



Washington Environmental Council

STRATEGIC PLAN

2016 - 2020

OUR MISSION

To protect,
restore,
and sustain
Washington's
environment
for all.

Environmental advocates come from different backgrounds from every corner of our state with different motivations, but we share a vision: thriving communities, with clean air and water for all, building a 21st century economy that improves our health and environment. The urgency of the challenges we face requires us to make progress faster and we are more powerful when we work together.



**WASHINGTON
ENVIRONMENTAL
COUNCIL**

HOW OUR WORK CONNECTS



OUR NEXT 50 YEARS PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

Since 1967, Washington Environmental Council has worked to improve the environmental health of our state.

While our tactics have evolved over time, our core values have remained constant: belief in the power of partnerships, commitment to leadership, and a willingness to learn and change.

At WEC, we take on the most important environmental challenges in our state. We consider how different issues connect – ecologically, societally, and politically – and create strategies that acknowledge and leverage these connections. To achieve environmental progress we use a full range of tools, including: policy advocacy at the local, state, and federal levels; grassroots organizing; voter engagement; and litigation.

We bring a culture of innovation and nimbleness to our work to provide effective leadership in a changing world. We scan the horizon and anticipate the future: evaluating what challenges are next, which are most important, and what is changing that our movement needs to address in order to succeed.

Scanning the horizon, anticipating the future.

At the core of this work is our role as a convener and our deep commitment to partnership. Working with a wide range of partners is fundamental to how we get things done and an integral part of our long-term success. Underlying it all is our foundational partnership with Washington Conservation Voters (WCV).

WEC and WCV share an office, staff, and a vision for Washington’s future. We bring our respective policy and political tools to our state’s environmental challenges and opportunities. WEC engages the public to meet environmental challenges; WCV helps elect environmental champions. WEC and WCV advocate for strong environmental policy and use different tools to hold government officials accountable.

As we celebrate our first 50 years and plan for the next 50, we’ve evaluated where we stand. With the support

of committed Washingtonians, we have accomplished so, so much. However, our work has not always led to equitable results. We can, and must, do more to center those communities most impacted by environmental harm to ensure that positive change happens where it is needed most.

We have much to learn from communities most impacted by pollution and climate change. Working for racial and environmental justice will make us stronger. By listening, learning, and evolving, we can repower the environmental movement through inclusion, innovation, and institutional change.

Repowering the environmental movement through inclusion, innovation, and institutional change.

The powerful thing about this change is the realization that we’re not working to “broaden” the environmental movement. Instead we are acknowledging and engaging with communities across the state that care about the environment, but may not identify as “environmentalists.”

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HOW WE WORK

These strategic priorities outline our organizational theory of change over the next five years: we do not know all that we will work on; we are willing to learn and adapt; and we need to keep building partnerships that last.

Driving Transformation Through Partnerships

WEC expands and evolves by partnering in new ways, illuminating new pathways for the environmental movement.

- Create coalitions with a range of partners – business, labor, tribes, and communities of color – and allow these partnerships to affect what issues we tackle. Invest in capacity-building and expertise to do this work well.
- Work with partners to demonstrate that a healthy environment is good for the economy and that environmentalists come from all classes, races, and geographies by telling success stories of environmental protection, community health, racial justice, and economic prosperity.
- Challenge ourselves to advance solutions that provide environmental, economic, and social benefits, in which we and our partners are deeply and mutually invested.
- Play different roles – convener, leader, or partner – depending on what the situation requires and how we add value. Leadership does not always mean being “in front.”

Pursuing Racial and Environmental Justice

We are a trusted ally for tribal nations and communities of color.

- Integrate a racial justice lens across our work with humility and evolve our approach as we learn. Engage with impacted communities in creating and implementing solutions.
- Expand our reach to all Washingtonians who share environmental values, making our base more reflective of the state’s shifting demographics and enabling wins at the ballot and in the legislature.
- Engage with our historically white membership in dialogue about systemic racism and environmental and economic justice.
- Be clear and vocal about our organizational commitments on racial justice and equity, both to hold ourselves accountable and leverage our influence within the environmental movement.
- Ensure professional pathways for people of color and native people within our organization and provide a work environment that supports and retains these staff.
- Grow our understanding of the role of tribal nations in the issues we work on. Devote time and resources to develop relationships. Jointly identify areas for collaboration and connection.



