comment. Within sixty days of receipt of the agreement, the department shall review the comments and approve or disapprove the agreement or submit the agreement to the landowner to revise as appropriate. The department, after consultation with the department of fish and wildlife, may approve the agreement if the agreement will create, enhance, or maintain habitat conditions for:

(a) The northern spotted owl in a manner that provides a measurable contribution toward meeting the goals of the SOSEA or a measurable benefit to northern spotted owls outside SOSEAs.

(b) The marbled murrelet in a manner that provides a measurable benefit to the species.

(6) **Enforcement of CHEAs.** The department shall review all applications and notifications from the landowner, proposed within the agreement area, for consistency with the agreement. Any applications or notifications found to be inconsistent with the agreement shall be returned to the landowner for modification. After landowner review, applications and notifications which are not consistent with the agreement shall be classified based on the rules in effect at the time of application and without any of the benefits of the agreement.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 76.09.040. WSR 08-24-011, § 222-16-105, filed 11/21/08, effective 12/22/08. Statutory Authority: Chapter 34.05 RCW, RCW 76.09.040, [76.09.]050, [76.09.]370, 76.13.120(9). WSR 01-12-042, § 222-16-105, filed 5/30/01, effective 7/1/01. Statutory Authority: RCW 76.09.040 and chapter 34.05 RCW. WSR 97-15-105, § 222-16-105, filed 7/21/97, effective 8/21/97.]