



State of our Forests and Public Lands

**WASHINGTON
ENVIRONMENTAL**
COUNCIL

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VOTERS

2020

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Introduction

Washington Environmental Council (WEC) and Washington Conservation Voters (WCV) are non-profit, statewide advocacy organizations that drive positive change to solve Washington’s most critical environmental challenges. We work with activists, partners, state agencies, and elected officials to protect, restore, and sustain Washington’s environment for all. We advocate for sustainable management of our lands, and strive to hold elected officials and industrial landowners accountable.

Since 2015, WEC and WCV have published an annual State of our Forests and Public Lands report highlighting the progress of the Commissioner of Public Lands and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). As nonprofit organizations, it’s our responsibility to keep the public informed on how well elected officials are protecting the environment. The Commissioner of Public Lands is the only elected statewide position that works almost exclusively with our natural resources, making it one of the most important positions for Washington’s environment.

Commissioner Hilary Franz is Washington State’s 14th Commissioner of Public Lands and administers DNR, which is responsible for managing, regulating, and protecting Washington’s 10 million acres of state and private forests, 2.6 million acres of state aquatic lands, and 1 million acres of state grazing lands. The Commissioner also supervises our state’s wildfire protection and chairs the Washington State Board of Natural Resources and the Forest Practices Board. The Board of Natural Resources sets policies to guide how DNR manages our state-owned forests, aquatic lands, and rangelands, and the Forest Practices Board adopts rules for state and private forests that are implemented and enforced by DNR.

The 2020 *State of our Forests and Public Lands* report focuses on the past year of Commissioner Franz’s progress. The report card reflects on issues WEC and WCV have prioritized in our work and feel should be a priority for any Commissioner. It captures a **Success**, **Work In Progress**, or **Needs More Work** grade on progress relevant to keeping Washington forests, aquatic lands, renewable energy, and other vital resources like salmon healthy and thriving for generations to come.

Message from Alyssa Macy, CEO:



We find ourselves in a historic time—one that has caused us to pause, reflect, and take action. The COVID-19 pandemic has not only exposed how fragile our systems are, but it has also brought global witness to the chronic under-resourcing of Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities whom have carried the burden of unsustainable economic systems and are now bearing the worst impacts of the pandemic.

Quarantine has reminded us of the enormous value of the outdoors and protecting the natural systems that sustains us. Right now, our state agencies play a critical role in ensuring we come out of this pandemic better than we came in. This time is an opportunity to reassess our values and what we invest in. Elected leaders like the Commissioner of Public Lands must fight alongside the public to address public health and economic and environmental challenges with a vision that realizes a just, sustainable future. We are intrinsically tied to the health of the planet and our actions continue to degrade our home.

To pull us out of this crisis and prepare us for the future, Washington State must prioritize public health and safety, local communities, and investments and policies that build sustainable jobs and restore our forests and shared waters.

The Department of Natural Resources, our Commissioner, and our public lands play an enormous role in creating that future. We hope that by assessing what is working well and what deserves improvement, we can help ensure it's a future that works for all of us.

Adapting to COVID-19

Like all of us, state agencies have had to change and adapt in the face of this global pandemic. The Commissioner has been adapting as needed by following internal employee safety measures on state lands, working and supporting external partners, and re-evaluating how to work with the public in a virtual setting.

SUCCESS



- Commissioner Hilary Franz partnered with outdoor sports company REI to launch the **Recreate Responsibly Coalition**. The coalition now consists of hundreds of organizations nationwide promoting responsible recreation during the time of COVID-19. The goal was to raise awareness of things the public should consider when visiting recreation sites. As a coalition, the group put forward six pillars, and added a seventh to ensure all recreationists, regardless of background, were welcomed. This campaign received national attention and continues to serve as the touchstone on all DNR's communication efforts as they navigate COVID-19 and the risks it creates. To learn more about this effort, visit www.RecreateResponsibly.org.
- COVID-19 safety concerns changed the face of public meetings. In the **Forest Practices Program**, DNR relies on the expertise of on-the-ground Tribal staff evaluation of proposed forest practices activities that may impact fisheries and other resources of cultural importance. The Forest Practices Board and the Board of Natural Resources also have public engagement during their meetings. Agency staff quickly made creative use of remote technology to continue public engagement efforts, including the use of Skype to have remote interdisciplinary team meetings, and having DNR take photos and videos of features of interest and send them electronically to help illustrate particular topics for discussion.
- Broadband connectivity has become even more important for rural communities in the face of COVID-19. Home schooling, work-from-home capacity, and medical tele-visits need fast reliable service. Situated on the Olympic Peninsula, the Hoh Tribe is miles away from health care and other critical services. The Commissioner heard of the concerns of Tribal members and mobilized the Agency to provide them better service. The local DNR region provided a land use license, space for equipment within an existing State communications building, and space for an antenna on an existing State communications tower in Jefferson County.

