

Why racial justice must be an integral part of how we talk about the environment



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Martin Baker, Former Deputy Director, Seattle Public Utilities
Christina Billingsley, Sr. Program Manager, Environmental Engagement
Dave Bricklin, Partner, Bricklin & Newman, LLP
Julie Colehour, **Board Chair**, Partner, C+C
Linda Cornfield, Philanthropist & Environmentalist
Peter Goldman, Founder, Washington Forest Law Center
Deb Hagen-Lukens, Lecturer, University of Washington
Jim Hanna, Director, Datacenter Sustainability, Microsoft
Shin Shin Hsia, Operations Director, Win/Win
Ken Lederman, Principal, Foster & Garvey PC
Chandra Lewnau, Attorney at Law, Law Firm of Johnson & Nagaich, P.S.
Melissa Mager, Conservationist & Retired Attorney
Sydney Miyahara, Attorney
Justin Parker, Executive Director, NW Indian Fisheries Commission
David Sarju, Principal, Crew Leadership
Amy Scott, Associate Director, Planned Giving at University of WA
Sapna Sopori, Consultant & Community Advocate
William Stelle, Natural Resources Consultant
Peggy Willis, Conservationist & Retired Technology Manager

STAFF

Nick Abraham, Communications Director
Rein Attemann, Puget Sound Campaign Manager
Paul Balle, Donor Relations Director
Eleanor Bastian, Climate & Clean Energy Policy Manager
Lennon Bronsema, Civic Engagement Director
Alec Brown, Forests & Fish Project Manager
Michelle Chow, Stormwater and Toxics Policy Manager
Anna Doty, Fossil Fuel Campaign Manager
Sarah Farbstein, Field Organizer
Julie Gonzales-Corbin, HR & Administrative Manager
Kat Holmes, Field Director
Tony Ivey, Field Organizer
Hau'oli Kahaleuahi, Communications Associate
Lauren Kastanas, Foundations Manager
Emily Krieger, Civic Engagement Manager
Rae Lee, Visual Communications Associate
Alyssa Macy, CEO
Kathy Malley, Development Director
Morgan Michel, Field Organizer
Lucy Middleton, Salesforce Admin & Data Systems Manager
Colton Misono, Administrative Associate
Tina Montgomery, Business Relations & Events Manager
Kristi Nakata, Digital Communications Manager
Darcy Nonemacher, Government Affairs Director
Sally Paul, Evergreen Forests Program Associate
Sean Pender, Administrative Director
Miguel Pérez-Gibson, State Forest Policy Advisor (*contractor*)
Rebecca Ponzio, Climate & Fossil Fuel Program Director
Lisa Remlinger, Chief Policy Officer
Mindy Roberts, Puget Sound Program Director
Danielle Shaw, Local Government Affairs Manager
Griffin Smith, Development Manager
Clifford Traisman, State Lobbyist (*contractor*)
Max Webster, Evergreen Forests Program Manager

TABLE OF CONTENTS

3	A Vision for Washington’s Future
5	Making Progress Together , a note from Alyssa Macy, WEC’s new CEO
7	Where do we go now? 2020 Legislative Session Recap
10	Sustaining our Sustenance: Why Caring for Washington Agricultural Workers is a Form of Environmental Justice
14	Voices for Clean Water
17	Fighting for the Environment means Fighting for Racial Justice
20	Organizational Updates: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Virtual Gala 2020• Celebrating We Are Puget Sound’s Awards• Orca Action Month 2020• CARES Act Impact on Charitable Giving in 2020• Funding Secured for• Ilwaco Community Forest!

Photo credit: Rae Lee (3); Patrick Hendry / Unsplash (4); Alyssa Macy (5-6); Samish Indian Nation Department of Natural Resources (cover; 14-16)

A note on links: We have uploaded this issue on our website as an interactive pdf so that our readers can directly click on the links

A Vision for Washington's Future

Lisa Remlinger, WEC's Chief Policy Officer

All of our lives have been upended by quarantine and the pandemic. For me, this time has also come with the challenges of being a new mom. Things that once seemed normal, like family and friends holding our son, are fraught with concern. When we should be encouraging him to show affection and kindness to others we are often grabbing him away as we step back ourselves. While his first months of life have looked very different from what we expected, they have also allowed time for reflection. Because of this, I realized there were things I had begun to take for granted or had grown complacent with in our communities and it made me want to push harder for a better future.



Activists at a march to the Tacoma LNG permit public hearing

While our future will be largely determined by our continued response to the COVID-19 pandemic and a coming economic recession, it is critical we have leaders who will prioritize public health and science to build the right recovery plan. We know that our environment is deeply tied to both our health and our economy and we cannot miss this window to invest in policies that address climate change, clean up toxic pollution, and restore our forests and waters.

This requires leaders who are ready to work at the scale and urgency of the enormous challenges we face. The public needs to know who is going to stand up for them and our Legislature needs to know there is a movement demanding real environmental leadership especially during these challenging times. Here is what we believe our leaders must show:

Belief in science: COVID-19 has shown us what happens when science is ignored and the experts and institutions we rely on to protect us are undermined. Our leaders must use science to lead us out of this crisis and build a just and equitable economic recovery, while also having the vision to tackle the climate crisis and act while we still have time.



