

*WEC's connection to a landmark
law that addresses toxic pollution
and environmental justice*

*Harnessing our power from an
historic election into the 2021
legislative session*

*Brainerd Foundation's
sunset, reflecting on their
years of support*

2020 WINTER ISSUE

CONVENE

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Photo credit: Occidental Chemical Plant Glen Springs Holdings Archive (cover, 4, 5); Photocopy of photograph (original print located in Pope & Talbot Archives Port Gamble, WA). Unknown Photographer, Circa 1953, courtesy of Library of Congress (6); Rae Lee (8); Opportunity Center at Othello Square, Homesight and Weber Thompson (9); Gasworks Park, Item 77122, Engineering Department Photographic Negatives (Record Series 2613-07), Seattle Municipal Archive (11); Chinook salmon, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (17); Matthew Warner (18); Jack Borno (19).

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A NOTE FROM OUR CEO

A challenging ten months behind us—we now face an even more uncertain winter.

As you hold this publication, the COVID-19 pandemic surges across our state and brings hardship throughout our communities, immeasurable effects of which range in scope from systemic to intensely personal. The full measure of this public health disaster seems hard to grasp while we remain in the thick of it.

However, as we summon the necessary response to this current crisis, we have an obligation to collectively respond to other deep and far-reaching crises, whether it’s dismantling structural racism or addressing the global climate crisis. We have experienced first-hand the devastating consequences of failure in leadership and of short-sighted policies during this moment, and now we must carry this hard-earned learning forward. What coronavirus’s impact illustrates is the need to address the chasms that run deep throughout our systems—bolstering the pillars of a healthy society—to weather future shocks.

It seems fiercely daunting, but we must forge on as my and so many of our ancestors did before us because we are resilient. We’ve banded together before to address seemingly intractable problems.

In this issue of CONVENE, we reflect on the Model Toxic Control Act, a landmark piece of legislation that remains a milestone in Washington Environmental Council’s history and highly relevant to our work today—generations later. We felt this great story illustrates the far-reaching impacts of a community coming together to tackle the pernicious

issue of industrial toxic pollution, a problem spanning different parts of a larger system and different communities; and, considers justice in its approach to address an environmental problem with unequal impacts.

We also want to highlight the stories that bring us hope, whether it’s businesses that demonstrate leadership in our community through thoughtful programs around environmental impact (pg. 13) or the gathering of innovators collaborating on resilient and carbon-smart forestry (pg. 21). Of course, we also have some behind-the-scenes updates from our virtual offices. Finally, we will walk you through the Environmental Priorities Coalition’s priorities and partnership agenda (pg. 20).

There are great opportunities for progress for climate, democracy, and justice during the upcoming legislative session, and we hope you will sign up for updates on our website and take advantage of this great opportunity to push our leaders in Washington legislature to make bold progress in this first ever virtual legislative session.

(If you don’t follow us on Twitter, this would be a good time to do so; join us in holding our leaders accountable via tweetstorms!)

From all of us here at Washington Environmental Council, thank you for your continued support and for being in community with us.



Toxic Pollution

In some areas of Washington state, you could toss a rock and hit a toxic waste site.

However, of the more than 13,000 properties in every corner of Washington state that are contaminated and in need of cleanup, many look innocuous: an old gas station with a leaky underground storage tank; a shop that used to be a dry cleaner, which, before modern regulations, released highly toxic chemicals that contaminated the soil around it. These sites are found throughout neighborhoods all over our state, in rural, suburban, and urban communities alike.

These poisonous chemicals—which most people have never heard of—seep into the soil and groundwater at these sites. Exposure to these chemicals can mean an increased risk of poor health conditions for the adults and children that live nearby, including cancer, pregnancy issues, and respiratory diseases. These same chemicals also contribute to the declining health and survival of fish and wildlife, such as culturally important Chinook salmon and critically endangered Southern Resident orcas.

Occidental Chemical Plant manufactured and improperly disposed of dry-cleaning chemicals for nearly 80 years leaving a legacy of groundwater, soil, and sediment contamination in Commencement Bay that is still in need of being cleaned up.

(Above) 1929; (Cover, across) 1928



You may be quite alarmed by now, especially when you learn that the federal Superfund law only addresses the worst and most dangerous sites—places like the Hanford nuclear facility and the lower Duwamish Waterway. Thousands of sites have toxic waste yet are not eligible for being cleaned under Superfund.

Fortunately, Washington has a state law specifically designed to protect our communities and natural resources from these toxic chemicals. Washington Environmental Council helped write the original bill and fought fiercely to avoid a watered-down version introduced by polluters. In 1988, WEC and partners launched a voter initiative, building a groundswell of grassroots enthusiasm to pass Initiative 97 and create what we now know as MTCA, or the Model Toxics Control Act.

MTCA is responsible for reducing toxic pollution, involving the public in decisionmaking, and cleaning up sites contaminated with toxic, hazardous waste. The original authors thought they were writing a law to tackle a few hundred leaking landfills and wood treatment facilities in rural communities, believing that all sites would be cleaned up in just a few years. But as MTCA became established and additional sites were discovered, it became clear that the number of hazardous sites was grossly underestimated.

Instead of a few hundred sites, the Department of Ecology has found tens of thousands across the state, and the number continues to grow.

In its 32 year history, MTCA has successfully cleaned up over 7,000 sites throughout the state, and prevented many other sources of pollution

that harm our communities by poisoning our water, air, and land; its broad success demonstrates how this law serves as one of the most important tools for environmental protection here in Washington.

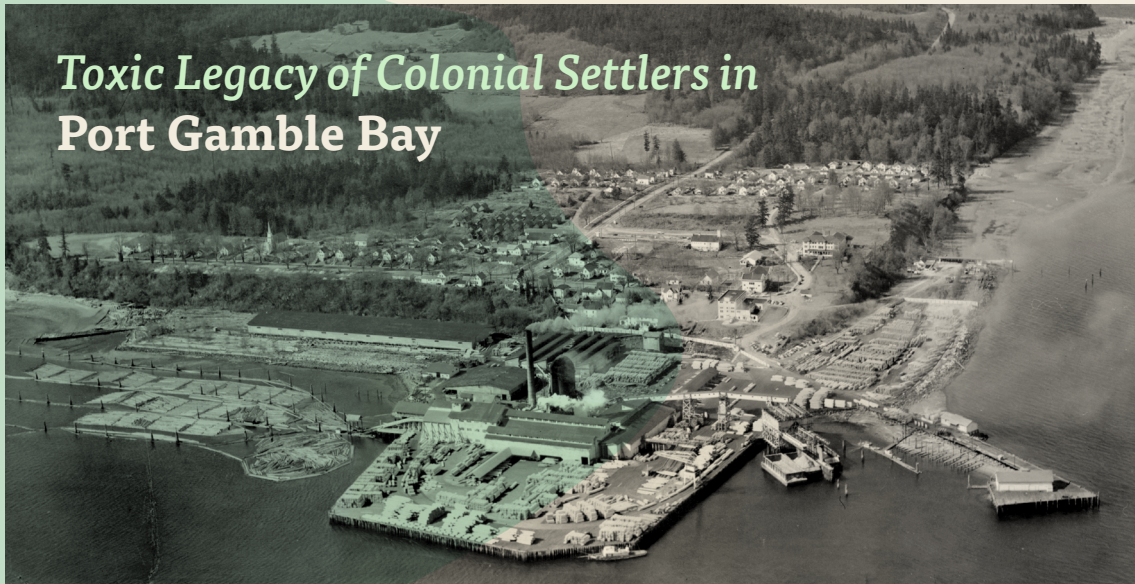
Another aspect of MTCA that can be considered a win of its own is the part of the law that holds polluters accountable for the dangerous footprint their activities left behind. Surely, one would only consider it fair that, when a toxic site is discovered long after the contamination takes place, it shouldn't be the new property owner or the surrounding communities that pay the price of the expensive cleanup in place of the responsible parties.

