

**Chapter 43.21J RCW**  
**ENVIRONMENTAL AND FOREST RESTORATION PROJECTS**

**Sections**

43.21J.005	Legislative findings.
43.21J.010	Intent—Purpose—Definitions.
43.21J.030	Environmental enhancement and job creation task force.
43.21J.040	Environmental enhancement and restoration project proposals—Evaluation—Award of funds.
43.21J.050	Training or employment.
43.21J.060	Unemployment compensation benefits—Training.
43.21J.070	Unemployment compensation benefits—Special base year and benefit year.
43.21J.800	Joint legislative audit and review committee report.
43.21J.900	Short title—1993 c 516.
43.21J.901	Section captions and part headings—1993 c 516.
43.21J.903	Conflict with federal requirements—1993 c 516.
43.21J.904	Effective date—1993 c 516.

**RCW 43.21J.005 Legislative findings.** (1) The legislature finds that the long-term health of the economy of Washington state depends on the sustainable management of its natural resources. Washington's forests, estuaries, waterways, and watersheds provide a livelihood for thousands of citizens of Washington state and millions of dollars of income and tax revenues every year from forests, fisheries, shellfisheries, recreation, tourism, and other water-dependent industries.

(2) The legislature further finds that the livelihoods and revenues produced by Washington's forests, estuaries, waterways, and watersheds would be enhanced by immediate investments in clean water infrastructure and habitat restoration.

(3) The legislature further finds that an insufficiency in financial resources, especially in timber-dependent communities, has resulted in investments in clean water and habitat restoration too low to ensure the long-term economic and environmental health of Washington's forests, estuaries, waterways, and watersheds.

(4) The legislature further finds that unemployed workers and Washington's economically distressed communities, especially timber-dependent areas, can benefit from opportunities for employment in environmental restoration projects.

(5) The legislature therefore declares that immediate investments in a variety of environmental restoration projects, based on sound principles of watershed management and environmental and forest restoration, are necessary to rehabilitate damaged watersheds and to assist dislocated workers and the unemployed gain job skills necessary for long-term employment. [1993 c 516 § 1.]

**RCW 43.21J.010 Intent—Purpose—Definitions.** (1) It is the intent of this chapter to provide financial resources to make substantial progress toward: (a) Implementing the Puget Sound water quality management plan and other watershed-based management strategies and plans; (b) ameliorating degradation to watersheds; and (c) keeping and creating stable, environmentally sound, good wage

employment in Washington state. The legislature intends that employment under this chapter is not to result in the displacement or partial displacement, whether by the reduction of hours of nonovertime work, wages, or other employment benefits, of currently employed workers, including but not limited to state civil service employees, or of currently or normally contracted services.

(2) It is the purpose of this chapter to:

(a) Implement clean water, forest, and habitat restoration projects that will produce measurable improvements in water and habitat quality, that rate highly when existing environmental ranking systems are applied, and that provide economic stability.

(b) Facilitate the coordination and consistency of federal, state, tribal, local, and private water and habitat protection and enhancement programs in the state's watersheds.

(c) Fund necessary projects for which a public planning process has been completed.

(d) Provide immediate funding to create jobs and training for environmental restoration and enhancement jobs for unemployed workers and displaced workers in impact areas, especially rural natural resources-dependent communities.

(3) For purposes of this chapter "impact areas" means: (a) Distressed counties as defined in \*RCW 43.168.020; and (b) areas that the task force determines are likely to experience dislocations in the near future from downturns in natural resource-based industries.

(4) For purposes of this chapter, "high-risk youth" means youth eligible for Washington conservation corps programs under chapter 43.220 RCW or Washington service corps programs under chapter 50.65 RCW.

(5) For purposes of this chapter, "dislocated forest products worker" has the meaning set forth in \*\*RCW 50.70.010.

(6) For purposes of this chapter, "task force" means the environmental enhancement and job creation task force created under RCW 43.21J.030. [2005 c 136 § 1; 1995 c 226 § 26; 1993 c 516 § 2.]

**Reviser's note:** \*(1) RCW 43.168.020 defines "distressed area."

\*\* (2) RCW 50.70.010 was repealed by 1995 c 226 § 35, effective June 30, 2001.