Understand links between health and pollution:

Air pollution directly impacts those with pre-existing health conditions, which put people at higher risk of death from COVID-19 and other major medical issues like asthma, heart disease, and upper respiratory illness. We need policies that restore our forests and shared waters, clean up toxic pollution, reduce health disparities, and help protect communities across the state.

Just and sustainable economic recovery:

We know that the status quo is leaving people behind, but our economic recovery doesn't have to. We shouldn't have to decide between family wage jobs and clean air and water. We need an economy that works for all of us, not the corporate polluters who've profited off our environment. Every community deserves a voice in creating that future and we need leaders who are willing to listen and stand up for all of us.

It can often feel like the stakes for elections are always high, but this November could be the most important in our lifetimes. The leaders we elect now are those that will make the decisions that decide our future. This summer and fall, when you are considering where to lend your time, your money, and your vote, we hope you will consider which candidates understand how to build the future we all want to see.

Lisa Remlinger is WEC's new Chief Policy Officer. She has worked for five years as our Forest Program Director, and we are so excited for her to help lead our community in an incredibly important time for our state.



Making Progress Together

a note from Alyssa Macy, WEC's new CEO



We find ourselves in a historic time—one that has caused us to pause and now to reflect and take action. TThe 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 (BIPOC) whom have carried the burden of unsustainable economic systems and are now bearing the worse impacts of the pandemic. The death of George Floyd has ignited a movement—one that demands justice for the many Black lives lost to police violence and a national reckoning of the impacts of institutional racism.

It is clear that we are not doing enough. Growing up on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation in Central Oregon, I know how it feels to be from a place that is under-resourced and often ignored. I carry the lessons and history of my community with me every day. No matter where we come from, we must see that the only way forward is through united action. Our elected leaders must fight alongside us 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. As a human problem, we need a human-centered solution—one that recognizes that our fates are interconnected.

We know we can do this because we have been here before. After the worst financial collapse this country has ever seen, we responded with the New Deal. We made big structural change to put people back to work and protect families' health and financial futures. To pull us out of this crisis and prepare us for the future, Washington state must prioritize public health, local

workers, and investments and policies that build clean energy jobs, clean up toxic pollution, and restore our forests and shared waters.

The global pandemic daylights the deep inequities in our communities, exposing decades of environmental racism and injustice that have left Black, Brown, and Indigenous people and communities of color vulnerable. These inequities, and the institutional barriers that uphold the dysfunctional system, have never been so obvious. The great pause we've all experienced together has reminded us that environmental work is intersectional work—we cannot show up only as environmental advocates. We need to see our work as part of a larger system of change.

We must ask ourselves what changes we need to make to be good, authentic allies with Black, Brown, and Indigenous people and communities of color, to be effective in our work, and to stay relevant in a time of great change. As we continue to advocate for the environmental policies we know we need, we must further integrate equity and racial justice as core principles of our work and follow the lead of the most impacted communities.

Indigenous worldviews of the Earth are remarkably different than the dominant culture—the Earth is our relative and we have a spiritual and moral obligation to be good stewards of the land and resources. We must protect her, honor her, and ensure that she is healthy for future generations. It is in this spirit that I approach my work at WEC – one of sacred duty and responsibility.

What has lifted me up during this time is the collective solidarity we are witnessing. Our frontline workers, nurses, educators, grocery clerks, and more are rightly recognized as the lifeblood of our society. It is the growing calls for better pay, benefits, and safety protections for those workers to give them the respect they deserve. It is the millions who have marched in the streets and protested against police brutality and white supremacy. Our collective decision to make a global sacrifice to protect each other from this pandemic is proof of how connected we truly are. It should also remind us, despite the urge to return to normal, that the worst thing that can come out of this crisis is that nothing changes.

Our only path forward is together.

“...we cannot show up only as environmental advocates. We need to see our work as part of a larger system of change.”



Where do we go now?

2020 Legislative Session Recap

When the 2020 Washington state legislative session came to a close in March of this year, the state Department of Health was reporting 4,896 total coronavirus cases in Washington, including 195 deaths¹. And as we know, reported cases and deaths in Washington and other U.S. states have increased exponentially since then, with evidence showing that because of long-standing and systemic inequities, Indigenous, Black, and Brown communities are being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 across the country². With an unprecedented public health and economic crisis underway at the local, state, and federal levels, we know the importance of prioritizing the protection of people, not providing clear giveaways to corporate polluters.

Yet, under the guise of the pandemic, the Trump administration is proposing rollbacks of significant environmental protections, including the *Clean Water Act*, *National Environmental Policy Act*, *Clean Car Standards*, *Endangered Species Act*, and so much more. And make no mistake, these rollbacks will disproportionately affect Indigenous, Black, and Brown communities first and worst.

Race best predicts whether a person lives near polluted toxic sites³. And Black Americans experience 56% more air pollution than others, relative to how much pollution they produce, while White Americans experience 17% less pollution than others, relative to what they produce⁴. All the while, Black and Brown Americans are more likely to be alarmed or concerned about global warming than White Americans⁵. On top of that, we also know that air pollution causes respiratory and cardiovascular issues that are the pre-existing conditions making individuals more susceptible to COVID-19⁶.

Here in Washington state, many of us are asking: What can we do to fight back against the Trump administration's proposed rollbacks, protect our public health, push forward a just economic recovery, and center communities most impacted by environmental injustices?

Part of the answer to these concerns lies in continuing to hold elected leaders accountable and unite together to champion just and equitable policies to dismantle systems that don't work, and provide lasting and reliable benefits for generations to come.