And, beyond the initial cost of cleaning up the toxic sites, there are also immeasurable costs to human health, to economic prosperity, and to culture resulting from the poisonous contamination. And it is the communities that are least responsible for the contamination that continue to bear the disproportionate burden of health, social, and economic impacts.

This is consistent with the pattern of predatory behavior—such as redlining and historic underinvestment in communities—that has become familiar in the United States for many decades, with the Civil Rights Movement first bringing national attention to the issue. In communities of color and low-income populations where structural racism has left deep imprints, polluting industries have considered these neighborhoods to be acceptable sacrifices for the continuation of their activities. In 2017, Front and Centered, a statewide coalition of organizations and groups rooted in communities of color and people with lower incomes, conducted an equity analysis identifying that 56 percent of MTCA sites are located in low-income communities and 46 percent are located in communities of color.

In the design of the law, MTCA seeks to address the inherent unfairness embedded in this example of how pollution and systemic oppression intersect to produce this wide-reaching environmental justice issue.

Toxic Legacy of Colonial Settlers in Port Gamble Bay



Near the entrance to Hood Canal, just on the northwestern end of the Kitsap Peninsula, lies Port Gamble Bay (Noo-Kayet). The Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe lived on this land for thousands of years, building their lives, spiritual, and cultural practices around the abundance of Pacific salmon, shellfish, and forage fish in the bay that have supported their ancestors since time immemorial.

In 1853, some decades after First Contact, the Puget Mill Company, later renamed to Pope & Talbot, Inc., saw a different vision for the bay: a mill site with excellent visibility of surrounding waterways, all the better for coordinating an abundance of log rafts. The mill owners negotiated with the elders of the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe: in return for relocating their permanent village on the western shore of the bay to Point Julia, located less than 500 feet across the bay, the Tribe would receive houses built from the mill's wood and jobs for their members. The Tribe could return after the mill was done, which they thought would take about 10 years.

We met with Paul McCollum, the Natural Resources Director of the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe of 14 years, to talk about the impacts of the mill's activities on their Tribal Nation. He described the tragedy of this moment as such: "They could

not have known that the mill would sit on the site for over 150 years and pollute the waters, impacting their traditional spiritual practices as well as their diet."

Not only were they never going to be able to move back to their ancestral village, but the mill also left them with a legacy of severe toxic contamination to their water, land, and natural resources. Wood ash from incineration, the breakdown of wood debris, and harmful chemicals used in the wood product manufacturing process and treatment activities left behind a toxic stew of contaminants that has resulted in devastating impacts on the bay that would reverberate for decades.

"They could not have known that the mill would sit on the site for over 150 years and pollute the waters, impacting their traditional spiritual practices as well as their diet."

Paul, who has been deeply involved with the cleanup and restoration of the bay's natural resources, talked about how the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe came to know there was a problem.

"Long before I got here, we were seeing problems of toxicity in the bay." One of the most obvious signs was the dramatic decrease in the herring stock in Port Gamble, which used to be the second biggest stock in the state. The Tribe's oral histories captured a picture of abundance and dramatic arrival. "When herring first comes into the bay, the elders would talk about it like it's a magical time...like a spiritual, beautiful thing. All kinds of fish—everything—would come after a tough winter. Everything started with the herring."

"When herring first comes into the bay, the elders would talk about it like it's a magical time... like a spiritual, beautiful thing."

So, of course, everyone noticed when the herring numbers dropped precipitously. Because fish and shellfish comprise such a significant part of the Tribe's diet, this had a marked impact on the availability of subsistence food.

This also had frightening public health implications.

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is responsible for setting fish and shellfish consumption standards based on exposure potential of cancer causing chemicals. In 2016, EPA updated the allowable risk of cancer from seafood consumption to not exceed more than 1 in 1 million, assuming a consumption rate of 175 g/day, equivalent to 6 ounces per day. This failed to take into account that the citizens of tribal nations, such as the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe, eat higher amounts of seafood for nutritional, cultural, and spiritual reasons. As such, in Port Gamble Bay, pre-cleanup, there was 1 in 1,200 cancer risk from the assumed 175 g/day of seafood.

Most Port Gamble S'Klallam tribal members eat as much as 500 g/day of fish and shellfish, nearly three times as much.

Once the Tribe's scientists realized the significant increase in risk of cancer from consuming the poisoned fish and shellfish, they were forced to recommend that Tribal members reduce their shellfish consumption from the bay, despite the cultural and spiritual importance of consuming their ancestral food.

Paul described how difficult it was to deliver this news to the members. "The Tribe has been eating the shellfish there forever. And it was unfortunate that the shellfish and fish were highly polluted." When they shared the dangers with the Elders, "some of the elders stopped eating shellfish which was very difficult for them. It's who they are; the things they eat connect them spiritually to the environment and the ecosystem."

While both the company and the Tribe may have benefitted from the short-term economic gains of the mill's operations, it is the Tribe that paid the long-term cost. The way the Puget Mill is discussed in history texts and articles—often celebrated as the longest running mill in North America—without mention of the lasting impact of its operations to the ecosystem and the community inextricably tied to the health of the bay is a clear illustration of how this story, too, is about injustice.

Port Gamble Bay was listed as a MTCA site in 2006 and the first round of cleanup finished in 2017. Although the upland work is still underway, MTCA helped clean up over 106 acres of contaminated aquatic land. This included approximately 110,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediment and wood waste and over 8,500 creosote pilings and other overwater structures, one of the biggest creosote piling removals in Washington state history.

While the Tribe celebrates this critical step towards restoring the bay, Paul can't help but think about how this public health crisis never

should have happened in the first place and that more attention is needed throughout our region on the impacts of toxic pollution.

Paul reflects, “People wouldn’t throw their oil in their garden, right?” And yet, for so long, we’ve collectively been using the Salish Sea as a place to dispose our toxics as if we are not interconnected with this ecosystem; we are finally seeing, in a way that is indisputable, the long overdue impacts of those actions in orcas and in the health impacts on Tribal communities.