Fostering Innovation

Our culture empowers us to experiment in creative ways to achieve transformational change.

- Implement an innovation project in each program area, perhaps harnessing market forces, working with government to develop new tools, or connecting the sectors of government, non-profit, and business.
- Foster innovation at all levels of the organization. Create systems that generate and reward new ideas.
- Use new communications tools to reach more people and foster engagement.
- Develop executive-level relationships with business and government to envision and partner on innovative projects that transcend our usual ways of interacting.

Partnering with Washington Conservation Voters

Our work with Washington Conservation Voters maximizes power for environmental results.

- Bring our combined power to strategic coalitions and to our work in the legislature, state agencies, and with the executive branch.
- Selectively engage at the local and federal levels, capitalizing on WEC and WCV’s relationships to achieve our program goals and build momentum for state-level progress.
- Work together at the local, state, and federal levels to cultivate current and future elected leaders.
- Further align our grassroots organizing and voter outreach capacity through the Voter Education Program.
- Work with WCV to explore the alignment of the WEC and WCV brands.
- Explore Board restructuring with both the WEC and WCV Boards to better align with organizational and staff operations.



WHAT STRATEGIES WE USE

ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

Our government affairs work influences decision-makers at the state, local, and federal level. Our voter education and grassroots organizing work influences those same decision-makers by raising up the voices of voters and grassroots activists. We intentionally connect and calibrate the inside and outside strategies for the greatest impact. Both strategies draw on the WEC-WCV partnership to more effectively influence decision-makers and enable their constituents to hold them accountable.

Influencing Government Decisions

Our government affairs team shapes nimble and collaborative strategies across a wide range of partners and coalitions. We are trusted and respected in selecting the right tools – legislation, rulemaking, or litigation – at the right time for positive change.

- Advocate at the local, state, and federal levels to break down governmental silos, help achieve our program goals, and strengthen our long-run effectiveness. Connect local and federal funding to state priorities and build momentum at the local government level to scale up and enact at the state level.
- Ensure that policies we worked to pass are implemented at the local level. Refine state policies through local feedback.
- Use strategic litigation to ensure laws and rules are implemented and enforced.
- Evolve the Environmental Priorities Coalition to be more powerful and relevant in a changing political landscape, including through partnerships with allied interests.
- Provide fiscal expertise and leadership for the environmental community and allies to secure funding to implement and enforce environmental policies that protect public health and strengthen communities.



Organizing the Grassroots and Engaging Voters

We will build a base of environmental activists large enough to advance transformational environmental policy. Our organizing is responsive, relational, ambitious, and grounded in data-driven best practices. We invest and communicate strategically to grow environmental activists of the future, so that we meet the needs of today while preparing for the challenges of tomorrow.

WEC’s Voter Education Program deploys people power to achieve significant policy wins for our programs and broader community priorities.

- Implement a transformational organizing model that results in a web of connected grassroots activists in key areas across Washington, including a focus on younger activists.
- Integrate activist identification and tracking into all of our grassroots outreach to build and mobilize our base.
- With partners, work to improve ballot access and implement a GOTV program each election cycle to increase voting among the New American Majority (unmarried women, people of color, and young people).
- Educate voters and residents about environmental opportunities and challenges in key legislative districts to build grassroots momentum for legislative and policy campaigns.
- Build and invest in programs that open professional pathways into the environmental movement for future leaders reflective of Washington’s changing demographics.



ENGAGING THE MOVEMENT

- Engage a majority of coal and oil activists in campaigns to transition to clean energy, harnessing the power of these effective “no” campaigns to build the future we want for Washington.
- Understand and work together with tribes on mutual goals for a sustainable future.
- Increase opportunities for grassroots activists to engage around complex forestry issues.
- Build on people’s personal connections to the Sound for recreation, food, and employment to engage more people to advocate for Puget Sound protection.