Forestry Issues

DNR manages approximately 2 million acres of state owned forests. In 1889, the U.S. Congress granted lands to support public institutions, funding the construction of public schools. DNR also manages state forest lands that help fund services in many counties. In addition to earning income, these lands must protect habitats for native plants and animals and provide clean and abundant water. Some lands also offer diverse public recreation opportunities. They must be managed sustainably over time, to ensure that future trust beneficiaries and local communities are not disadvantaged by today's actions. DNR also owns State Natural Areas which are managed for conservation, research, and education. Progress on state lands has varied.

DNR's Plan for Climate Resilience

SUCCESS

In February 2020, Commissioner Franz released DNR's Plan for Climate Resilience. The report prioritizes climate-related risks to DNR's mission, responsibilities, and operations, and identifies specific responses. Such a plan is a first-of-its-kind at DNR, and the more than 200 detailed action items across every program now guide climate work the Agency does. The risks and responses span the natural resource sectors in which DNR works, and consider Tribal engagement, equity and environmental justice, and the reversing greenhouse gas trends.

- The report reflects input from DNR staff and over 150 external experts and partners. DNR has begun implementation of the plan, including Commissioner Franz's issuance of a Commissioner's Order directing DNR staff to "take all practicable steps within our existing authorities and as guided by DNR's Plan for Climate Resilience to incorporate climate change considerations into all relevant decisions, policies, procedures, and operations including, where relevant, into legal, policy, and guidance documents."
- Other actions in the Plan for Climate Resilience are highlighted in more detail throughout this report, including implementation of DNR's 20-year forest health strategy, increasing the use of state lands for renewable energy projects, and increasing carbon sequestration.

Carbon Sequestration Advisory Group

The Carbon Sequestration Advisory group is comprised of representatives from environmental organizations, the timber industry, academics, and other businesses. This group was convened to complete three tasks outlined by the state Legislature: (1) examine inventories of carbon capture and storage on Washington’s forestlands; (2) explore existing programs to incentivize landowners to sequester additional carbon; (3) provide recommendations to the state Legislature about any new opportunities to improve carbon capture and storage in the state.

SUCCESS



Washington does not currently have any formal way of supporting landowners in improving carbon sequestration on their lands

- In 2020, Washington State Legislature updated our state’s climate targets (HB 2311) to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050. After focusing first on reducing emissions, improving carbon capture and storage in natural systems like forests, farmlands, and estuaries was recognized as critical for reaching this goal.
- Washington does not currently have any formal way of supporting landowners in improving carbon sequestration on their lands, despite the enormous opportunity to use the state’s natural resources to help fight climate change.
- The Carbon Sequestration Advisory Group was successful in bringing together a diverse range of stakeholders to discuss the opportunity to better use our lands and aquatic systems as a way to reduce the impacts of climate change, and was able to establish a shared understanding of what tools currently exist to support landowners in their ability to do more to remove harmful greenhouses gases from the air.
- Recommendations from this group and how they will be presented to the Legislature are still unknown. Therefore, a significant body of work still exists around how the information gathered by this group will be used to drive forward new programs and funding to protect our natural and working lands.

20-Year Forest Health Strategic Plan

DNR’s 20-Year Forest Health Strategic Plan¹ for central and eastern Washington calls for maximizing the effectiveness of forest health treatments, such as mechanical thinning and prescribed fire, by coordinating and prioritizing forest management activities across watersheds and large landscapes. It provides a framework for our state to restore our forests. This plan will reduce the threat of wildfire as well as provide habitat, clean water, and economic opportunities.

