

The Washington State Small Forest Landowner Database

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In House Bill 2091 the Washington State Legislature authorized the creation of the Department of Natural Resources Small Forest Landowner Office (SFLO). In that same bill, Legislators also authorized the creation of a database on non-industrial private forestland (NIPF) that could provide reliable reports assessing ownership patterns such as information on watershed coverage, forest management and housing. In April 2001, Rural Technology Initiative (RTI) staff began development of the database with the support of the Department of Natural Resources and consulting organizations.

What is the Small Forest Landowner Database?

The SFLO database is a complete record of parcels designated as non-industrial land in Washington State. The data was collected from the assessor's office of every county in Washington that contains timberlands or forestlands. RTI staff converted thousands of records from 34 separate county databases into a single common format using Microsoft Access® and the Visual Basic programming language. The state will use information produced by the database to evaluate the effects of new regulations on the NIPF and to help support adaptive management legislation.

Overview of the Database

House Bill 2091 requires that the Department of Natural Resources Small Forest Landowner Office assemble reports every 4 years detailing the current population of NIPF landowners, their acreage, and where they are located. Understanding how the database will be used was critical to its design and construction. Data in the database includes the parcel's owner information, location, size, land classification, watershed, and residence information.

- The owner's information will provide the Legislature with Washington's first statewide NIPF mailing list, enabling them to contact those affected by new regulations.
- The parcel location is accurate down to the quarter section of its township, section and range.
- The watershed of the parcel can be found by putting its location data into a specially made program that utilizes GIS technology to connect the parcel to a specific watershed.
- Parcel size and land classification are both common characteristics that can be used to further assess the number of NIPF affected by new regulations, and better allocate economic relief to the owners most affected.
- Over time the database will likely also illustrate a growing concern among non-industrial owners - conversion from forestland to other uses is occurring at an alarming rate and that contrary to the goal of forest practice regulation, the increasing rules are forcing that trend.



The SFLO-NIPF Database Can Answer Questions Like:

- How many NIPF owners of less than 20 acres are there in the Skykomish River watershed? Of these, how many are located in Snohomish County? King County?
- What is the average forested parcel size within the Little Naches watershed? What percentage of parcels are 40 acres or less? Greater than 40 acres?
- Where are NIPF located? Are they at the urban interface? Are they on the ridge tops or in the valley bottoms? Do their lands have more or less streams than industrial lands? Are NIPF disproportionately affected by the new regulations?
- How many NIPF are there in King County? Eastern Washington? Washington State?
- What is the conversion rate of non-industrial lands to other uses and how has it changed with regulations?

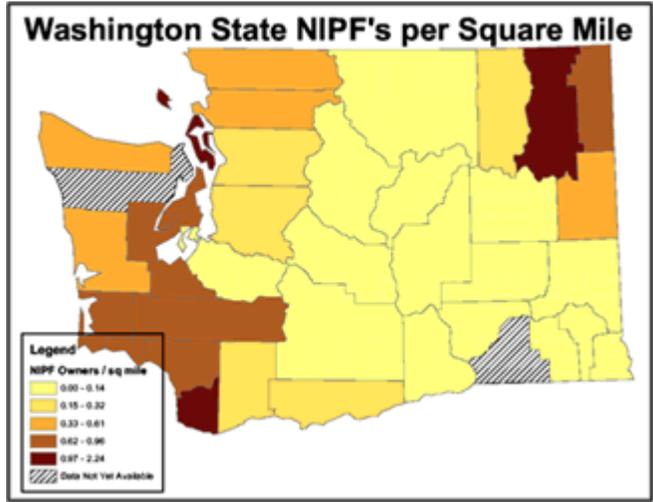


Figure 1 - NIPF owners per square mile. Stevens and Island Counties have the most.

Summary

With the passing of the Salmon Recovery Act, the Department of Natural Resources realized a need for a database of the state's NIPF to track effects of new regulations. The Rural Technology Initiative, with the help of the Small Forest Landowner Office and other consultants, was able to design and construct a database that can answer questions mandated by House Bill 2091. With further verification of data validity at the county level, the SFLO database will be an important resource of NIPF information for the state of Washington.

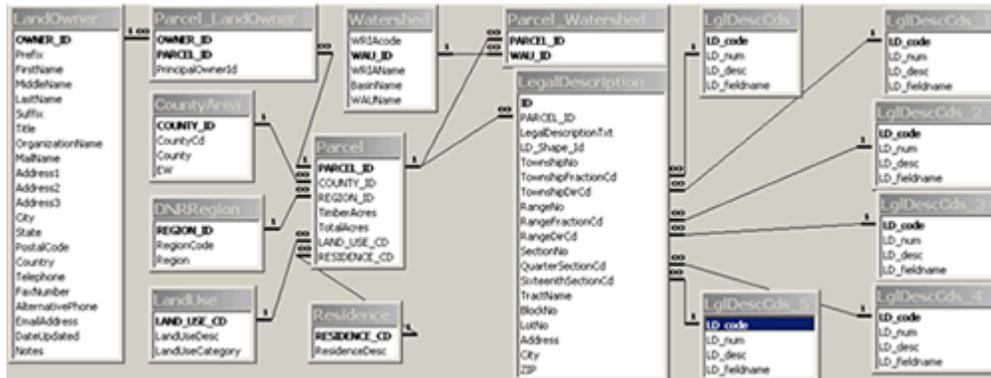


Figure 2 - The SFLO-NIPF database tables and their associations with each other.

For more information visit the RTI website at www.ruraltech.org or contact the Rural Technology Initiative, University of Washington (206) 543-5774 rti@u.washington.edu.