Looking Back: 2020 Session Included Progress & Revealed Obstacles for Bold Action

To make meaningful progress forward, we need to reflect on what happened during the last legislative session. Where was progress made? Where did legislators fail to pass bold environmental policies?

Washington's *Environmental Priorities Coalition (EPC)*, representing more than 20 statewide organizations, noted some environmental progress in 2020. Two of the four 2020 EPC Priorities passed during session: a statewide ban on plastic bags and new science-based climate pollution limits.

Unfortunately, major climate action stalled in the Senate yet again, marking the second time in as many years that the House has passed a Clean Fuel Standard with the Senate failing to take action.

Our CEO, Alyssa Macy, says it best: "We do not get to take a year off from climate change. If we aren't working to solve this crisis year after year, we are losing the fight. The Senate cannot be the place where climate action goes to die."



Policy that passed

Reduce Plastic Pollution, SB 5323, sponsored by Senator Mona Das

This landmark bill eliminates single-use, plastic carry-out bags. Washington state has become the ninth state in the nation to pass a statewide policy addressing this chronic source of plastic pollution via the Legislature. The bill passed with strong bi-partisan support by a vote of 67-29 in the House, and a concurrence vote of 35-15 in the Senate.

Climate Pollution Limits, HB 2311, sponsored by Representative Vandana Slatter

Climate action requires carbon reductions across the board and deep investments in healthier natural landscapes—shorelines, forests, and farms. After years of trying, this bill passed and updates the state's greenhouse gas limits to reflect current science and includes investing in nature-based solutions like trees and soils to capture excess carbon.

Policy that failed to pass

Clean Fuel Standard, HB 1110, sponsored by Representative Joe Fitzgibbon

Transportation is responsible for nearly half of our climate and air pollution in Washington, and our state is the only state on the west coast without a Clean Fuel Standard. This bill would have required fuel producers and importers to reduce pollution from the fuels that power our transportation system and provide more options to fuel vehicles (such as electricity and local renewable biofuels). A Crosscut/Elway poll showed 66% of Washingtonians support a Clean Fuel Standard. Unfortunately, the bill failed to pass out of the Senate Transportation Committee.

Clean Air Act Authority, HB 2957, sponsored by Representative Joe Fitzgibbon

In response to a January Supreme Court decision, this bill would have clarified that the state has authority to adopt, implement, and enforce clean air standards for indirect sources that reduce emissions associated with buildings and transportation.

Policy impacted by COVID-19

Healthy Habitat, Healthy Orcas, sponsored by Representative Debra Lekanoff

After decades of development-related habitat loss, it is clear the state's policy of "no net loss" simply isn't working. Salmon runs are down 90% and we continue to lose 800 acres a year of vital forest land and habitat in the Puget Sound region alone. Net ecological gain would protect and restore habitat across the state faster. The Legislature included funding to collect science and critical information on the issue, but the funding was frozen as the COVID-19 crisis intensified.

Where Do We Go Now?

The coronavirus public health crisis, mounting economic crisis, growing calls for racial justice, and ongoing urgency for climate action and salmon recovery are converging. The fact is that protecting the health of people and the health of our planet are directly connected.

We need strong leadership at all levels of government to act on the biggest challenges we face and to foster a responsible and just economic recovery.

Through 2020 and as we transition into 2021, Washington Environmental Council will continue working alongside community partners, organizations, our members, grassroots activists, scientists, Tribal leaders, and more to hold elected officials accountable and champion policies that prioritize protecting our health and our environment.

For a full 2020 legislative session breakdown, visit: <https://wecprotects.org/session/>



"We do not get to take a year off from climate change. If we aren't working to solve this crisis year after year, we are losing the fight. The Senate cannot be the place where climate action goes to die."



Sources

¹<https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/coronavirus-daily-news-updates-march-29-what-to-know-today-about-covid-19-in-the-seattle-area-washington-state-and-the-nation/>

²<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/racial-ethnic-minorities.html>

³<https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/race-best-predicts-whether-you-live-near-pollution/>

⁴<https://www.pnas.org/content/116/13/6001>

⁵<https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/publications/race-and-climate-change/>

⁶<https://epha.org/coronavirus-threat-greater-for-polluted-cities/>



Sustaining Our Sustenance

Why Caring for Washington Agricultural Workers is a Form of Environmental Justice

Excerpted from original piece
by **Ally Arnold**, Advocacy &
Community Outreach Intern

Agricultural workers in the U.S. are considered essential during the COVID-19 pandemic, for obvious reasons: we need to eat. The agricultural workers outside the city—the very people providing our sustenance—are our life support. The pandemic has created additional challenges for farmworkers, most of whom are not unionized and are facing difficulties negotiating safe workplace policies. Many seasonal farm jobs that provided much-needed income to Washington farm workers, like the tourism-dependent Tulip farms in Skagit Valley, are not available this year. For the jobs that are available in the fields and packing houses, social distancing measures are difficult to enforce.

In April, Edgar Franks and Marciano Sanchez from *Familias Unidas por la Justicia* spoke to Washington Environmental Council and Washington Conservation Voters' volunteers on a webinar amplifying farmworkers' calls for increased protections from COVID-19. Edgar and Marciano shared insights and motivations from their successful negotiations for a historic union contract for farmworkers in 2017.

