

2020

Impact Report



**WASHINGTON
ENVIRONMENTAL
COUNCIL**

Acting for Clean Energy

Secured new climate pollution limits

The *Climate Pollution Limits bill* passed in 2020 updates our state's greenhouse gas emission reduction targets to reflect current science, incorporate the role of sequestration into our state's climate policy, and establish the statewide intent around achieving these limits in a way that is equitable and invests in Washington's workers. Now that these limits are in place, we can use them in the years to come to advocate strong, equitable policies that functionally reduce climate pollution.

Rulemaking on 100% Clean Electricity

In 2019, we helped to secure the landmark *100% Clean Electricity* policy, but our work didn't end there: we have spent the past year continuing to work with environmental groups, community of color and frontline organizations, and labor unions to ensure the law is implemented according to its intent.

We have been heavily engaged in complex rulemaking processes since the law's passage to guide and advocate strong regulatory oversight of all electricity utilities in our state. This follow-through is critical for just and equitable climate action.

Stopping Fossil Fuels

Strengthening the State Environmental Policy Act

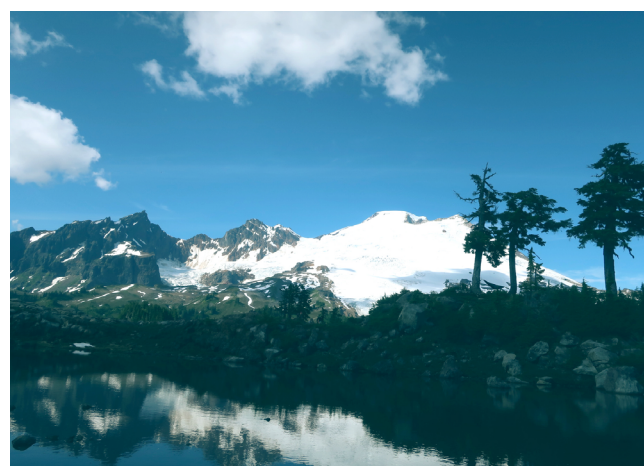
The fossil fuel industry has been working for years to weaken the *State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA)* in an effort to advance dirty and harmful coal, oil, and gas projects.

This year, we began working with Ecology on a rulemaking process to develop new guidance for SEPA which will help establish stronger requirements for greenhouse gas emissions evaluation on these projects and prevent them from moving forward in the first place.

WEC helped to secure SEPA's passage in 1971 and it is foundational to environmental protection in our state. Ever since then, we have been both defending it from attacks, while also helping to evolve to make sure it meets today's needs.

WEC does a huge amount of foundational ground-work to set up and deliver on big environmental wins, which often goes unseen

— Alyssa Macy, CEO of Washington Environmental Council



Protecting Puget Sound

Launched the We Are Puget Sound campaign

Public awareness and engagement are critical to protecting and restoring Puget Sound. The goal of our new *We Are Puget Sound* campaign is for everyone to see themselves in Puget Sound recovery by connecting with each other and with this remarkable place. This will grow the chorus of voices advocating for clean water and healthy habitat.

In person and virtual events have drawn significant interest, and the *We Are Puget Sound* book has won two publishing awards to date. The campaign includes actionable steps people can take, such as voting, reducing personal impacts, and centering communities of color.

Equitably reducing the impacts of toxic pollution

As a result of our advocacy this past year, Ecology expanded the list of consumer products to evaluate under *Safer Products for Washington* to include personal care products containing phthalates, which disproportionately impact women of color.

In addition, WEC has successfully advocated for Ecology to include environmental justice in our state's toxic pollution cleanup and prevention funding program, including in the ranking and prioritization of toxic waste sites and in the assessment of cleanup alternatives.

Delivering on Orca Recovery Task Force recommendations

As a member of the Task Force, we pushed for a comprehensive set of 49 recommendations needed to increase salmon availability, reduce toxics, and decrease boat noise and disturbance—all factors that need to be addressed to recover our orcas.

Several important actions were taken in 2019 including setting licensing rules for whale watching boats and increasing oil transportation safety measures. We've been engaging in the rulemaking processes for both to ensure strong rules are adopted.

Additionally, we started a conversation with the state about how to better protect habitat in our state, so that we can transition beyond a frame of "No Net Loss" to one of "Net Ecological Gain."

Sustaining our Evergreen Forests

Elevating the value of community forests

Community forests are working forests owned by municipalities, local government agencies, Tribes, and/or non-profit organizations and managed for the benefit of local communities. Last year, we and local partners hosted four legislative tours at community forest sites in Grays Harbor, Pierce, Chelan, and Ferry counties. These tours drew dozens of participants from the State House, state agencies, local governments, and community organizations. As a result, we secured funding for the Recreation and Conservation Office to establish the first state-led process for vetting and funding future community forest projects.

Additionally, we have been working with the City of Ilwaco for years on their community forest, which received federal funding earlier this year to protect the City's vital water reservoir and drinking water in perpetuity, while providing new opportunities for outdoor education and recreation-based economic development in Southwest Washington.

Advancing the conversation around forestry as a natural solution to combat climate change

We hosted the third annual Carbon Friendly Forestry Conference in November 2019, which continued to provide attendees with important learning and networking opportunities. Areas of focus included the intersection of forest management and climate change in West Coast working forests, as well as the roles of climate-smart forests and forest products as natural solutions for mitigating and adapting to the climate crisis.

Holding the state accountable

In January 2020, WEC and several partners filed a lawsuit against the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) regarding its management of our forested trust lands. The state constitution requires these forests be managed to maximize benefit for all people in our state. This means that DNR and the Commissioner of Public Lands Hilary Franz must consider the health of our state, communities, and environment when managing our state trust lands. We shouldn't be forced to choose between often unsustainable and unreliable funding from timber sales and the essential services these lands provide, including clean air and water, fish and wildlife habitat, local jobs, and carbon storage.



Engaging People in Democracy

- Mobilizing the public is another critical element to our long-term success. In 2020, we turned out over 400 people from 45 out of 49 legislative districts to our Environmental Lobby Day, and 100 people in support of Youth Climate Lobby Day. We also turned out over 100 people to Puget Sound Clean Air Agency hearings in Seattle, Tacoma, Everett, and Bremerton on behalf of a Clean Fuel Standard. We have been engaging people virtually since the pandemic hit, with nearly 500 people attending our webinars from late March through early June.
- Our relationships with elected leaders are critical for our work. This year, we worked to educate, communicate, and build stronger relationships with more than 70 new and incumbent local government leaders in Tacoma/Pierce County, Snohomish County, King County, Bellingham/Whatcom County, Jefferson County, Skagit County, and the City of Spokane. Ensuring we have strong local leaders on the environment is essential to building success at the state level—we had support for the Climate Pollution Limits policy from over 50 local government leaders from communities across the state.
- We have been working to elevate the Census and its importance among our members and supporters. As a member of the Census Alliance Allies table, we are working to connect the Census not only to our environmental policy priorities, but to racial and environmental justice as well.

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