SUCCESS

- DNR identified **33** priority planning areas totaling nearly **2 million acres**, and completed science-based landscape evaluations on **over 1 million acres**. These evaluations identified **286,220 to 430,120 acres** of forest health treatments are needed to move these landscapes into a more resilient condition.
- DNR developed a draft comprehensive and multi-scaled Monitoring Framework that went to partners for review, and initiated the all-lands treatment tracking component of the plan where willing individuals and organizations are able to report their forest health treatments.
- At the end of the 2019 calendar year, partners had reported **58,783 acres** of forest health treatments across state, private, and federal land ownerships in priority planning areas while Agency staff completed or have planned for landscape level forest health projects in **15 of the 33** planning areas.



Wildfire Surcharge

SUCCESS

The Commissioner introduced the *Wildfire Prevention & Forest Health* bill that would have helped reduce wildfire damage and cost. It would have created a new dedicated account to invest \$63 million each year for proven fire prevention and firefighting strategies. This investment would have protected our communities by ensuring firefighters have the resources and training they need to get to fires quickly and keep them small. By making these investments, we could have taken needed steps to keep Washington's communities, landscapes, and people safe.

- DNR's requested legislation (HB 2413) was proposed but did not pass either chamber in the 2020 legislative session. The request faced stiff opposition from the insurance industry, despite the fact that the state faces hundreds of millions of dollars for wildfire response during active fire years. 2020 was a supplemental budget year, and it is often difficult for funding proposals to get traction during a short session even for proposals addressing an urgent need.
- The Commissioner's leadership was strong and she provided helpful information on the urgency to address wildfires and forest health in our state so we are not scrambling with more expensive fixes down the road. The bill generated funds via a surcharge on property insurance to pay for wildfire risk reduction through forest health treatments and to provide more reliable funding for wildfire preparedness and response.

"The request faced stiff opposition from the insurance industry, despite the fact that the state faces hundreds of millions of dollars for wildfire response during active fire years."



Better Wildfire Communication

SUCCESS

As part of the Agency's Wildfire Strategy,² DNR developed a plan to better protect non-English speaking communities during wildfire response. Many of Washington's most vulnerable populations live in areas with high wildland fire risk. Older adults, young children, and those with limited English proficiency can be vulnerable during wildland fires due to potential health impacts. Recent research indicates that vulnerability to wildland fire is unequal. Census tracts that are majority Black, Hispanic, or Native American have a 50 percent greater vulnerability to wildland fire than other census tracts.³

- Under the Wildfire Strategy, DNR developed curriculum for, and provided cultural competency training to, first responders and community engagement organizations and specialists, along with an engagement plan with potentially impacted communities and leaders.
- They also invested in phone interpretation services and interpreters who are knowledgeable about wildland fire and the local area to provide timely, high-quality interpretation for wildland fire information and evacuations.
- The next step is to develop the capacity for translating public safety notices and alerts.



Issues on State Forest Lands

DNR manages approximately 2 million acres of state-owned forests. In 1889, the U.S. Congress granted lands to support public institutions, funding the construction of public schools. DNR also manages state forest lands that help fund services in many counties. In addition to earning income, these lands must protect habitat for native plants and animals, and provide clean and abundant water. Some lands also offer diverse public recreation opportunities. They must be managed sustainably over time, to ensure that future trust beneficiaries and local communities are not disadvantaged by today's actions.

WORK
IN PROGRESS

Board of Natural Resources Carbon Policy

Pacific Northwest forests are powerful natural systems for absorbing and storing carbon. As manager of 2.1 million acres of public forestlands in Washington, and given our climate crisis, DNR needs to factor climate and carbon science and corresponding impacts into forest management decisions. In June 2019, we asked the Agency and Board of Natural Resources to develop a policy that would inform how carbon and climate science should guide forest management decisions.

- In DNR's formal response to our policy request, the Agency outlined a number of different ways it is engaging in carbon and climate work. We support these efforts and have highlighted some of them in this report, including the Carbon Sequestration Advisory Group and the Plan for Climate Resilience. It is clear that DNR is trying to make progress here, and the efforts they are making on climate are commendable, however, the agency still lacks a formal policy for how to manage state forestlands with carbon and climate in mind. This

is important, because an official policy guides and binds management decisions, timber harvest planning, and more.