While Governor Inslee's administration has responded to calls for farmworker protections during the pandemic, the fight for justice continues. As of May 2020, workers at several Central Washington fruit packing companies are striking. Even if their demands are met, the work of advocating for environmental justice in agriculture continues — along with being built on exploitative and racist labor practices, industrial agriculture is one of America's largest polluters, and environmentalists need to fight for massive reform. The task is ambitious, but necessary: invest in the agricultural workers who are feeding our nation while transitioning to localized, sustainable food systems.

May 2020 Strikes at Central Washington Fruit Packing Companies

Following outbreaks of COVID-19 at their workplaces, workers at several Central Washington fruit packing companies have walked out of work and are on strike outside their respective workplaces, demanding justice. A few went on hunger strike for 55 hours. While each individual strike has its own company-specific demands, the worker committees formed from the

striking workers at each site have many demands in common, ranging from increasing minimum wage and hazard pay to demanding personal protective gear.

Committees formed at each strike site are collaborating to come up with unified demands. The workers are not alone. I interviewed Morgan Michel, one of several volunteers who traveled to Central Washington to bring supplies and support to the strikes last week. Michel witnessed many community members and advocates from across the state standing with the strikers in solidarity (at a safe distance). Volunteers were also able to show support from remote locations. Sunrise Movement Seattle, for example, organized persistent phone calls to the fruit packing companies to encourage negotiations in good faith with workers.

Are the Strikes Working?

Collective action from strikers supported by Familias Unidas por la Justicia and Community to Community Development Fund, as well as local communities, allies, and activist groups like Sunrise Seattle, has put enough pressure on the fruit packing companies to begin negotiating and implementing changes. These kinds of collective actions, initiated by the farmworkers themselves, are necessary for creating change in a legislative system that excludes farm workers. Edgar Franks noted, “Farmworkers have been on the frontlines of environmental injustice for a long time. But they have also been on the frontlines of organizing and proposing solutions.” Some of the fruit companies are responding to the pressure by increasing pay and providing masks. Nevertheless, the responses have been varied. Some strikers have successfully negotiated with their employers and have seen improvements, while others are still dissatisfied.



Next Steps

There is still more work to be done. Some strikers fear retaliation from their employers, despite being protected by the National Labor Relations Act (since they are not considered field workers). More follow-up needs to be done to ensure that employers do not retaliate against strikers. Furthermore, long-term solutions must be implemented so employees are able to negotiate without resorting to a strike in the future. Structural changes that will allow fruit packers to continue to negotiate in the future, like the FUJ's two-year contract with Sakuma Brothers Farm, for example, would be a step toward ensuring that workers are supported in their essential work.



**Corporate agriculture
has exploited people of
color *and* the Earth's soil in
order to feed America.**

It is time to mend the system.

Why Should Environmentalists Support Agricultural Workers in Their Fight for Justice?

Elected officials have a responsibility to ensure that policy and funding solutions protect the communities they represent by holding polluters accountable and safeguarding public health, workers, and the environment. Investing in jobs that can be sustained, such as farming, will be key to ensuring that our economy can thrive without depending on coal, oil, and gas. Currently, however, big agriculture companies in the U.S. rely heavily on fossil fuels, so it is not enough to simply invest in agriculture without implementing systematic changes. As Edgar mentioned in the webinar, “the globalized food system damages the landscape, damages local economies, is labor and resource intensive, and is a recipe for disease transmission.”

In order to build both a sustainable and just future, environmental solutions must actively restore the injustices that have occurred in farmworker communities as a result of the exploitative use of land for industrial-scale agriculture. According to the USDA Economic Research Service, 57% of farm laborers were Hispanic and of Mexican origin while only 27% of farm supervisors were Hispanic and of Mexican origin; this highlights the racial disparity between supervisors and laborers. Additionally, only 54% of farm laborers in 2018 were recorded as U.S. citizens. Fear of deportation is a legitimate concern for many of these individuals. Furthermore, pesticide exposure, coupled with low wages due to agricultural corporations' control over the labor force, is one way that intersectional, systematic factors contribute to farmworkers' impoverished and unhealthy status. Not only is

exposure to chemicals linked to higher rates of cancer and illness, but lack of health insurance, crowded housing conditions, and limited sanitation increase the likelihood for farmworkers to contract diseases and decrease their chances of getting proper treatment (Flocks, 2012).

Along with social injustices that accompany large-scale agriculture, heavy pesticide use and fossil-fuel intensive farming practices deplete the soil and produce alarming CO2 emissions. Fossil fuels make modern large-scale agriculture possible. If we truly start to shift our economy away from oil and gas, jobs will be created, because we will need a larger labor workforce in combination with renewable energy technology to replace the work done by fossil fuels. To be able to pay agricultural workers a fair wage, though, investments in fossil fuels will need to go to laborers instead of the fossil fuel industry. Everyone deserves clean air, convenient transportation, living wage jobs, and communities that are healthy and affordable. To make this vision possible, agricultural workers must be protected and invested in, not only during COVID, but throughout and beyond the just transition away from fossil fuels.

For Ally's full piece, visit: <https://wecprotects.org/sustaining-our-sustenance-why-caring-for-washington-agricultural-workers-is-a-form-of-environmental-justice/>.