WHAT WE ADVOCATE

FOUR KEY PROGRAMS

Over the next five years, WEC will focus in these four areas of environmental challenge and opportunity. Because WEC works in all these areas at once, we consciously consider the connections among them, whether it's the connection between forested streams and the health of Puget Sound or between a healthy economy, the state budget, and our policy goals. We also share lessons learned among our programs, translating winning tactics across our work.

Acting for Climate and Clean Energy

We work to advance state policies to reduce carbon pollution so Washington is on track to meet 2035 emissions limits.

The crisis of climate change affects all elements of Washington's environment that WEC works to protect. Washington can, and must, take bold climate action now to expand our clean energy economy. Our natural alignment with other West Coast states allows us to leverage our collective impact: passing an innovative climate policy here will add pressure for national action.

Reduce Carbon Pollution

- Pass equitable and innovative economy-wide climate policies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and generate investment in a just transition to clean energy, resilient forests, and water infrastructure.
- With diverse stakeholders, create a broad, winning coalition and redefine the climate movement.
- Update Washington's 2035 and 2050 carbon emissions limits based on best available science.

Advance Clean, Efficient Energy and Transportation

- Achieve one significant new statewide policy in addition to economy-wide carbon reduction policy, recognizing the priorities of our partners.

Preventing New Fossil Fuel Infrastructure

As we prevent new fossil fuel infrastructure, we support solutions to build the clean energy economy and ensure safe transport of existing fossil fuels as we reduce their use over time.

Washington cannot embrace a clean energy economy while locking in infrastructure that perpetuates carbon-intensive power sources. Our fossil fuel campaigns, Stand Up To Oil and Power Past Coal, provide on-the-ground forums for an examination of the impacts of the fossil fuel economy on communities and waterways and help remove the social license for climate-harming projects. These campaigns connect our Climate and Clean Energy and People For Puget Sound programs.

- Lead in building strategic campaigns that deepen existing partnerships and bring in new voices while preventing new fossil fuel infrastructure in our state.
- Support economic development alternatives to fossil fuel projects in terminal communities.
- Spur action to protect our iconic waterways, specifically Puget Sound and the Columbia River, by elevating awareness of the risk fossil fuels pose. Lead the work for the environmental community to pass key policies that protect our waterways and communities from existing fossil fuel transport.
- Strengthen regulations and other tools that govern existing transport and handling of oil at refineries and on vessels to protect our communities and waterways from oil spills and derailments.



Protecting and Restoring Puget Sound

We work to restore Puget Sound from more than a century of harm by responding to emerging threats to the Sound, its connected waters, and our collective heritage.

Degradation of Puget Sound continues to outpace recovery efforts, and while some progress has been made, several 2020 targets for Puget Sound recovery will not be met. WEC and our partners must dig deep using a wide range of tools to safeguard a healthy, livable Puget Sound and Salish Sea for people, orca, and salmon. WEC's People For Puget Sound Program is a recognized leader, trusted voice, and valued expert in Puget Sound recovery. We look across the Puget Sound landscape – both physical and political – to identify gaps and make the system function more effectively as a whole.

Puget Sound Leadership

- Provide leadership to create a comprehensive post-2020 Puget Sound strategy by convening groups that focus on specific Puget Sound issues or tools.
- Lead efforts to increase funding for Puget Sound at the local, state, and federal levels.
- Hold elected officials and government agencies publicly accountable for their decisions on Puget Sound recovery.

Clean Water

- Strengthen stormwater policies and regulations to facilitate green infrastructure in a majority of Puget Sound communities.
- Establish a dedicated funding source for stormwater projects that incorporates innovative, sustainable approaches to managing polluted runoff.
- Partner with tribes and other disproportionately impacted communities to achieve sustainable funding for cleanup of toxic sites and prevention of additional toxic pollution.
- Prevent new oil terminals and improve safety for land and water transport of oil to existing refineries.

Healthy Habitats

- Enact new policies and update existing regulations to save intact habitat and restore degraded habitat, including both marine waters and the rivers and streams that feed Puget Sound and the Salish Sea.
- Provide support for local communities' leadership to protect their shoreline habitat and aquatic reserves.