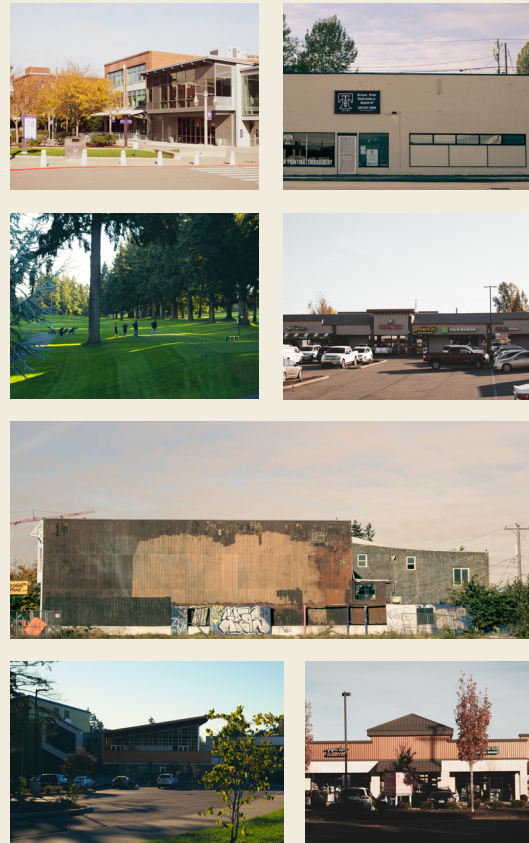
(Right) MTCA sites can vary a lot in the scale of contamination and size. Here we have some sites that show the varied uses for the sites once they have been cleaned up, as well as one lot that still needs to be addressed.

Poisoned Lots: Barriers to Flourishing

Port Gamble is one of seven Puget Sound Initiative sites, which gave it priority on the list of MTCA cleanup sites. But there remain many more sites that are left undiscovered, and out of sight, until developers try to break ground for a new project and discover unpleasant surprises in the soil or groundwater.

Polluting industries leave behind more than chemical contamination—they also prevent the community from using the land to enrich their neighborhood: vacant lots instead of parks, schools, businesses.

A community that understands the impacts of environmental racism and Seattle’s exclusionary redlining practices is Othello, one of the many neighborhoods that make up South Seattle. “Othello was a historically very underserved, under-invested community,” says Tony To—the Director Emeritus of HomeSight, a community-based non-profit and a community member from South Seattle. He calls the specific legacy of polluting



industries in these neighborhoods an “injustice, too—this lost potential to the community of whatever could have been there.” Just think of the cascading series of benefits from a single community center.

There is frustration underlying Tony’s voice when he speaks. “You have these contaminated sites that are underutilized because of the cost of the cleanup. You can’t build anything on it, you can’t use it as a public open space because it’s contaminated. This underutilization of land is part of the way communities are deprived of wealth. Or how gentrification occurs because only a market rate developer in a strong market will take the risk of building something. The property is right next to a light rail station and you can’t do anything with it unless you find a way to offset the risk! Wouldn’t it have been nice if it had been a park if you couldn’t build anything? But they couldn’t do that either because of the contamination.”

But it’s never too late to fight for these missed opportunities. As our state population grows, and the housing crisis worsens, communities around the state have started to look to these underdeveloped, contaminated plots of land for opportunities to reclaim and revitalize their neighborhoods. So it makes sense that, for community leaders like Tony, reclaiming contaminated MTCA sites for his community in South Seattle is a priority.

HomeSight’s newest project is working with the community to redevelop a 3.2 acre plot of land at the intersection of Martin Luther King Jr. Way South and South Othello Street. Despite its central location to public transportation, businesses, and housing, Othello Square has been vacant for the past three decades due to groundwater and soil chemical contamination from a Chevron gas station—it is a MTCA site.

A Model Process

Tony speaks to some important questions they had to address during the development process to ensure that it was equitable: “how do you grow? What happens to the people that are already there?” How do you ensure that the people and the environment that created the character of these communities that make them so attractive for growth are not pushed out? Tony was adamant that “it cannot be done without community being at the center of it, without the community having a say in how the thing is done, what the needs are.”

And the community was more than eager to help envision the site’s future, coming together through



Illustration of the Opportunity Center at Othello Square

two years of community meetings to decide for themselves what they wanted this plot of land to be. Given that Othello is one of the most diverse neighborhoods in the Great Seattle area—“You got 50 languages spoken there, probably over a dozen ethnicities. You have so much diversity—ethnic, cultural, income, and language”—it’s all the more impressive that a shared vision emerged.

“You can’t build anything on it, you can’t use it as a public space because it’s contaminated. This underutilization of land is part of the way communities are deprived of wealth.”

Their vision was “a campus of buildings that was community driven, community owned, and community based... with a mix of uses that would create living wage jobs, and also create ways that people can advance themselves if they live there,” Tony said. “Basically, a village environment.”

Tony laid out what the community priorities were. Efforts to build affordable housing were certainly important, but “we’re surrounded by low income housing. And what we needed were jobs for the people that live in the low-income housing to advance themselves and do better, so that was number one priority.”

Other than economic opportunities, universally appreciated urban design elements—pedestrian friendly features, public gathering places, a way to safely cross the busy thoroughfare—also made the cut.

Furthermore, the community meetings highlighted a desire to preserve the cultural diversity in the neighborhood.

Tony said, “There’s a lot of homeowners in the Othello neighborhoods that were primarily homeowners of color, because there were affordable homes in southeast Seattle and they were able to buy homes pretty cheaply. So there’s actually a pocket of older African American homeowners, along with a lot of immigrants, including the old Italian, Jewish, Irish immigrants of the earlier days, and, of course, a lot of Southeast Asian and East African families.”

Enabling these community members to remain in the area instead of being priced out—or return—would require low income ownership and mixed income rental opportunities.

“No one is building for people between 60% of area median income to 80%, or even 100%, of median income.” We need “step up” housing so that residents and their families can stay in the neighborhood when their incomes improve and others in need can move into their apartment.

But why?

So...Who Should Pay?

Developments are expensive. Cleanup, when a potential development site turns out to be contaminated, is expensive. It’s not surprising, therefore, that, in areas that don’t have immediate property value and are not so dangerous that merit an urgent cleanup, there remains so many underutilized contaminated sites.

MTCA holds polluters accountable to make sure they pay their fair bill. And when a polluter isn’t identifiable, a developer can pay for the cleanup.

In neighborhoods like Othello that have borne the legacy of economic and racial injustices, private developers are less likely to want to invest and pay for a site cleanup. Although HomeSight is relying on MTCA to hold Chevron accountable and clean up their legacy contamination, HomeSight is also fundraising to make up additional funding needs for the development; organizations like HomeSight often serve a crucial role bridging gaps and bringing resources into their communities.

In contrast to these underserved communities, in more affluent neighborhoods, it’s easier for the developer to recover the costs by putting in expensive housing and retail on the property. So, not only are there fewer sites—recall, that contaminated sites are disproportionately sited in communities of color where there’s historically been less political will to contest this injustice—the increased property value alone provides sufficient incentive for developers to take on the challenge; they’ll simply include that cost into the subsequent build in the form of expensive housing and rent.