- In our current reality, increasing carbon sequestration should be a key value of public forest management. A full policy is required to inform the direction of state forestlands and the carbon they store and emit, as current and future generations grapple with the climate crisis and its impacts to our communities and resources.
- The Agency has stated in front of the Board of Natural Resources that DNR shares the goal of developing climate policy for state lands. We understand this is a big undertaking that requires extensive research and groundwork, some of which has already begun. We absolutely support this endeavor, would like to see a comprehensive outline of the path ahead, and look forward to working with DNR and the Board throughout the process.



Marbled Murrelets

NEEDS
MORE
WORK

Marbled murrelets are small seabirds that nest in coastal old-growth forests and feed in marine waters. In December 2019, the Board of Natural Resources adopted a Long-Term Conservation Strategy for the marbled murrelet. This decision amended DNR's Habitat Conservation Plan, and the federal government issued a permit that allows the Agency to harvest timber on state-managed forestlands despite impacts to marbled murrelets.

- The adopted strategy does not do enough to mitigate the harm that DNR's forest management activities, and the climate crisis, will cause the marbled murrelet over the coming decades. Earlier in the process, the Board and DNR chose not to pursue a more conservation-focused strategy, even though a DNR technical report from 2008 recommended much more protection than the final plan achieves. Conservation organizations, the scientific community, and other government agencies urged DNR to select a more conservation-focused plan, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, which approved the plan and issued the permit to DNR, pointed to a more protective strategy as the "environmentally preferable" alternative.
- DNR attempted to remedy stakeholder concerns by creating the Solutions Table, which brought together the Agency, beneficiaries of timber revenue, timber industry, and conservation organizations, to try to find creative, mutually-beneficial solutions and do more for all interests involved. Unfortunately, the Table concluded with no measurable solutions for murrelet conservation or rural communities, and the Agency has yet to set a clear path for how to address these concerns. As time goes on, we continue to lose critical habitat to state timber harvests and are losing vital time to recover marbled murrelets in Washington.



Olympic Experimental State Forest

NEEDS
MORE
WORK

The 270,000 acres of forested lands in *Olympic Experimental State Forest (OESF)* provide habitat for a number of endangered species. The OESF is meant to test forest management strategies that both provide habitat conservation and generate revenues,⁴ but 50 percent of the OESF is dominated by young forests that were clear cut in the 1970s and through the 80s.⁵ Major watersheds in the OESF are home to the most robust salmonid populations in Washington, including the listed endangered species bull trout and Lake Ozette sockeye. The federally threatened northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet also reside in the OESF.

- Unless changes are made, critical marbled murrelet habitat in the OESF is in danger of being logged under the current Long Term Conservation Strategy as early as this year, while the courts tackle litigation from conservation groups and beneficiaries.
- Bull trout riparian habitat protections are further reduced under the controversial 2016 OESF Land Plan, and negotiations with stakeholders and the US Fish and Wildlife Service reached an impasse.
- Currently the 2016 OESF Land Plan takes a business as usual approach in the face of climate change impacts, placing revenue over habitats, and leaving forests and species at further risk. **The upcoming Western Washington Forest Health report is an opportunity where DNR can give forest health and short term revenue generation equal weight and recommend feasible changes for habitat preservation and restoration.**



(top) This flowing type 4 stream was not included in the the forest practices map, one of many examples of flowing surface water overlooked and therefore inadequately protected within harvests

(bottom) Bull Trout; Eric Anderson/WA Department of Fish & Wildlife

Legal Case on the Trust Mandate: Managing for the Public Good

In early 2020, counties, timber industry, and conservation groups filed multiple lawsuits against the Agency regarding how DNR manages state lands. The lawsuit filed by WEC, conservation partners, and local residents, seeks a shift in the way Washington manages its public forests.⁶ The suit asks the courts to declare that DNR and the Board have been misinterpreting the state constitution, and that DNR can and must manage the state forests for all the people of the state.⁷ If successful, this would give the Agency the discretion to manage for broader public benefits that forests provide in addition to timber, such as clean water, clean air, carbon sequestration, habitat, and recreation, and better incorporate local and Tribal concerns and priorities.