Source

Joan D. Flocks, The Environmental and Social Injustice of Farmworker Pesticide Exposure, 19 Geo. J. on Poverty L. & Pol'y 255 (2012), available at <http://scholarship.law.ufl.edu/facultypub/268>

A recent update, and a way you can support Familias Unidas por la Justicia:

Despite FUJ's critical leadership role in their many efforts to promote justice for farmworkers, their organizers often go months without pay due to funding shortfalls. *Community Alliance for Global Justice* has a goal of raising \$20,000 to support FUJ. Visit their website to see how you can support: <https://tinyurl.com/Finance-Frontlines>



Sometimes the simplest questions lead to the most impressive outcomes. That's what happened with the question, "I've got a boat and some money, what can we do?" The answer: clean up 702,000 pounds or 18,000 gallons of toxic chemical creosote from the Salish Sea. That's enough creosote to fill nine dump trucks—the result of a remarkable partnership and a lot of hard work.

In 2014, Todd Woodard, the Director of Natural Resources for the Samish Indian Nation, approached Christopher Robertson, the Aquatic Restoration Manager at the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (WADNR) about expanding a marine debris program limited by road access, leaving out many of the islands in traditional Samish Indian territory. With funding in part from the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) **National Estuaries Program** (NEP), and in partnership with WADNR, Washington Conservation Corps (WCC), Veterans Conservation Corps (VCC) and EarthCorps, the Samish Indian Nation Department of Natural Resources was able to launch a multiyear program to make the Salish Sea healthier for people, animals, and the environment.

Creosote stands out from other marine debris because it is known to cause cancer and be toxic for marine plants and wildlife. It is a wood preservative commonly used for things like pilings, telephone poles, railroad ties, or docks. During storms or with erosion overtime, preserved wood can be released into the Puget Sound and accumulate on beaches. In the summertime, you can smell the noxious tar radiating from logs and see it weeping out from the wood. The toxic nature of creosote makes disposal difficult and requires hazardous materials (HAZMAT) certification, limiting those that can participate.

Each year, Samish and WADNR lead summer cleanups with members of WCC, VCC, and EarthCorps as the hardworking boots on the ground. Over the past six years, the cleanup partnership has removed 702,000 pounds of creosote treated wood and an additional 65,000 pounds of other marine debris from public and private shorelines of the Puget Sound (a combined weight equivalent to 255 midsize sedans).

Three years after the start, in 2017, their efforts improved by first surveying the islands in the springtime so they could prioritize areas with the most litter and treated wood as well as track their cleanup. Not only have yearly surveys expedited cleanups, they have also shown which sites are “accumulation zones” and likely to repopulate debris, allowing them to direct work accordingly. While the 2017 survey revealed shockingly that there were 325 impacted sites within the San Juan Islands, in 2019, they found 141 less sites due to their efforts.

Cleanups by boat are tricky business. They require skilled boat operators with training for navigating dangerous, super shallow water with 5000 pounds of debris on board, which would be similar in weight to two compact cars. Multiyear funding from NEP meant that they could find





Despite how complicated and monumental of an effort these cleanups were, the Samish Tribe took them on because removing creosote was found to be critical to preserving, protecting and enhancing culturally significant natural resources and habitats for current and future generations. Since time immemorial, the Samish people have been stewards of the San Juan Islands and have lived and prospered on the land and waters of the Salish Sea. Samish culture and traditions are intimately tied to resources and places in the region. The removal of toxins is critical to honoring traditional ways, their ancestors and preserving the cultural use of materials, foods and their identity.



Partnership between the Samish Tribe and WDNR was critical to the success of the project. Before the Samish Tribe was able to offer resources and boat access, marine cleanups were limited to places that could only be reached by car. Federal funding enabled the Samish Tribe to increase WDNR's people power so they could focus and expand their work. If federal funding from NEP disappeared or was underfunded, cleanups in Samish Territory would stop all together in places that can only be reached by boat. This would be a huge step backwards for getting to those difficult to reach places that often provide rich habitat and where toxins will build up overtime, putting the environment and the community at risk.

Fighting for the Environment means **Fighting for Racial Justice**

For some of us, it seems counter intuitive to think of these issues in the same breath.

For others among us, they are one and the same.

In recent weeks, we are starting to see the web of interconnections better. You may have been reading articles about how COVID-19 impacts Black, Latino, and Indigenous communities in greater numbers, both from existing health disparities or from the insidious racism built into our healthcare system. You have probably also read about how climate change impacts those same communities disproportionately, and how that should be taken into account as we work on local climate action plans, as well as a national response.

This web runs deep into our history and current systems. The exploitative mindset that underlies white supremacy and continues to harm BIPOC communities, is the same one driving depletion for profit, reckless drilling for fossil fuels, and irresponsible pollution of our waters. White supremacy champions dominion over nature, positions people as apart from the ecosystems we live in, divides us into groups with competing priorities, and leads to the disproportionate harm and death of Black, Brown, and Indigenous people

and other people of color. In order to address our climate crisis, we must reckon with the fundamental mindset that is baked into some of our deepest systems in the United States. This is our legacy.

Because the problem is distributed unfairly to BIPOC communities, we must center those same communities in the process of developing policy solutions; in addition to ensuring that the same kind of systemic injustice isn't perpetuated in our long-term policies, there are immediate needs that need addressing—housing access, rising food costs, access to healthcare, just to start—which can only happen when communities of color are centered in climate resilience planning.

Just as one example, as we build a low-carbon future through policies and creating new jobs in the clean energy sector, we should prioritize a Just Transition as an important aspect, one that considers equity in where the structures are developed and advocates for workers' rights.