This strategy holds for less affluent areas, too. When developers do come into underserved communities, they more often than not prioritize market interests over community interests. For instance, the housing across the street from the Othello Project, when it opened for rent in 2009, was priced at \$1500-\$2000 for a month’s rent when the average rents in the neighborhood were \$600-\$900.

That’s because these private developers often have no reason to invest in the community priorities and benefits, which will add to the built cost without a parallel increase in profit. “You can only do what the market is willing to guarantee you. There are not enough [financial] equity sources to mitigate a lot of the things that create healthy communities, like, toxic cleanup. Or, healthy materials and healthy design.” Without those sources, “these things don’t get factored in. These things don’t happen.” Thus, organizations like HomeSight also play an important role in elevating community benefits in these developments.

MTCA holds polluters accountable to make sure they pay their fair bill. If no liable party can be found, MTCA makes sure the cleanup is done to improve human and environmental health, either by the Department of Ecology, or by developers.

In the absence of polluters that can be held accountable or developers willing to step up, the Washington Department of Ecology is the entity next in line to clean up a toxic site. Troublingly, many cleanups are left to Ecology, so only the most toxic and dangerous get cleaned up, and hundreds more sites are found every year. Even with MTCA’s success, there are still over 6,000 properties that are unusable due to toxic contamination.

This lag is due to a deficit in resources to support these expensive cleanups. In 1988, when WEC—then a group of passionate volunteers—helped author and pass MTCA, the hundreds of sites they



anticipated would have a more manageable cost than what is now estimated for the remaining discovered sites.

As lots remain vacant and communities continue to be harmed by toxics and underinvestment, there is a critical need to shore up the existing funding systems to adequately address these opportunity gaps created by historical injustices. During the 2019 legislative session, WEC worked to push the State Legislature to address funding gaps in the initial MTCA law and ensure that the Polluter Pays model adequately covers the need, which far outstrips the original estimate.

56 percent of MTCA sites are located in low-income communities and 46 percent are located in communities of color.

-Equity Analysis from Front & Centered

Gasworks Park is a familiar sight to many in Seattle, and is an example of a larger site that was cleaned up using MTCA funding.

This funding investment, which may be under scrutiny in the upcoming legislative session as the state prepares for emergency funding and shortfalls, must still be prioritized. MTCA funding remains a crucial part of our region's long-term planning for a sustainable and livable future, including being part of the strategy for creating more affordable housing.

“You have to address a way to create cleaned up sites because you’re going to run into toxic contamination everywhere.” Many of these are “underutilized light industrial sites that should be up zoned to mixed use. And if you can connect those sites with transit, they become valuable,” Tony notes, “and there is no land in the Puget Sound region that is not valuable.”

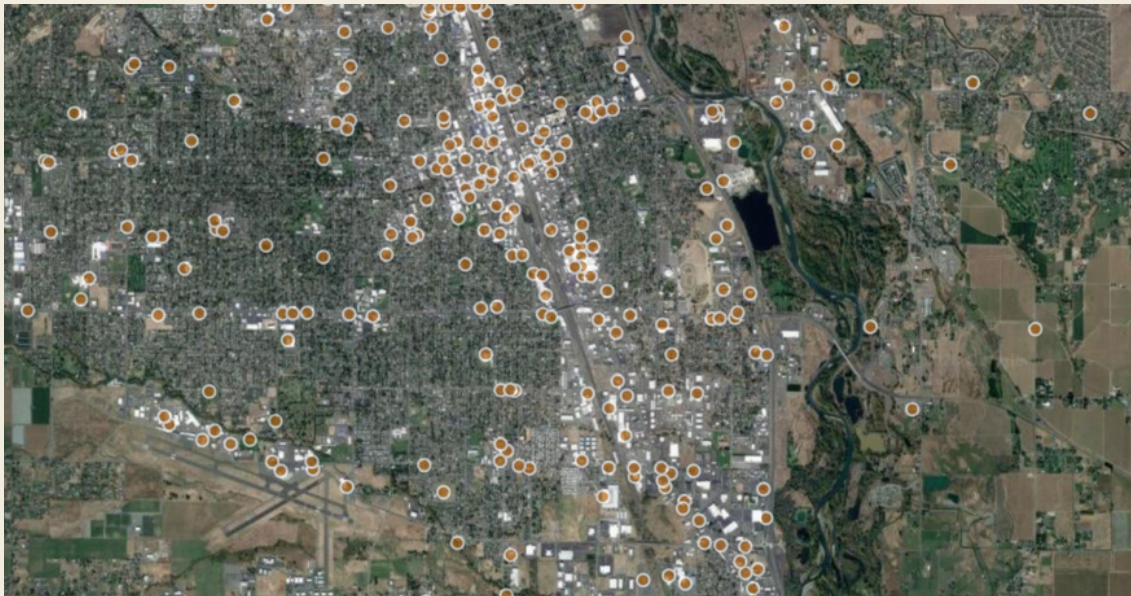
Afternote:

In recent years, WEC has worked alongside community partners to reform MTCA to address racial and economic disparities and center those most impacted. Together, we have gone to the legislature to fight for more public participation dollars

that provide resources to communities and empower them to lead, stabilized MTCA funding to ensure money is available for prevention and cleanups, and reimagined how MTCA cleanups can bring benefits and goods to communities throughout Washington state—such as centrally located affordable housing and community spaces like Othello Square.

MTCA is currently undergoing a ten-year rulemaking process to rewrite the policies and processes guiding the law. The rulemaking process provides an opportunity to address economic and racial disparities by incorporating equity and environmental justice into the rule. WEC sits on the Stakeholder and Tribal Advisory Group and we are using our position to advocate for stronger protections for communities of color and lower income communities.

To see how many MTCA sites are located in your community, check out the Washington Department of Ecology's **What's In My Neighborhood** tool. This map below is of the sites identified—including cleaned and not yet addressed—in the Yakima area.



Support for WEC's work on MTCA was provided, in part, by the Puget Sound Stewardship and Mitigation Fund, a grantmaking fund created by the Puget Soundkeeper Alliance and administered by the Rose Foundation for Communities and the Environment.

In summer months, whale watchers eagerly await the return of Southern Resident killer whales (SRKW) to the Salish Sea after hunting afar during lean winter months. More commonly known as orcas, SRKW comprise three orca populations (pods J, K, and L) that share similar feeding and migration patterns through a territory that stretches from British Columbia to California.

Unfortunately, they are, as of today, down to only 74 members.

While their population had suffered sharp declines in decades past from being hunted and captured, it is now a combination of environmental threats that will push them to extinction unless systemic measures are taken to address them. Until then, we may continue to bear witness to tragedies such as the one that took place just over two years ago when the world watched in sympathetic grief as the mother orca, Tahlequah, carried her lost calf for 17 days while swimming nearly 1,000 miles.

Unlike Transient orcas that have more varied diet that include mammals such as seals, Southern Residents predominantly sustain themselves on Chinook salmon, comprising about 80% of their diet.

Much like the Southern Residents, naturally spawning Chinook salmon populations are also declining, with nine populations listed as threatened or endangered, mainly due to habitat loss and, increasingly, climate change.