For decades, we have advocated in the courts, the Legislature, at DNR, and at the Board of Natural Resources for reconsideration and reformation of how DNR logs state forestlands. But DNR asserts that it has a legal duty to maximize revenue by logging its forests as much as possible under state and federal law. **This approach leads to regular conflicts that pit funding for county services and schools against protecting the vital natural forest processes that sustain our communities and wildlife.**

DNR's current interpretation and operations put short-term economic interests ahead of the wider needs of the state and future generations. With respect to state forestland management, Commissioner Franz needs to push the Board and DNR to find long-term, big-picture solutions that rethink how we take care of our communities and forest resources through the climate crisis. **Washingtonians shouldn't have to choose between funding for essential services and the protection of natural resources. Our leaders can and must find solutions that deliver both.**

*"...DNR asserts that it has a **legal duty** to maximize revenue by logging its forests as much as possible under state and federal law."*



Issues on Private Forest Lands

DNR regulates forestry practices on approximately 8 million acres of private forest land. Practices may include cutting trees, constructing forest roads, or applying chemicals. State rules, as well as a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) covering water quality and threatened fish, specify which practices are allowed and which are not. The HCP relies on an Adaptive Management Program (AMP) to provide science-based recommendations and technical information to assist the Forest Practices Board in determining if it is necessary to adjust forestry rules and guidance. DNR manages the Adaptive Management Program. To date, the AMP has generally failed to adapt the Forest Practices Board rules as new science is published. Instead, the AMP is mired in constant debates amongst stakeholders over how best to proceed and progress here continues to remain out of reach.

Adaptive Management Program Conflict Transformation

WORK
IN PROGRESS

Recognizing the continued frustration of many stakeholders, DNR has been trying to prioritize program recommitment and reinvigoration. As reported last year, the Agency brought together leaders to reboot and improve collaboration and relationships. The Commissioner showed leadership on this by bringing on a skilled facilitator and making this a priority, however progress has been slow.

- There has been an unfortunate lag in meaningful interactions among participants of this workshop over the past year. To date, there has not been any improvement in the program, processes, or relationships.
- The Conflict Transformation Specialist that DNR hired just completed a Conflict Assessment report. This report provides a solid foundation from which to move forward, but there is a need to move quickly to act on the findings of the report and attempt to make needed progress. Further delay will likely result in the program becoming even more contentious and dysfunctional.

NEEDS
MORE
WORK



A timber sale boundary sign on a tree within the wetland highlights the narrowness of wetland delineation often seen in sale.

Water Typing

Water typing is a DNR classification system of streams and other water bodies that identifies whether or not there is fish habitat present. The Forest Practices Program uses water types to determine how large of a protective riparian buffer is required for logging operations. Adopting a permanent rule has languished for decades. The Commissioner needs to create a system that adequately protects our salmon and other important aquatic species.

- The Forest Practices Board, led by DNR, has been working to adopt a permanent water typing rule for 23 years. After a series of delays, the Board removed any self-imposed deadlines to complete the rule.
- Delays continue to plague the progress toward a final rule. Upon removing any deadlines, the Board subsequently established a couple of workgroups to determine the components of the rule. One workgroup, which was proposed as a half-year exercise, is not currently scheduled to finish its work until spring 2021, two years after it was proposed.

Compliance Monitoring

Biennial compliance monitoring reports are compiled on forest practices on private forestlands. DNR is also mandated under state law to regulate and enforce forest practices rules. According to the reports spanning nearly a decade, streams containing fish habitat have been consistently mistyped and therefore under-protected as defined in the rule (WAC 222-16-031).

Compliance monitoring is important because under forest practices rules, non-fish habitat streams may be clear-cut to their streambanks for 50 percent of their length and the remaining stream areas have only a 50-foot riparian buffer. Recent scientific studies are showing these practices are making stream temperatures too warm and are therefore not meeting Clean Water Act standards defined by the Washington Department of Ecology (CMER Westside Type N Effectiveness Monitoring project 2018).

NEEDS
MORE
WORK

An example of a mistyped stream; this stream was logged as non-fish type (Type N), but, after it was clearcut logged, surveys found fish in the stream.

