

*Keeping communities together is
at the heart of redistricting justice*

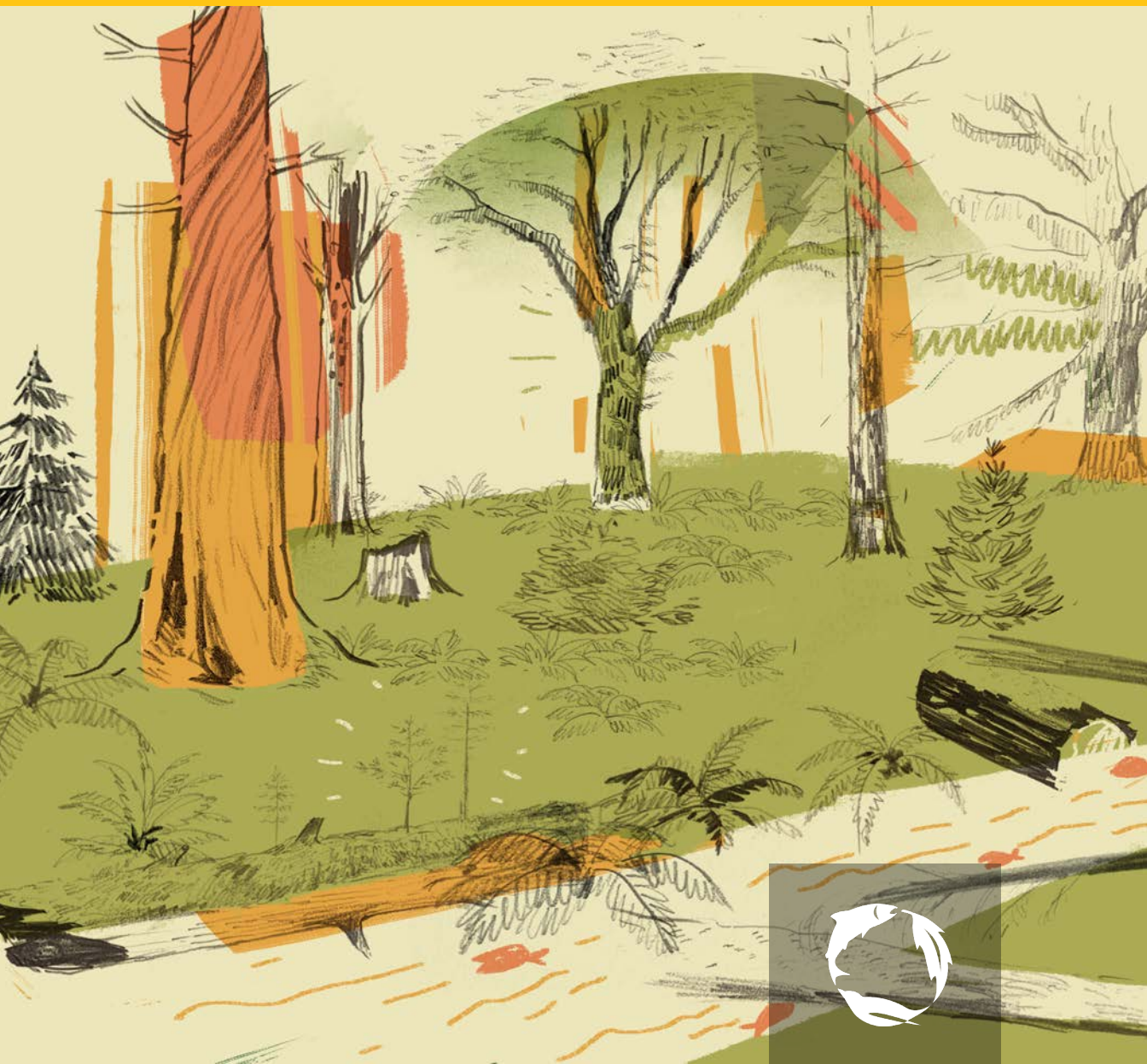
*Strategies to manage our forests to
work for people and planet*