Together, the Southern Resident killer whales (SRKW) and the Chinook salmon sit at the nexus

of a highly complex web of interconnections. For the Tribal Nations that call this region home, salmon and orcas have held economic, cultural, and spiritual importance since time immemorial. They represent not only iconic species we recognize as our neighbors in coastal waters and rivers, but are part of our lives and economic and recreational activities. And: they are the keystone species that define the ecology of our region; without them, our ecosystem is irrevocably changed.



The Southern Residents' struggles and the sharp decline in the Chinook salmon runs have been clear signals about the health of the Salish Sea, and about the chains of impact and causality that tie all of us together here in the Pacific Northwest. For example, in returning to freshwater rivers and streams, Pacific salmon feed the birds and bears, and their carcasses provide the nutrients to add to the health of the surrounding forests.

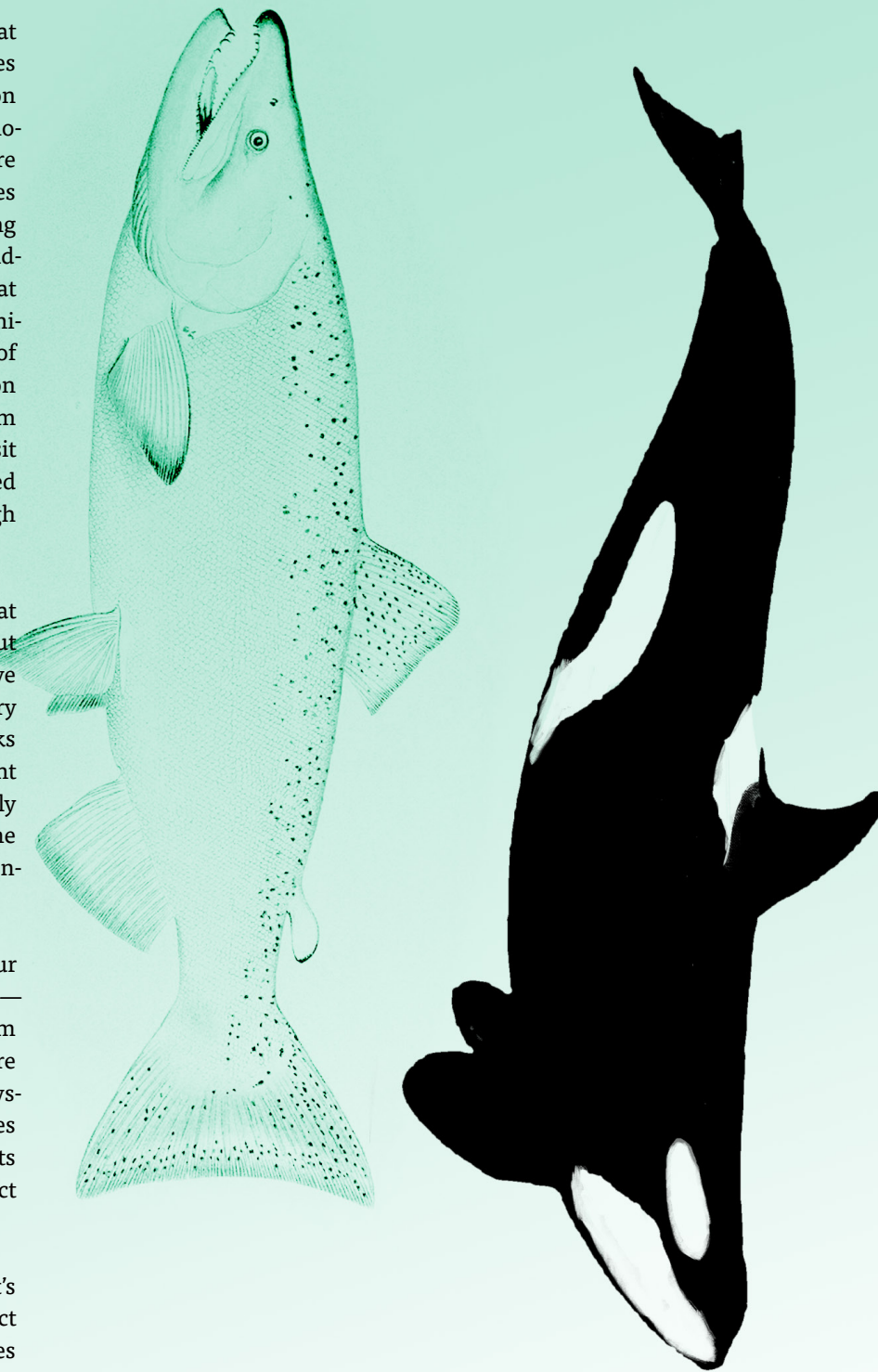
Furthermore, the toxics that accumulate in the orcas' blubber—poisoning them during periods of starvation as fats are broken down for energy, and also get passed down to the calves—originate from multitude of sources, from stormwater pollution and from industrial activities. While the impacts are visible in these apex predators, these same toxics impact many communities that rely on the Salish Sea; the same chemicals are toxic to people, which is why sensitive people like pregnant women and communities that consume more fish than others must limit the fish they eat. And we are now learning that these toxics can kill juvenile salmon, limiting the orcas' food supply, as well as herring that then feed the salmon.

It is our actions as neighbors in this ecosystem that have the most profound impacts. Our activities on the water has caused enough noise pollution that the orcas cannot effectively use their echolocation to hunt. Spawning areas for salmon are already threatened by rising river temperatures due to the loss of riparian vegetation; in pushing for developments that sprawl through rural landscapes instead of focusing on smart growth that protects sensitive areas, we further damage Chinook salmon habitat, losing up to 800 acres of habitat and forest land in the Puget Sound region every year. Dams and culverts block salmon from migration routes. By not investing in public transit and stormwater infrastructure, we send unfiltered water with contaminants from roads, through sewers, and into the Sound.

At WEC, we have worked to pass the policies that tackle the above threats to orcas and salmon. But no single action will turn the tide. The collective action and transformation at the scale necessary to rescue our declining Chinook salmon stocks and ensure the survival of Southern Resident killer whales requires leaders at every level. Only through systemic solutions can we ensure that the health of the Salish Sea is restored for future generations.

To that end, we need a cultural shift across our communities. Wherever you live in Washington—in a dense city block seemingly far removed from nature, or deep inland on golden hills—all of us are inextricably woven into the fabric of the ecosystem, and the accumulated impact of our activities eventually take its toll on our shared home and its inhabitants. Therefore, we must collectively act with the consequences of our actions in mind.

We all have personal choices to make, and it's important to consider all of the ways that we impact the natural resources around us. While WEC does not advocate for decreasing fishing as a uniform measure because of the impact it has on Tribal Treaty Rights, we respect that other organizations do feel strongly. PCC took an initial measure, then did the hard work of holding conversations with scientists, fishermen, and Tribal officials to learn



all they can about the issue, took a hard look at their operations, published an updated Chinook Sourcing Standard, and also used the opportunity to educate their members. The following is their journey over the last 2 years as they learned how they can exercise the best possible stewardship on this issue through their business.