**Savings—Effective date—2005 c 136:** See notes following RCW 43.168.020.

**Severability—Conflict with federal requirements—Effective date—1995 c 226:** See notes following RCW 43.160.020.

**RCW 43.21J.030 Environmental enhancement and job creation task force.** (1) There is created the environmental enhancement and job creation task force within the office of the governor. The purpose of the task force is to provide a coordinated and comprehensive approach to implementation of chapter 516, Laws of 1993. The task force shall consist of the commissioner of public lands, the director of the department of fish and wildlife, the director of the department of ecology, the director of the parks and recreation commission, the timber team coordinator, the executive director of the workforce training and education coordinating board, and the executive director of the Puget Sound partnership, or their designees. The task force may seek the advice of the following agencies and organizations: The

department of commerce, the conservation commission, the employment security department, the recreation and conservation office, appropriate federal agencies, appropriate special districts, the Washington state association of counties, the association of Washington cities, labor organizations, business organizations, timber-dependent communities, environmental organizations, and Indian tribes. The governor shall appoint the task force chair. Members of the task force shall serve without additional pay. Participation in the work of the committee by agency members shall be considered in performance of their employment. The governor shall designate staff and administrative support to the task force and shall solicit the participation of agency personnel to assist the task force.

(2) The task force shall have the following responsibilities:

(a) Soliciting and evaluating, in accordance with the criteria set forth in RCW 43.21J.040, requests for funds from the \*environmental and forest restoration account and making distributions from the account. The task force shall award funds for projects and training programs it approves and may allocate the funds to state agencies for disbursement and contract administration;

(b) Coordinating a process to assist state agencies and local governments to implement effective environmental and forest restoration projects funded under this chapter;

(c) Considering unemployment profile data provided by the employment security department.

(3) Beginning July 1, 1994, the task force shall have the following responsibilities:

(a) To solicit and evaluate proposals from state and local agencies, private nonprofit organizations, and tribes for environmental and forest restoration projects;

(b) To rank the proposals based on criteria developed by the task force in accordance with RCW 43.21J.040; and

(c) To determine funding allocations for projects to be funded from the account created in \*RCW 43.21J.020 and for projects or programs as designated in the omnibus operating and capital appropriations acts. [2023 c 470 § 2039. Prior: 2007 c 341 § 62; 2007 c 241 § 4; 1998 c 245 § 60; 1994 c 264 § 17; 1993 c 516 § 5.]

**\*Reviser's note:** The "environmental and forest restoration account" created in RCW 43.21J.020 was repealed by 2000 c 150 § 2.

**Explanatory statement—2023 c 470:** See note following RCW 10.99.030.

**Intent—Effective date—2007 c 241:** See notes following RCW 79A.25.005.

**RCW 43.21J.040 Environmental enhancement and restoration project proposals—Evaluation—Award of funds.** (1) Subject to the limitations of \*RCW 43.21J.020, the task force shall award funds from the \*environmental and forest restoration account on a competitive basis. The task force shall evaluate and rate environmental enhancement and restoration project proposals using the following criteria:

(a) The ability of the project to produce measurable improvements in water and habitat quality;

(b) The cost-effectiveness of the project based on: (i) Projected costs and benefits of the project; (ii) past costs and environmental

benefits of similar projects; and (iii) the ability of the project to achieve cost efficiencies through its design to meet multiple policy objectives;

(c) The inclusion of the project as a high priority in a federal, state, tribal, or local government plan relating to environmental or forest restoration, including but not limited to a local watershed action plan, stormwater management plan, capital facility plan, growth management plan, or a flood control plan; or the ranking of the project by conservation districts as a high priority for water quality and habitat improvements;

(d) The number of jobs to be created by the project for dislocated forest products workers, high-risk youth, and residents of impact areas;

(e) Participation in the project by environmental businesses to provide training, cosponsor projects, and employ or jointly employ project participants;

(f) The ease with which the project can be administered from the community the project serves;

(g) The extent to which the project will either augment existing efforts by organizations and governmental entities involved in environmental and forest restoration in the community or receive matching funds, resources, or in-kind contributions; and

(h) The capacity of the project to produce jobs and job-related training that will pay market rate wages and impart marketable skills to workers hired under this chapter.