*2021 was historic for environmental
policy at the state capitol*

2021 SUMMER ISSUE

CONVENE

WASHINGTON ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL



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Errors & Corrections:

The print version of this issue had original art on page 9 which raised concerns from our partners that the figure on the furthest right was a Black man in prison garb with dreadlocks. While the intersection of prison labor and wildfire remains an issue that we hope to address in a future issue in our publication, that was not the artistic intent here, and we apologize to our partners for the oversight in not being attentive to how visual misrepresentation can perpetuate harmful stereotypes. We have since edited the artwork in the digital version to make the likeness closer to a wildland firefighters outfit.

A NOTE FROM OUR CEO

Itukdi kadux,

I greet you in my traditional kiktsh language because I maintain a strong bond through language to my people, my culture and all those who have come before me. I need deep connections within myself, my communities, and the environment to sustain me, my work, and the world around me.

The more disconnected we are from ourselves and each other — the more disconnected we are from the earth.

This perspective allows me to see that how we treat ourselves and our communities reflects how we treat the environment. Those connections, sadly, are in a critical state of disrepair.

This past year, COVID forced us to isolate ourselves for long periods of time, which resulted in the loss of the threads that bind us to one another. More people are lonely than ever before, hate crimes are on the rise across our communities, wildfires are already raging across the region, and precious salmon are dying from warming waterways, which ultimately threaten the Southern resident Orca pods in the Salish Sea.

In this moment of reflection on the state of our world, I recall, “Seeker of Visions,” a book of healing wisdom from interviews with Lame Deer (Lakota). Lame Deer said, “being a living part of the earth, we cannot harm any part of her without hurting ourselves.” In essence, we are nature.

In this issue of Convene, we seek to draw deeper connections between each other, our work, our communities, and the environment because we recognize that we are inextricably linked to the natural world. Our stories in this issue of Convene ask us to find solutions that work for people and the planet, without falling into the trap of one or the other — we can do our work in the sweet spot at the intersection of both. Ultimately, restoring connections already lost because what we do to the earth, we do to ourselves.

You’ll read about how the legislative session’s success and opportunities came about because we centered environmental justice and people and communities. With the passage of landmark legislation, including the Healthy Environment for All (HEAL) Act, Clean Fuels Standard and a wildfire funding bill to name a few, we highlight the fibers that bond our work, our relationships and communities, and the environment.

I’m excited for you to read our forestry piece, which dives into how we can manage forests in ecological ways that benefit local and regional economies, help communities thrive, and sustain our environment for generations to come. We also elevate redistricting work happening in our state, feature a story by Seattle Public Utilities, and include updates from our organization, such as recent wins and new staff we’ve brought on board to carry out our mission.

Alyssa Macy
CEO of WEC



The Reciprocity In-Between

Managing Forests for Community & Climate

Amidst the layered shrouds of green mosses and sword ferns, bright red beaded thimbleberries and blackberries the size of a pinky nail, the calls of spotted towhees and robins shine with the clarity of crystal. In this old-growth coniferous and deciduous forest in Seattle's Seward Park, Western red cedar and Douglas fir are so tall you have to crane your neck all the way back to glimpse the disappearing tree tops. Big leaf maples splay out their branches with large leaves known for their fiery golden autumn hue. This patch of forest is a microcosm of the layered relationships that circle about daily, season to season, in the larger swaths of old-growth forests across the Pacific Northwest.

Older forests like this one have a few iconic qualities. Old trees stretch high up and are spaced out with enough room to create light gaps where the sun can stream through and coax trees like the Douglas fir to take root. Meanwhile, Western hemlock sprout in shady patches of forest floor. The spaciousness between trees allows a diversity of undergrowth vegetation to thrive including licorice ferns, salmonberry, salal, nootka rose, and Indian plum. Then there's the decadence — and not the kind we associate with chocolate cake — but the presence of dead and decaying matter enriching the soil and giving rise to new life.