WHAT WE ADVOCATE CONTINUED

Sustaining Our Evergreen Forests

We strive to improve management of state and private forests through policy tools and advocacy that value the full range of benefits from our forests.

Sustainably managed forests provide not only timber products but clean drinking water, removal of carbon pollution, cultural values for tribes and many communities, places for outdoor recreationists and wildlife to thrive, and many associated local jobs. Over two million acres of private forestland will likely change hands in the next few years. WEC is poised to seize the opportunity, as we work toward a goal of transforming one million acres of private lands from industrial to sustainable forest management.

Growing Our Future Campaign

- Convene landowners and businesses to develop projects demonstrating new economic models for sustainable forest management, including monetizing increased carbon storage in forests.
- Secure long-term dedicated funding to transition from industrial to sustainable forest management, with longer growing cycles and more trees left after logging.
- Change policies to increase near-term funding sources for sustainable forestry projects.

Sustainable Management of State Forests

- Work with the Commissioner of Public Lands to identify at least two strategic initiatives to improve management of state and private forestlands.
- Achieve an ecologically-sustainable 10-year cut level for western Washington’s state forests.
- Enhance endangered species protections through adoption of a conservation-based long term strategy for the marbled murrelet seabird.

Improve Private Forest Management

- Defend and expand forest protections on private lands and ensure adequate funding for scientific research and stakeholder participation by working with stakeholders in the Adaptive Management Program and the legislature.



WHO WE AIM TO BE

WEC has talented staff and abundant resources in order to achieve our goals.

Striving for Organizational Excellence

- Provide the tools, processes, and culture to attract, inspire, and retain a diverse and talented team to move our work forward.
- Invest consistently in technology solutions, optimizing for highest mission impact.
- Ensure WEC is known for competitive and livable salaries and benefits, reflecting the changing cost of living in Washington.
- Develop and implement plans for staff career development and ongoing training and professional development.
- Develop effective succession plans for senior staff.
- Evolve hiring practices to include a social justice lens, diversifying staff and the management team with regard to race and gender.
- Align and optimize staff capacity to ensure success of strategic plan.
- Create a new Board development plan that empowers WEC to achieve this Strategic Plan, including through working with a broad set of partners, and increasing the racial, geographic, and age diversity of the Board.
- Explore creating an advisory council for input from a broader range of partners and to provide an entry point for deeper organizational engagement.

Strengthening Financial Health

- Through collaboration and partnerships with new and existing donors, foundations, businesses, and other organizations, expand our base of financial support so we can achieve this plan’s vision. Grow our budget approximately 30% over the course of this plan to reach a total of \$3.5 million.
- Grow and leverage our endowment to \$5 million so we are responsive to environmental challenges and opportunities and foster innovation within our organization and community.
- Maximize our 50th Anniversary’s potential to build the endowment, launch a planned giving program, and attract sponsors and donors.
- Pursue collaborative fundraising opportunities with our partners to maximize the pool of donors supporting our work and secure larger grants that help fuel joint campaigns. Systematize the structures supporting campaigns.
- Expand our donor base to reflect the changing demographics of Washington, focusing on age, race, and capacity, to ensure our long term success.
- Use existing and new technology to connect with and cultivate new and existing donors.
- Grow the culture of philanthropy so that program staff are empowered to build relationships and deepen organizational connections that result in innovative partnerships and new revenue streams.



**For 50 years, you have been the center
and the strength of our work.**

Thanks to countless supporters, tireless
volunteers, passionate letter-writers, generous
donors, reliable partners, bright-eyed interns,
and everyone in between, WEC has convened
and mobilized those who are connected by
a common goal: protecting, restoring, and
sustaining Washington's environment for all.

Join us in continuing the WEC legacy by finding
your place in our collective story.



**WASHINGTON
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wecprotects.org

1402 Third Ave, Suite 1400
Seattle WA 98101

206.631.2600

photography & creative commons

Amanda Smith-USFWS \ David Adam Edelstein \ JHenry Rose \ Kristi Nakata \ Miles Ritter \ Natalie Jamerson \ Paul Summers \ Rich MachIntosh-USGS