After watching Tahlequah carry her calf for 17 days, PCC started asking: “How can we sell Chinook without contributing to the SRKW food shortage or harming already vulnerable populations of Chinook salmon?” PCC is dedicated to preserving local farmland and partnering with Northwest producers and ranchers, but their identity as a Puget Sound-grown grocery co-op that sets strong environmental and social stands also led them to be a longtime leader in sustainably caught seafood and conservation efforts for marine environments; it made sense for them to take a stand for the Southern Residents.

This concern echoed through their membership and customer base. “Many of our members reached out to voice their deep concern with the continuing plight of the Southern Residents,” recalls Brenna Davis, VP of social and environmental responsibility. “They were demanding action.”

In September of 2018, as a direct response to the call to action, PCC announced that it would issue a moratorium on all Chinook salmon caught in waters from British Columbia, Washington, and Oregon.

By stopping sales of Chinook caught in the general area where Southern Residents reside, PCC was ensuring that their most direct connection to the Southern Residents—Chinook salmon—wasn’t adding to the problem, and also setting an example to others in this sector.

PCC received a lot of positive support for this initiative. “It was absolutely the right step to take at the time, based on the information we had available

to us,” said Davis. “Most importantly, it let people know we were serious about finding solutions and started some important conversations.”

Those conversations provided some important feedback from local marine conservation organizations, fishermen, tribal leaders and scientists that called attention to many of the complexities underlying the Southern Resident and Chinook issues and the moratorium we had put in place. For example, they learned that, in the Pacific Northwest, local fisherman and Tribes working to conserve and restore Chinooks and Southern Residents—people whose livelihoods and cultures depended on sustaining orca and salmon—were shut out by their moratorium.

Yet, neither the larger existing seafood standards and certifiers, such as PCC’s sustainable seafood partner Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch, nor smaller place-based programs seemed to evaluate different sources of Chinook with all of these important details in mind.

It soon became clear: their moratorium, although a good step forward, was not enough. PCC would need to go into uncharted territory and create its own Chinook sourcing standard. To do it right, they were going to need the help of someone with extensive experience in ocean conservation issues, as well as good relationships with a diverse set of fishery experts. PCC knew that Brad Warren, Executive Director of the National Fisheries Conservation Center (home of the Global Ocean Health program), was up to the task.

Starting in the spring of 2019, Warren and his team of researchers combed through fishery data and studies and reached out to government and tribal officials, fishermen, hatchery experts, and other marine conservation experts to piece together a carefully crafted draft standard. Then, PCC and Warren met with these leaders again to have them review the draft concepts and analysis and provide feedback.

The end result: A Chinook sourcing standard.



“The Chinook sourcing standard is designed to enable PCC seafood buyers to avoid (or reduce to near zero) two risks that are subjects of passionate concerns: intercepting prey needed by Southern Residents, and harming struggling Chinook salmon stocks,” says Warren. “These standards also address a third risk, identified as knowledge risk, that affects nearly all conservation work: potential for errors arising from incomplete or uncertain scientific information about the fishery or its impacts.”

“These standards are designed for the world we have today,” said Warren. “Modern civilization has completely altered so much spawning and nursery habitat in the Northwest that our rivers don’t make salmon the way they once did. We’ve crowded these fish out of their homes. We’ve diked and filled their nursery grounds, filled the side channels with suburbs. We’ve made cities and farms out of the immense estuaries where young Chinook used to shelter and feed before going to sea.”

One result is that these days, around three out of four salmon caught in Puget Sound were spawned and reared in hatcheries during their early life stages.

“They still swim out to pasture at sea for most of their lives, but these fish wouldn’t exist if tribes and agencies weren’t stepping in to do the job that rivers used to do,” Warren said. “It’s a pretty radical intervention, and hasn’t always been skillful. But a lot has been learned about how to operate hatcheries so that they complement restoration efforts and minimize potential harm to nearby populations of naturally-spawning salmon. The Chinook standards we built for PCC require use of recognized best practices in any hatcheries that support the catch.”

In August 2020, PCC published its Chinook Sourcing Standard developed in collaboration with National Fisheries Conservation Center. This was a definite step forward in reaching their intended goals, but PCC saw that there was still a lot of work ahead. Evaluating fisheries to assess whether they are continuing to meet the standard, as well as identifying new fisheries that

receive high enough ratings, would continue to be an ongoing process. Even more importantly, the work PCC invested in creating this standard demonstrated that sourcing is a small piece of the problem: retailers as a whole need to think beyond their purchase orders and seafood labels if they truly want to be part of the solution.

“This standard is by no means the final word. It is a measure that offers a ‘no-harm’ choice to worried consumers while we all roll up our sleeves to tackle the systemic forces—especially pollution, habitat degradation and climate change—that are increasingly emerging as the dominant drivers of decline for Chinook salmon and the Southern Residents that depend on them,” emphasized Warren.

PCC agreed. They are now committed more than ever to developing their understanding for how contribute to the solutions, and sharing their journey with their community.

Many thanks to Aimee Simpson, J.D., PCC’s director of advocacy and product sustainability, for much of the republished content above. The original article was published in the Sound Consumer; please look for updates on this journey in the future editions.

Want to understand more about PCC’s new Chinook sourcing standard? Visit their Honest Products page at pccmarkets.com/chinook

With an active membership of a little more than 80,000 households, PCC operates 15 stores in the Puget Sound area, including the cities of Bellevue, Bothell, Burien, Edmonds, Issaquah, Kirkland, Redmond and Seattle.

PCC’s commitment to the environment is longstanding. This year, they committed to a comprehensive set of sustainability goals that reduce their environmental impact and protect our waters; for instance, increasing the number of organic products that we sell reduces toxic pesticide runoff into waterways. And their commitment to 100 percent renewable energy and net climate positive store operations addresses climate change. They partner with organizations that fight for the health of restoring salmon runs: Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition & Salmon Safe.



Courtesy of Pacific Northwest National Laboratory



In Gratitude to the Brainerd Foundation

Kathy Malley (Development Director)

This December, the Brainerd Foundation closed its doors after 25 years of grant-making. While they may not be known to many of you, the investments they made in groups across our region helped to protect the places we love and the resources that sustain us.

The Brainerd Foundation invested in more than 500 organizations across the region and into British Columbia and Alaska. To create systemic change, they considered all of the tools needed and funded groups protecting the environment through litigation, advocacy, and policy change; journalists and activists; community and grassroots networks; and Tribal and First Nations. When you look through the even a small sample of their grantees, you see how integral the Brainerd Foundation has been in empowering major environmental progress here in the Pacific Northwest.

We are grateful that the Brainerd Foundation has stood by as a steadfast supporter of WEC for the last 25 years. They invested in us in ways that strengthened our capacity and that of the broader environmental community.

In 1995, when the Foundation was just getting off the ground, Paul Brainerd traveled to

Washington State Governor Jay Inslee has announced his rejection of the Vancouver Energy project, which was the last remaining undecided project of at least a dozen well-developed schemes planned for Northwest ports and refineries.

communities across the region, asking the hard questions to understand the obstacles faced by conservation groups. This first step signaled how the Foundation would go on to be such an effective partner to so many organizations for 25 years.