Following are some ways frontline communities have also been leading in building a vision for a sustainable future:

Intersections of Systemic Racism & the Environment in Washington State

A visual primer

Natural disasters: Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities, due to redlining and ongoing economic injustice, are more likely to live in areas at risk of natural disasters. On top of that, disaster response continues to perpetuate environmental racism. For example, U.S. citizens receive, on average, about \$26 per person, per year, from the federal government, while tribal citizens receive approximately \$3 per person, per year.

Incarceration: Northwest Detention Center (NWDC) is an example of a prison located on contaminated brownfield—in this case, Tacoma Tideflats, a federal Superfund cleanup site where a coal and gasification plant leaked toxic sludge into the soil for three decades—that is so polluted that it's been zoned to exclude residential development.

Given that Black men are disproportionately represented in incarcerated populations, this makes incarceration and the prison industrial complex a point of convergence between environmental justice, economic justice, and racial justice.

Traditional Food: Climate change not only threatens with sea level rise and flooding risk, it has had profound impacts on the food source of many tribes in the Pacific Northwest, salmon being a notable species. Another community impacted is the Makah Tribe, whose traditional foods have been severely depleted by commercial overfishing, rising ocean temperatures, and acidification. Their treaty-reserved right to hunt gray whales as one of their traditional food was prevented by state government and by environmental activists. The loss of traditional diet leads to health problems, as well as impacting cultural and spiritual practices.

Indigenous science has long been helping Washington state agencies with sustainable co-management of our salmon stock, despite the steep uphill battle against warming waters and pollution, as well as serving as important knowledge to shape local climate adaptation.

Food sovereignty through Black-owned urban farms empower Black communities and addresses the gap in access to healthy and affordable food, but it also models sustainable agriculture, organizing around food justice, community care and healing, and natural habitat creation in the urban environment. Black farmers are modeling how our food system can

Highways: Living near highways and other high traffic areas expose communities to high levels of nitrogen oxide, a major killer through heart disease. All over the country, in rural states as well as “clean cities,” people of color are exposed to 38% higher levels of this pollution compared to white Americans, after controlling for income (that is, this disparity is not just between poor and the wealthy).

look in a future that is community-centered. “It’s farming as revolution, farming as care.”

Mutual-aid groups in the wake of COVID-19 have sprung up to address community needs during this system disruption. These networks of community care model what resilience will look like in the face of a changing climate.

Climate and Environmental Justice movement: It’s important to note that, while the conservation movement has been historically white, environmental justice as a movement has been led by people of color, and is deeply rooted in Black history and Indigenous communities’ fight for justice and recognition of sovereignty.

It can sometimes feel disheartening to think on the magnitude of problem before us, to tackle the vast moneyed interests behind fossil fuel industries, as well as centuries of injustices.

But leaders in environmental justice have demonstrated how we can take heart: when you embrace the diverse and integrated nature of these fights, you can mobilize together and form a powerful coalition to accomplish what seems impossible. While fighting infringements from the system that puts monetary value on human labor, and inherently sees Black, Brown, and Indigenous bodies as “less,” we can empower community-based solutions that prioritize *equity, participation, and justice for all.*

Superfund Sites: Duwamish River is a Superfund cleanup site, one of the nation’s most toxic waste sites due to industrial waste dumping. Life expectancy in the surrounding South Park and Georgetown neighborhoods is 8 years shorter than the Seattle average, and 13 years shorter than for residents of Laurelhurst in North Seattle.

Food Insecurity & Food Deserts: Due to redlining and socioeconomic disparities, communities of color are more likely to live in neighborhoods with less access to affordable, fresh, and healthy food. Poor nutrition adds to health disparities, leaving communities vulnerable to threats such as COVID-19.

Sacrifice zones: Race is the most significant factor (more than socioeconomic status) in predicting where our commercial hazardous waste facilities are located. US government has intentionally cited hazardous military sites near Indigenous communities. Pervasive patterns of behavior from municipal, state, and federal government demonstrate regulations and policies that condone environmental racism, targeting communities of color for toxic waste disposal and establishing industries in those communities, banking on lack of political power to act with impunity.

Please refer to our sources on the interactive pdf on our website.

Agriculture: Most farmworkers in Washington State are male, Latino, and immigrant workers, and seasonal workers are more likely to be undocumented. They are exposed to harmful pesticides and herbicides, are at high risk during heatwaves, and are more likely to be affected by air pollution and wildfire.

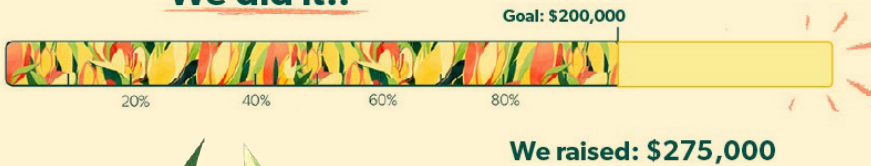
WEC's gala

We are left with an overwhelming sense of gratitude after our first-ever Virtual Gala! We are inspired, humbled and proud to see the outpouring of support from friends new and old, from board and staff alumni, to sponsors and partner organizations, to friends and family. The number of folks who tuned in virtually showed your commitment to the importance of WEC's work by giving generously – all told, we raised over \$275,000 to fuel our work ahead!