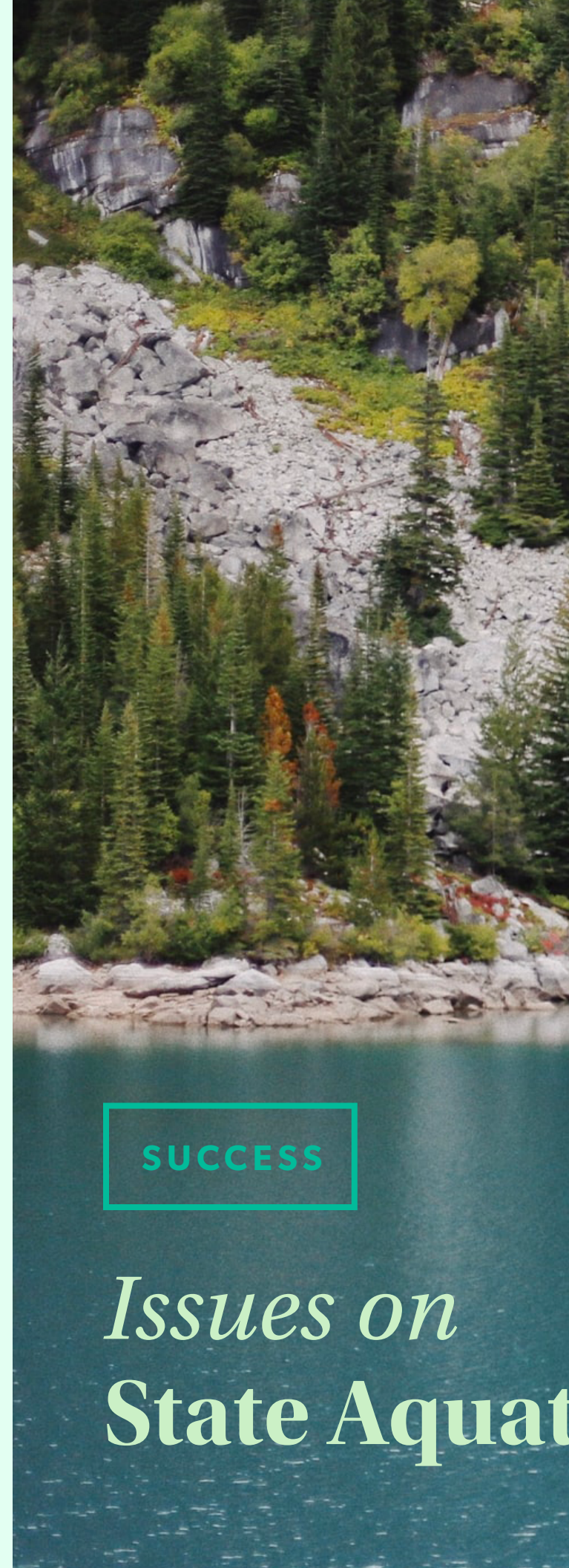


- Over the last decade, DNR's compliance monitoring reports demonstrate that a chronic problem persists with DNR approving harvest applications submitted by private forestland owners who incorrectly type waters as non-fish bearing, when they actually have fish-bearing characteristics.
 - DNR's 2010-2011 Compliance Monitoring Report found that private forest landowners submitted harvest applications that inaccurately depicted fish habitat streams as non-fish bearing in approximately 24% of the sample.
 - DNR's 2012-2013 report showed increased levels of compliance rates compared to the prior report, but 12.5% were still under-classified in the sample.
 - DNR's 2016-2017 report found 17% had fish-bearing characteristics and were therefore under-classified.
- When looked at over the larger landscape (covering nearly 9 million acres), these rates of non-compliance translate into thousands of miles of Washington streams that contain fish habitat being under-protected with inadequate riparian buffers. Many of these streams are being clear-cut to their banks, and do not meet Ecology's water quality standards based on research on non-fish streams (2018).