When Paul visited our office, he was surprised to see how little technology we had. At WEC, we had handful of computers that we all shared. I still had a typewriter in my office. As the Development Director, I was regularly asking foundations to help fund the purchase of computers, and it was always an uphill battle.

Very shortly after the Brainerd Foundation got off the ground, suddenly I was being told to include computer purchases in our proposals. You see, Paul had, before starting the foundation, revolutionized the publishing industry with the creation of PageMaker, a desktop publishing software. Because of his entrepreneurial background in the technology sector, Paul understood the importance of giving people the tools to get the job done and was willing to use his influence to encourage other grantmakers to do the same.

More importantly, the Brainerd Foundation invested in our organization for the long-haul. They gave us general operating support, which

meant that we had the ability to deploy the resources in strategic ways to achieve our mission. When we wanted to build a more unified approach to advocacy in Olympia, they were critical to helping us get the Environmental Priorities Coalition off the ground and ensuring its long-term success. When we wanted to better leverage the environmental values of Washingtonians, they encouraged us to expand our team of grassroots organizers. And whenever we had a crazy idea to test about how to better educate and engage voters, they were right there, because they believed in the power of a healthy democracy: when people vote, the environment wins.

The team at the Brainerd Foundation were some of the best funding partners we could have asked for.

They expected us to try new things, learn from the results and evolve our strategies, while providing a consistent base of support that gave us the confidence needed to do this work. We are so proud to have been a part of their journey and legacy. We give our deep gratitude for all they have done to build up the environmental community and create a sustainable future for the Pacific Northwest for generations to come.

“We are shaped powerfully by the landscapes of our childhood; I have yet to meet someone whose eyes did not light up when recalling the place that shaped their sense of self, community, and broader humanity. Diamond Lake, in southern Oregon, is that place for me and it will forever call to me. The beauty of nature, sense of place, and the richness of this earth have led me to create the Brainerd Foundation and to sustain its work over a quarter of a century.”

-letter from Paul Brainerd
(March 2008)

“Our commitment to building the capacity of organizations in our region meant that we filled a lot of gaps and gave people the ability to make better use of their time, energy, and resources.”

-The Brainerd Foundation Sunset Report:
Sharing What We've Learned

“Most environmental funders specialize in one or more policy issues, like forests or climate or water. Our priority was to build the will of policy-makers to protect all of these things.”

Organizational Updates

As a community, we have done our job to turn out in record numbers across the country: we were thrilled to see voter turnout at almost 85% and wins for more women and Black, Native, and people of color candidates. It's time to celebrate one of the highest turnout elections in modern history because we know our democracy is stronger when it includes us all, regardless of our age, race, gender, or where we live. Better representation of our communities in governance translates to stronger, more meaningful progress on the issues that matter to us, such as environmental and climate justice, affordable housing, economic recovery, and public education.

This incredible turnout is due — in large part — to the work we know you have done to register new voters, engage infrequent voters, volunteer, and encourage your friends and family to vote. From all of us at Washington Environmental Council: *thank you*.

Civic engagement is more than just casting a ballot, and we want to give a particular thank you to the exceptional work of those not eligible to vote this election — the hours you spent encouraging others to get out the vote does not go unnoticed. We hope you took a moment to celebrate.

With the momentum that's been created during the election season, we look forward to working with you to fight for progress in the upcoming legislative session, which will be a shorter, virtual session.

2021 Legislative Session Environmental Priorities

We wanted to share a preview with you of our top environmental priorities for the upcoming virtual session.

For well over a decade, environmental groups in Washington State have organized our efforts in Olympia through the Environmental Priorities Coalition. Our top three priorities for the 2021 Legislative Session are:

Clean Fuels Standard, requiring fuel producers and importers to reduce pollution from the fuels that power our transportation system.

Clean and Just Transportation, creating a holistic transportation system with unconstrained revenue and investments that focuses on accessibility for all users, prioritizes equity, and reduces greenhouse gas emissions and environmental impacts.

Conservation Works, our budget priority seeking to protect essential environmental programs from budget cuts and promote investments in

responsible projects that tackle climate change, create good jobs, support salmon and orca recovery, and help communities chart their own course for a better future.

In addition to the Environmental Priorities Coalition's top priorities, we also support work led by outside partners that are important for environmental progress through our Partnership Agenda. This year's Partnership Agenda includes:

Voting Justice, led by the Voting Justice Coalition to automatically restoring the freedom to vote to those under community supervision and secure pre-clearance requirement for the WA Voting Rights Act

The **HEAL Act (Healthy Environment for All)**, led by Front & Centered to add an essential racial equity lens to the environmental program work done by the state (a recommendation from the Environmental Justice Task Force).

The **Working Families Tax Credit/Recovery Rebate Campaign**, led by Budget and Policy Center to enact and fund an updated Working Families Tax Credit/Recovery Rebate.

Worker Protection Act, led by the WA State Labor Council to protect whistleblowers and provide workers with different tools to push back against discrimination, wage theft, or dangerous working conditions

The nature of this unprecedented session means that it is more accessible and there are more opportunities to get involved. Follow us on twitter and Instagram to see how you can take part in advocating for these issues and contact your representative in the upcoming months! And if you would like to volunteer as a legislative activist with us, sign up on our website at:

<https://wecprotects.org/volunteer/>



2020 Virtual Carbon Friendly Forestry Conference

Like many other organizations, we have had to adapt our work to the limitations that come with a pandemic. This year, we convened our annual Carbon Friendly Forestry Conference on a virtual platform over two days, November 17th & 18th. We leveraged the accessible nature of a virtual gathering to invite more folks and new audiences to the event, which showcased innovative strategies and opportunities for sustainable forest management that can create a stronger economy and healthier communities in a changing climate.

We opened with a welcome from our CEO, Alyssa Macy, who said: "Our collective destiny and the future of our Evergreen State and planet relies on our ability to gather together in spite of our differences, generate creative solutions only accessible by working together, honor ancestral knowledge

and lived experiences, listen to our communities, and partner with people most affected, to ensure that our West Coast forests are healthy and resilient, and work for all who depend on them for today and for generations to come."

We heard from Hilary Franz, Commissioner of Public Lands, who reminded us that threats to our state's forests also impact our ability to mitigate a rapidly changing climate, and that when we prioritize our forests, they can act as natural climate solutions. We were privileged to have speakers representing diverse areas of the forestry and wood products space. The six, hour-long webinars included:

- the Yakama Nation's habitat restoration and forestry efforts and the significance of forest management to the Tribe's cultural, social, and economic needs;
- an example from Collins and RenewWest of how a carbon project can incentivize and support restoration of forestlands after catastrophic fires;
- a case study of a mass timber building in Portland with mutually amplifying goals around sustainability and equity, including carbon sequestration, worker rights, human health, watershed health, and habitat protection, with the project team of Meyer Memorial Trust, LEVER Architecture, Sustainable Northwest and Project^;
- how the inequitable distribution of urban forests and greenspaces due to legacies of racist housing policies impacts health and climate resilience in Los Angeles, and how conservation and forestry in urban ecosystems can center communities and environmental justice, with insight into the work of the Audubon Center at Debs Park;
- how increasing small forest landowner access to carbon offset markets—work that Finite Carbon is undertaking—can help scale the voluntary carbon market, which is an element of the journey to a decarbonized economy;

- “reforestation hubs” as a new model of restoring city forests from Cambium Carbon, that can address immediate air quality issues, create green jobs, mitigate climate change at scale, and empower communities.