(2) The following types of projects and programs shall be given top priority in the first fiscal year after July 1, 1993:

(a) Projects that are highly ranked in and implement adopted or approved watershed action plans, such as those developed pursuant to rules adopted by the agency then known as the \*\*Puget Sound water quality authority for local planning and management of nonpoint source pollution;

(b) Conservation district projects that provide water quality and habitat improvements;

(c) Indian tribe projects that provide water quality and habitat improvements; or

(d) Projects that implement actions approved by a shellfish protection district under chapter 100, Laws of 1992.

(3) Funds shall not be awarded for the following activities:

(a) Administrative rule making;

(b) Planning; or

(c) Public education. [2007 c 341 § 63; 1993 c 516 § 4.]

**Reviser's note:** \*(1) The "environmental and forest restoration account" was created in RCW 43.21J.020 which was repealed by 2000 c 150 § 2, effective July 1, 2001.

\*\* (2) The Puget Sound water quality authority and its powers and duties, pursuant to the Sunset Act, chapter 43.131 RCW, were terminated June 30, 1995, and repealed June 30, 1996. See 1990 c 115 §§ 11 and 12. Powers, duties, and functions of the Puget Sound water quality authority pertaining to cleanup and protection of Puget Sound transferred to the Puget Sound action team by 1996 c 138 § 11. See RCW 90.71.903. For later enactment regarding the Puget Sound partnership, see chapter 90.71 RCW.

**Effective date—2007 c 341:** See RCW 90.71.907.

**RCW 43.21J.050 Training or employment.** (1) Eligibility for training or employment in projects funded through the \*environmental and forest restoration account shall, to the extent practicable, be for workers who are currently unemployed.

(2) To the greatest extent practicable, the following groups of individuals shall be given preference for training or employment in projects funded through the \*environmental and forest restoration account:

(a) Dislocated workers who are receiving unemployment benefits or have exhausted unemployment benefits; and

(b) High-risk youth.

(3) Projects funded for forest restoration shall be for workers whose employment was terminated in the Washington forest products industry within the previous four years.

(4) The task force shall submit a list to private industry councils and the employment security department of projects receiving funds under the provisions of this chapter. The list shall include the number, location, and types of jobs expected to be provided by each project. The employment security department shall recruit workers for these jobs by:

(a) Notifying dislocated forest workers who meet the definitions in chapter 50.70 RCW, who are receiving unemployment benefits or who have exhausted unemployment benefits, of their eligibility for the programs;

(b) Notifying other unemployed workers;

(c) Developing a pool of unemployed workers including high-risk youth eligible to enroll in the program; and

(d) Establishing procedures for workers to apply to the programs.

(5) The employment security department shall refer eligible workers to employers hiring under the \*environmental and forest restoration account programs. Recipients of funds shall consider the list of eligible workers developed by the employment security department before conducting interviews or making hiring decisions. Recipients of funds shall ensure that workers are aware of whatever opportunities for vocational training, job placement, and remedial education are available from the employment security department.

(6) An individual is eligible for applicable employment security benefits while participating in training related to this chapter. Eligibility shall be confirmed by the commissioner of employment security by submitting a commissioner-approved training waiver.

(7) Persons receiving funds from the \*environmental and forest restoration account shall not be considered state employees for the purposes of existing provisions of law with respect to hours of work, sick leave, vacation, and civil service but shall receive health benefits. Persons receiving funds from this account who are hired by a state agency, except for Washington conservation and service corps enrollees, shall receive medical and dental benefits as provided under chapter 41.05 RCW and industrial insurance coverage under Title 51 RCW, but are exempt from the provisions of chapter 41.06 RCW.

(8) Compensation for employees, except for Washington conservation and service corps enrollees, hired under the program established by this chapter shall be based on market rates in accordance with the required skill and complexity of the jobs created. Remuneration paid to employees under this chapter shall be considered covered employment for purposes of chapter 50.04 RCW.

(9) Employment under this program shall not result in the displacement or partial displacement, whether by the reduction of

hours of nonovertime work, wages, or other employment benefits, of currently employed workers, including but not limited to state civil service employees, or of currently or normally contracted services. [1993 c 516 § 8.]

**\*Reviser's note:** The "environmental and forest restoration account" was created in RCW 43.21J.020 which was repealed by 2000 c 150 § 2, effective July 1, 2001.