Other Notable Forestry Work



- DNR's *Urban Forestry Program* reformed its community forestry assistance grant program to include a focus on equity, including a requirement that applicants use the Department of Health's Environmental Health Disparities Map to develop their projects in highly-impacted communities. The Urban Forestry Program has awarded funding to three equity-focused urban forestry projects: one in Tacoma in 2018 and two in Spokane in 2019. In this same timeframe, the program has procured roughly \$800,000 in additional grant funding from the Forest Service for three urban forestry projects in the Seattle metro region where key project components include emphasis on diversity, equity, and accessibility.
- DNR has compiled and made available *a list of all the timber sales scheduled for the next two fiscal years*. This will allow interested individuals and groups to better understand and respond to harvests occurring on state lands. We thank the Agency and Commissioner for making this information easily accessible.
- In October, the Board of Natural Resources approved a pair of transactions that preserved the old forest stands at the core of *Blanchard State Forest in Skagit County*, while also ensuring local beneficiaries would still receive revenue from trust lands elsewhere in the county. The transactions permanently protect Oyster Dome, Samish Overlook, and other popular recreation areas while preserving the trees for conservation.



SUCCESS

Issues on State Aquatic Lands

DNR manages, leases, and protects more than 2.6 million acres of aquatic lands that include navigable lakes, rivers, streams, and marine waters such as Puget Sound, the Salish Sea, and the outer coast. While most of this report is focused on forests, it should be recognized that water and trees are connected from the uplands to the lowlands, making up complex ecosystems and economic opportunities. Several actions demonstrate that DNR is responsibly stewarding these unique resources while also balancing economic benefits.

- The Aquatics Division continues to engage through processes like the Orca Recovery Task Force to do its part sustaining the health of Puget Sound and salmon recovery. In July 2019, DNR purchased over 650 acres, expanding protections around Kennedy Creek in South Puget Sound, a chum salmon system important to the Squaxin Island Tribe's Treaty Rights.
- After the August 2017 failure of Cooke Aquaculture net pens, DNR terminated the lease as the company was not maintaining the facility appropriately. Cooke challenged that decision in court, but DNR held fast. In February 2020, Thurston County Superior Court upheld the decision.
- The proposed Millennium Coal Export Terminal in Longview, Washington, could export 44 million tons of coal every year and cause direct harm to our public aquatic lands. DNR has continued to apply resources to uphold their decision to deny harmful leases to the terminal. This process began in January 2017, when DNR rejected a request to sub-lease aquatic lands in Longview to the coal company. DNR successfully defended its decision against the company's litigation, with the WA State Supreme Court denying further review earlier this year and terminating the case.

Renewable Energy Projects on State Lands



We are already experiencing the impacts of dirty climate pollution—from more frequent wildfires to record-breaking temperatures to the loss of species to warmer waters. A transition to appropriately-sited clean energy is needed. Over the past year, DNR continued to build out its energy portfolio on state lands. The Agency's goal is to increase the use of state lands for renewable energy to lessen carbon emissions and increase revenue for trust beneficiaries. DNR has leveraged the passage of the *Clean Energy Transformation Act* to build out a clean energy program with two early successes

- The Rattlesnake Flat wind project recently became the first Labor and Industries certified commercial energy installation with a project labor agreement—a pre-hire collective bargaining agreement, making it eligible for a 100 percent sales and use tax exemption. The project is being built, in part, on state lands in Adams County.
- The Lund Hill solar project, located in part on state land in Klickitat County, has completed the leasing process. Avangrid Renewables plans to begin construction as early as Fall 2020. When completed, the 1,800-acre project will have a 150 megawatt capacity.
- As projects continue, it is important DNR works with the Department of Fish and Wildlife on siting guidelines when projects are developed. Siting in intact shrub steppe will always have significant impacts compared to distributed solar or siting on already disturbed lands.

Special Legislative Thanks:

This last legislative session, the Commissioner and her Agency were supportive on a number of important environmental priorities.