We are grateful for all of the speakers who shared their knowledge and seeded conversations in a new virtual setting; to Rachel Baker, our new forest program director for moderating Q&A discussions; to Sally Paul, our forest program associate, for organizing and ensuring the conference was a smooth and impactful event; and to all of the attendees who were engaged, asked thoughtful questions, and joined us as a community invested in climate-smart forestry.

To see the full list of speakers and agenda, check out:

wecprotects.org/carbon-friendly-forestry-2020/

We hope to be able to see you in person in 2021 for the 5th annual Carbon Friendly Forestry Conference!

100% Clean Electricity Update

Here in Washington, we have several sectors that need to transition to better adapt to a changing climate...including our electrical grid. 100% clean electricity is one of the important efforts WEC and partners have fought to bring to fruition. In 2019, the Washington State Legislature took historic action and passed the Clean Energy Transformation Act, which requires 100% clean electricity by 2045, phasing out fossil fuels used in electricity production in Washington.

Since its passage, WEC and our partners have worked to ensure the rules that utility companies must follow in order to achieve this groundbreaking law remain on-target for progress. To that end, on November 12th, we submitted comments to the Utilities and Transportation Commission on their 100% clean rules for private, investor-owned utilities. We also asked you to utilize the public comment process to weigh in and tell the Department of Commerce — the state agency responsible for regulating public, consumer-owned utilities — to keep their rules strong so that we stay on the path

to equitable and clean electricity. We are expecting these to be announced towards the end of the year.

But the process doesn't end there; every utility will start a Clean Energy Implementation Planning process around May of 2021. That's when utilities will engage the public and set targets and identify actions to meet the law. It is through these extended and comprehensive planning efforts that we can start to transform a sector so large, and we invite you to stay tuned to see how utilities fulfill their commitments to this transition.

Together, we can keep Washington on a path to 100% clean electricity in a way that advances equity and creates good jobs here.

Development & Events Associate



Faye Kennedy (she/her) Faye worked with Washington Environmental Council as the Swim Duwamish Intern in 2015. After graduating from Seattle University with a degree in Environmental Studies & Ecological Systems, she went on to work for the Whale Trail and Friends of the Issaquah Salmon Hatchery. Faye returns to WEC as the Development and Events Associate, supporting the Development team. In her free time, you can find her on her yoga mat or at the beach with her dog.

Field Organizer



Dre Say (they/them) graduated from Boston University with a BA in International Relations & Religion. They were introduced to the environmental justice movement in the region through Got Green. Since then, they have organized with various grassroots groups and non-profits to fight for environmental justice in King County, especially for low-income people of color. Dre's primary loves are talking about politics and religion, empowering others (especially youth) to get involved in politics, drinking coffee, and cooking and eating spicy peanut soba noodles.

NEW ADDITIONS TO OUR TEAM!

Communications Director



Zachary DeWolf (he/him) is a citizen of the Chippewa Cree Nation of Rocky Boy, Montana and is currently finishing a term as the first-out LGBTQ Director elected to serve on the Seattle School Board. Prior to joining WEC, Zachary led homelessness diversion efforts at King County, served as Director of Communications and Education for Pride Foundation, and served in the US Peace Corps in Belize. In addition to being a published writer in the Advocate, Native Peoples Magazine, Oxford University Press, and local publications, Zachary has served with Gender Justice League, South Seattle Emerald Advisory Board, and Seattle Housing Authority. He was honored to represent his community as a Grand Marshal in the 2014 Seattle Pride parade and enjoys spending time with his husband Derek and their dog Maya, hiking, reading, and drinking cold brew year-round.

Communications Associate



Grace Drechsel (she/her) graduated from Western Washington University with a dual major in Political Science and Creative Writing and a minor in Education & Social Justice. She brings her passions for both advocacy and storytelling to WEC as the Communications Associate. Her previous career experience is in student leadership and legislative advocacy at the Washington State level. She has also been a barista, a nanny, and a field organizer for voter registration efforts and for a local campaign. She has a lot of love for her home of Tacoma, and in her free time, you can find her watching bad reality TV, reading literary fiction, cooking vegan meals, or swimming in the cold Puget Sound waters in Longbranch, Washington.

Administrative Associate



Meralina Morales (she/her), originally from the Bay Area, worked under the regional director of the Department of Interior Office of Environmental Compliance to bring more equitable policies to the region. While attending UC Berkeley studying Sustainable & Equitable Development, she worked for Berkeley Food Institute, helping create a more equitable food system. She went on to Geneva, Switzerland where she worked with the U.N. and the WHO to help realize their sustainability and corporate social responsibility goals. In her free time you can find her traveling the world to scuba dive or baking.

Evergreen Forests Program Director



Rachel Baker (she/her) believes forests are central to solving many global challenges, including halting climate change and building resilient communities. Her career has focused on strategies to promote forest conservation and sustainable development internationally. Prior to joining WEC, Rachel worked for Earthworm Foundation, managed the forest campaign at the Bank Information Center, and carried out field research on community forest use in Oaxaca, Mexico, and Darién, Panama. Rachel holds a Master of Forestry and a Master of Environmental Management from Duke University's Nicholas School of the Environment. Outside of the office, Rachel enjoys backpacking and biking with her partner, gardening, and playing ukulele.



Washington Environmental Council

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UNION BUG

Washington Environmental Council

is a nonprofit, statewide advocacy organization that has been driving positive change to solve Washington's most critical environmental challenges since 1967. Our mission is to protect, restore, and sustain Washington's environment for all.

As we approach the close of a hard year for many of us and an impactful year for Washington's environment, the holiday season gives us an opportunity to reflect and give thanks.

We at Washington Environmental Council are especially grateful for your support, as our members helped us weather a challenging time and still accomplish so much in 2020.

With your support we continued to build an environmental movement that is calling for equitable, effective climate action and fighting against new and expanded fossil fuel terminals. We also worked to get out the vote, protect our evergreen forests, and keep Puget Sound healthy. All of this was possible because of our partnership with Washington Conservation Voters, and the years of work building strong relationships with organizations representing labor, communities of color, faith, and public health, and with businesses who support clean energy.

If you'd like us to continue to have a significant impact in 2021, please make your tax-deductible year-end gift to WEC today. You can make your gift online at <https://wecprotects.org/giving>, or you can use the remit envelope in this newsletter.

You can also make gift-giving easy by making a gift in honor of a family member or friend. When you honor someone with a gift to WEC, that person will receive a letter thanking them for their environmental commitment and letting them know who made a gift in their honor. (Please make sure to provide the honoree's name and address)

If you have a question or need help, please feel free to call our **Development Manager, Griffin Smith at 206.631.2609**