One benefit of a virtual event was that we brought the event into your homes! While an in-person event would have been 500 people, this Virtual Gala reached over 2,000! Thank you so much to those of you who made gifts and bid on auction items.

All of our work – whether it's fighting against oil and coal terminals, working with rural communities to build a sustainable future, restoring Puget Sound, or firmly committing to our partnerships as we push for climate action – takes YOU choosing to make a difference. Together, we are working toward the lasting change we know our state needs.

We did it!!



(A note from Rod Brown, previously Board
Chair of Washington Environmental Council)

Celebrating Joan Crooks

“

Originally I had planned to give these comments at the WEC Gala this spring, but I'm still happy to talk about Joan Crooks, even in print. I have worked with Joan for almost 30 years, when she started her long journey at WEC. Every year after that was a pleasure. We waged a lot of hard campaigns together — and won a lot of them too. And always with Joan's steady calm and happy smile.

Like so many of us, Joan started working at WEC as a volunteer. She and I were both lucky to be volunteers who caught the eye of Joan Thomas, the legendary environmentalist who mentored so many young people. Joan T. got Joan C. involved in the ultimately successful fight to stop an oil pipeline across Puget Sound. (Q. Will these pipeline proposals never go away? A. Only if people like Joan continue to organize against them.) WEC hired Joan full-time in 1992, and in 1995 she became the Executive Director.

In her many years as Executive Director, Joan worked hard to make WEC bigger, better funded, and more powerful. But the work that impressed me most was in building partnerships outside of WEC. She helped create the Environmental Priorities Coalition to coordinate all the environmental groups who lobby in Olympia. We environmentalists can sometimes be fractious when we try to decide our legislative priorities, but Joan built a structure and, more importantly, a set of relationships that allowed us to reach consensus year after year. This resulted in real success for the environment. Over the years the Environmental Priorities Coalition secured 69 laws, policies and/or budget provisos that help people and our land, air, and water. And it became a national model for how to get things done.

Joan also created the partnership between WEC and Washington Conservation Voters. Many of us saw the logic of having closer links between the political and the policy worlds. But it took Joan's patience and resolve—always with an eye on the larger vision—to make it happen.

Though none of us know now how we will eventually solve the climate crisis, we do know that a big piece of the solution is the joining of forces between environmental and social justice advocates. Joan helped build this partnership with the creation of the Alliance for Jobs and Clean Energy. Yet again Joan saw that we can be stronger by sharing our power with others. Joan's real legacy lies in the relationships she built with others.

Included in these relationships are the many staff and interns she mentored along the way. Joan Thomas's mentorship was pivotal in her career development, and she felt a responsibility to "pay it forward." Young people with the desire to protect and restore Washington's environment find their way to the WEC/WCV offices. With patience, time, and energy, Joan mentored many people who are today working in government, in law, in other non-profits, in business, and in philanthropy - all focused on some aspect of advocacy that makes our world a better place.

Washington is fortunate that Joan decided to make this her adopted home. She is passionate about our communities, our land and water, and the people who will fight for them.

So, sometime this summer or fall, when you are out in a park, on a trail, or on the water, think of Joan and say a word of thanks for her accomplishments.



Joan Crooks, with her husband, Don Davies

Celebrating We Are Puget Sound's Awards

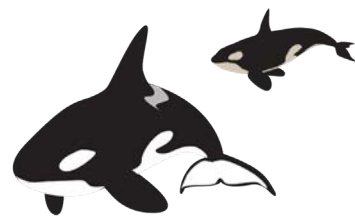
In January, 2020 was gearing up to be a very exciting, promising and engaging year for the **We Are Puget Sound** book and campaign, with creative outreach planned with our publishing partner, Braided River. We had grand plans in the works to bring the campaign to communities around the Salish Sea by organizing in-person forums and events, presenting at conferences and libraries, and getting people excited and engaged. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic meant we had to cancel the original plans to protect public health.

However, we are pleased that people have remained very much engaged through virtual events. So far this year, nine events have drawn nearly 1000 participants, we established a **We Are Puget Sound ambassadors program** to provide guidance and resources for the people profiled in the book to be effective spokespeople for the campaign, and partnered with King County Library System on a poster contest that drew 45 beautiful, creative and artistic submissions and more.

Our reach expanded even further when We Are Puget Sound received two national book awards! We are honored to win the Gold Medal for "Best Regional Non-Fiction" in the West Pacific from **the Independent Publisher Books Awards (IPPY Awards)** and the Silver Medal in Ecology and Environment from the **Nautilus Book Awards (Better Books for a Better World)**. The book and campaign results from a remarkable publishing partnership of Braided River, WEC, more than 100 supporters of Puget Sound, regional writers and photographers, and people who shared their stories in the pages of the book. We are deeply grateful and appreciative of everyone involved and look forward to more successes.

Mountaineers Books is offering We Are Puget Sound—and all their titles—for 25% off at:

www.mountaineers.org/books.



ORCA ACTION MONTH 2020

Along with the health of the Southern Resident orcas, the health of our community was our top priority when Orca Salmon Alliance made the decision to pivot to a virtual Orca Action Month in June 2020.

The biggest challenge for Orca Salmon Alliance was to find virtual ways to engage with the public that embodied the same energy, excitement and personal touch of our traditional in-person gatherings. And, we did it! We offered webinars, beach/neighborhood walk cleanups, concerts, story times, pub trivia, poster contest, orca book club, youth lessons, whale crafts and 30 days of action for orca recovery all from a safe distance ... much akin to the distance we need to keep from the orcas to help them stay safe!