**RCW 43.21J.060 Unemployment compensation benefits—Training.** An individual shall be considered to be in training with the approval of the commissioner as defined in RCW 50.20.043, and be eligible for applicable unemployment insurance benefits while participating in and making satisfactory progress in training related to this chapter. [1993 c 516 § 9.]

**RCW 43.21J.070 Unemployment compensation benefits—Special base year and benefit year.** For the purpose of providing the protection of the unemployment compensation system to individuals at the conclusion of training or employment obtained as a result of this chapter, a special base year and benefit year are established.

(1) Only individuals who have entered training or employment provided by the \*environmental and forest restoration account, and whose employment or training under such account was not considered covered under chapter 50.04 RCW, shall be allowed the special benefit provisions of this chapter.

(2) An application for initial determination made under this chapter must be filed in writing with the employment security department within twenty-six weeks following the week in which the individual commenced employment or training obtained as a result of this chapter. Notice from the individual, from the employing entity, or notice of hire from employment security department administrative records shall satisfy this requirement.

(3) For the purpose of this chapter, a special base year is established for an individual consisting of the first four of the last five completed calendar quarters, or if a benefit year is not established using the first four of the last five completed calendar quarters as the base year, the last four completed calendar quarters immediately prior to the first day of the calendar week in which the individual began employment or training provided by the \*environmental and forest restoration account.

(4) A special individual benefit year is established consisting of the entire period of training or employment provided by the \*environmental and forest restoration account and a fifty-two consecutive week period commencing with the first day of the calendar week in which the individual last participated in such employment or training. No special benefit year shall have a duration in excess of three hundred twelve calendar weeks. Such special benefit year will not be established unless the criteria contained in RCW 50.04.030 has been met, except that an individual meeting the requirements of this chapter and who has an unexpired benefit year established which would overlap the special benefit year may elect to establish a special benefit year under this chapter, notwithstanding the provisions in RCW 50.04.030 relating to establishment of a subsequent benefit year, and RCW 50.40.010 relating to waiver of rights. Such unexpired benefit

year shall be terminated with the beginning of the special benefit year if the individual elects to establish a special benefit year under this chapter.

(5) The individual's weekly benefit amount and maximum amount payable during the special benefit year shall be governed by the provisions contained in RCW 50.20.120. The individual's basic and continuing right to benefits shall be governed by the general laws and rules relating to the payment of unemployment compensation benefits to the extent that they are not in conflict with the provisions of this chapter.

(6) The fact that wages, hours, or weeks worked during the special base year may have been used in computation of a prior valid claim for unemployment compensation shall not affect a claim for benefits made under the provisions of this chapter. However, wages, hours, and weeks worked used in computing entitlement on a claim filed under this chapter shall not be available or used for establishing entitlement or amount of benefits in any succeeding benefit year.

(7) Benefits paid to an individual filing under the provisions of this section shall not be charged to the experience rating account of any contribution paying employer. [1993 c 516 § 10.]

**\*Reviser's note:** The "environmental and forest restoration account" was created in RCW 43.21J.020 which was repealed by 2000 c 150 § 2, effective July 1, 2001.

**RCW 43.21J.800 Joint legislative audit and review committee report.** On or before June 30, 1998, the joint legislative audit and review committee shall prepare a report to the legislature evaluating the implementation of the environmental restoration jobs act of 1993, chapter 516, Laws of 1993. [1996 c 288 § 36; 1993 c 516 § 11.]

**RCW 43.21J.900 Short title—1993 c 516.** This act shall be known as the environmental restoration jobs act of 1993. [1993 c 516 § 15.]

**RCW 43.21J.901 Section captions and part headings—1993 c 516.** Section captions and part headings as used in this act constitute no part of the law. [1993 c 516 § 16.]

**RCW 43.21J.903 Conflict with federal requirements—1993 c 516.** If any part of this act is found to be in conflict with federal requirements that are a prescribed condition to the allocation of federal funds to the state or the eligibility of employers in this state for federal unemployment tax credits, the conflicting part of this act is hereby declared to be inoperative solely to the extent of the conflict, and such finding or determination shall not affect the operation of the remainder of this act. The rules under this act shall meet federal requirements that are a necessary condition to the receipt of federal funds by the state or the granting of federal unemployment tax credits to employers in this state. [1993 c 516 § 19.]

**RCW 43.21J.904 Effective date—1993 c 516.** This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and shall take effect July 1, 1993. [1993 c 516 § 20.]