- **Community Forests:** Over the summer of 2019, community forest partners hosted four field tours for the Washington State Legislature at different project sites across the state. These tours drew dozens of people to Washington's forests to see firsthand what community forest management looks like in places like Ashford, Montesano, Nason Ridge, and Chewelah. These tours were instrumental in passing legislation to establish the state's first framework for a future community forest grant program to invest in land conservation, recreation improvements, and stewardship. Throughout these efforts, DNR served as a critical partner by sharing resources and staff time to ensure the community forest story is told right. Because of that support, community forests have a strong future when it comes to protecting the many values that come from Washington's working forests.
- **Climate Pollution Limits:** Climate action requires carbon reductions across the board and deep investments in healthier natural landscapes—shorelines, forests, and farms. Last session, the Commissioner supported HB 2311 that updated the state's greenhouse gas limits to reflect current science and lay groundwork to reach net zero carbon emissions and beyond. DNR supported the bill's directive for agencies to support sequestration and offered to help provide assistance to other state entities.
- **Clean Fuel Standard:** HB 1110 would have required fuel producers and importers to reduce pollution from the fuels that power our transportation system. The Commissioner publicly supported this tested and effective policy that would clean our air, create economic development, and move us beyond oil. In her statement she noted the Agency was ready to help build a clean fuel economy by expanding our portfolio of wind and solar farms which will also create new sources of revenue for rural communities.
- **Derelict Vessel Removal:** In the 2020 legislative session, the Commissioner worked to help pass SB 6528 to expand the Derelict Vessel Removal Program. The bill provided additional tools for DNR to work with vessel owners to prevent them from sinking in the first place, and to change vessel liability laws to cover more vessels in the program. While funding was vetoed as a cost-saving measure, the program will be better prepared to save public funds in the future.





Conclusion

Throughout this report, we were looking for measurable progress—meaningful, at-scale change that we could point to as improvements. From this benchmark, Commissioner Franz is making progress on a fair number of issues. Where she has chosen to lead, she has accomplished important results.

As has been the case in previous years, unfortunately challenges still exist and work is still needed on state and private forest issues. The threats to our forests and rural communities are real. Healthy forests support millions of dollars in economic activity in timber, fishing, and recreation, and thousands of jobs across the state. They protect our most critical drinking water sources, clean our air, and are one of our best tools to fight the climate crisis. But we are continuing to lose acres of healthy forests every year, salmon runs are down by 90% of the historic levels, and rural communities continue to lose tax revenue from corporate timber that no longer serves local communities.

When changes are made to Washington's logging rules or forestry management plans, they impact millions of acres of land that in turn affect millions of Washingtonians and their communities for decades. The Commissioner also has an important role to play in protecting and restoring salmon. This will require leadership on complicated issues.

Washington needs a Commissioner who will make tough decisions to protect forests and salmon while working toward a future based on renewable energy to fight climate change. Commissioner Franz has the opportunity to change the status quo to sustainably manage state and private forest lands that benefit the environment and local communities across Washington. Threats to our forests are growing every day and we do not have the luxury to wait for progress. Commissioner Franz is making progress and it is our job to continue pushing for more because this office has arguably more potential than any other for our environment. WEC and WCV look forward to continuing to work with the Commissioner and her staff to realize this potential.



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WEC is a nonpartisan 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization that does not support or oppose any candidates or political parties. We educate the public about the actions their elected officials have taken on environmental issues and we work with elected officials of all party affiliations to protect our environment.

**WASHINGTON
CONSERVATION**
V O T E R S

WCV is a 501 (c) 4 that ensures Washington's decision makers keep our environment protected, healthy, and vibrant. Over the last 35 years, we have elected environmental champions, held our elected leaders to the highest standard, and built statewide momentum for environmental campaigns through innovative voter outreach efforts and community organizing.



State of our Forests and Public Lands 2020

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Works Cited

Click through
on bolded items
to access the
linked webpage

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- ³ From Davies, I.P., R.D. Haugo, J.C. Robertson, P.S. Levin. (2018). The unequal vulnerability of communities of color to wild_re. PLoS ONE. 13(11): e0205825. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0205825> (accessed 11/7/2018)
- ⁴ Source – DNR overview web site – at <https://www.dnr.wa.gov/oesf>.
- ⁵ Source – DNR overview web site – at <https://www.dnr.wa.gov/oesf>.
- ⁶ **Conservation Northwest, Washington Environmental Council et al. v. Commissioner of Public Lands** (Thurston County Superior Court No. 20-2-01051-34)
- ⁷ **Const. art. XVI §1**
- ⁸ **DNR 2010- 2011 Compliance Monitoring Report**
- ⁹ **DNR 2012- 2013 Compliance Monitoring Report**
- ¹⁰ **DNR 2016- 2017 Compliance Monitoring Report**
- ¹¹ **Derelict Vessels**
- ¹² **Vessels Removed**

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