We're pleased to announce that our first virtual Orca Month was super successful! In fact, we were able to reach a much larger and broader audience with folks tuning in from as far away as Scotland, New Zealand, Florida and Arizona. Wow! Our social media channels were buzzing with activity all month long. Huge thank you to Mollie Bryan, Orca Month coordinator, and our fiscal sponsors PCC Community Markets, Kavu, Seattle Art Museum, Seattle Neighborhoods, Tulalip Foundation, and Keta Foundation, who all played a pivotal role in the success of our first-ever virtual Orca Month!

View winning entries from the poster contest at:

<https://kcls.org/we-are-puget-sound/>

CARES Act Impact on Charitable Giving in 2020

This year, because of the effects of COVID-19 on the economy, Congress passed the **CARES Act**. Included in the CARES Act were temporary changes to how charitable gifts can be deducted on your taxes.

- For people who take the standard deduction, they can take an **additional \$300 deduction** for charitable gifts (like those to WEC) on their 2020 taxes in addition to the standard deduction.
- For people who itemize their deductions, the limit on deductions for charitable contributions has been raised from **60%** of adjusted gross income to **100%** of adjusted gross income for their 2020 taxes on contributions to qualifying charities (like WEC). This does not apply to contributions to donor advised funds.
- For people with their own businesses, the limit on corporation charitable deductions for contributions to qualifying charities (like WEC) in 2020 is increased from **10% to 25%**.

These changes are only apply for gifts made in 2020, so make sure to make your qualifying gift to Washington Environmental Council today!



Funding Secured for Ilwaco Community Forest!

Community Forests are a great way to protect local forests and the value they provide, like clean water, recreation and local jobs. We've been working a long time with the City of Ilwaco and we're excited to see this small seaside community as one of 10 projects on this year's list of funded projects through the **U.S. Forest Service's Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Grant Program!** This project will protect the city's drinking water forever and provide new opportunities for outdoor education and recreation-based economic development in Southwest Washington. Whether it's Ilwaco, Chewelah, Chimacum, Nisqually or Glenwood, we know these investments pay off for Washington's communities!

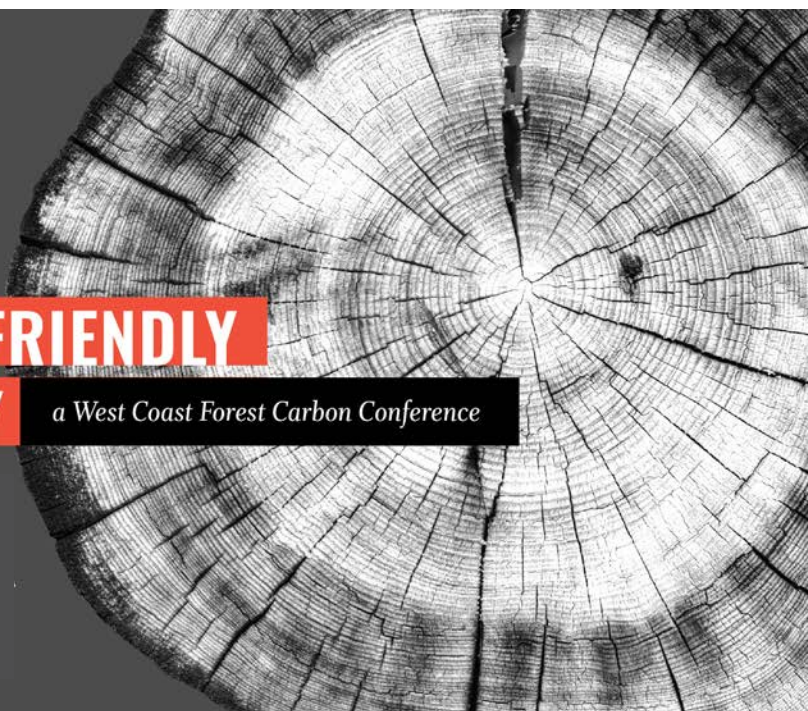
The Carbon Conference is going virtual this year!
Stay tuned and sign up for updates at:
<https://wecprotects.org/carbon/>

VIRTUAL

CARBON FRIENDLY FORESTRY

a West Coast Forest Carbon Conference

Bringing together diverse thinkers and stakeholders to learn about and discuss innovative strategies and opportunities for sustainable forest management that can create a stronger economy and healthier communities in a changing climate





**WASHINGTON
ENVIRONMENTAL
COUNCIL**

This paper is 100% Post-
Consumer Recycled Fiber
FSC Certified | Green-e



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.

Washington Environmental Council

1402 Third Ave, Suite 1400
Seattle, WA 98101

When more people vote and are engaged in our democracy, the environment and our communities win.

REGISTER TO VOTE

Make sure you and your friends and family are registered to vote or pledge to vote to receive reminders before the November General Election. Remember, 16 and 17 year olds can now pre-register to vote!

<https://wecprotects.org/register-to-vote>

CENSUS

A fair and accurate census count is crucial in ensuring communities receive the resources they need and to a fair redistricting process.

Get the facts about the 2020 Census from our partners at the Washington Census Alliance

<https://www.wacensusalliance.org>

Make sure everyone you know completes their census at:

<https://2020census.gov>