Regenerating Life

An uprooted tree trunk with roots reaching every which way is smothered by sword ferns, multiple species of moss, and lichen. Nurse logs like these abound in older forests and exemplify the symbiosis winding through

each level of the ecosystem. While this tree's life as a green giant reaching for the sky has ended, in its death it nurses new life so the forest can continue its cycle of regeneration. Nurse logs can support life for hundreds of years. Moss and lichen that may struggle to flourish on the forest floor thrive on the nutrient-rich nurse log. Seedlings are also able to begin life on the nurse logs, and those seedlings that grow largest and fastest often latch onto decaying moss and lichen.

Between the thick towering trunks of the forest canopy, berries and foliage that provide food for forest dwelling animals and insects in the understory, and the burgeoning growth on nurse logs, older forests are rich with overlapping relationships that bolster resilience. Scientist and writer Robin Wall Kimmerer calls the "green architecture" of the forest a stellar "model of efficiency, with layers of foliage in a multilayered canopy that optimizes capture of solar energy."

Older forests are a peek into important ecological qualities that can inform how we manage and interact with all types of forest lands. These forest relationships mirror the interdependence of our human communities, as complicated as they may be. "If we are looking for models of self-sustaining communities, we need look no further than an old-growth forest. Or the old-growth cultures they raised in symbiosis with them," Kimmerer, of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, writes in her book *Braiding Sweetgrass*. Like forest ecosystems, human communities also support one another through cycles of life, providing food, shelter, and services for our collective well-being.

The Gifts of the Forest

Forests quietly share many gifts: they clean our air, filter sediment and pollutants from our water, prevent flooding and landslides, absorb and store carbon, and are places of cultural importance. They provide us with food, jobs, wildlife habitat, wood products, and recreation opportunities.

They are also vital carbon sinks, absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere to store in trees, soil, fungi, and vegetation. *Forests are an invaluable tool to mitigate climate change because of this process, called carbon sequestration. Natural climate solutions* focused on avoiding deforestation and improving forest management *can even provide 18% of the climate change mitigation needed to limit global warming to 1.5°C.* According to *a study from Oregon State University*, the Pacific Coast and Cascade Mountain forests of Washington and Oregon are the highest priority area for forest carbon sequestration in the contiguous western United States.

Forest management, then, is crucial to our state's well-being in terms of climate change, and the land's ecological integrity, and job security for forest-dependent and timber communities. Over many decades of working with scientists, communities, forest managers, and leaders of Native nations, we've learned that not all forest management approaches are the same. Management practices that prioritize revenue and timber production above all other benefits degrade the natural ecosystem processes that provide us with clean air, water, habitat, climate mitigation, and more.

The Challenge of Managing Forests

Let's consider an intensively managed, or industrial timber plantation where trees are grown with the primary goal of harvesting timber to maximize economic return. Here, trees are evenly spaced and homogenous, much like a monoculture crop farm. These forests have decreased biodiversity, because forest managers focus on removing undergrowth which can create competition by robbing nutrients from trees that could otherwise use those nutrients to maximize timber production. With important connections like undergrowth, decaying matter, and biodiversity removed from the equation, forests are not able to cultivate the safety net of mutual support built into a richly layered forest. And without a variety of tree species, forests are more susceptible to pests and disease.

Humans have always harvested trees at various scales throughout history. We undoubtedly rely on forest products like paper and wood to build our homes, care for our families, and enrich our lives. Timber production and processing provide jobs and contribute to the economic health of rural communities. *But in a time of great ecological imbalance and climate crisis we need to be thoughtful about ensuring the health of our forests.*

Last March, an article in The Seattle Times, "*Amid climate crisis, a proposal to save Washington*"



state forests for carbon storage, not logging” presented varying perspectives in a complex and important dialogue about managing Washington’s state trust forestlands. It is easy and too simplistic to interpret the forest management issue as one of false dichotomies: either forests should be left untouched to preserve natural ecosystem function, or managed intensively for timber with little intentionality around ecological balance.

This either/or approach doesn’t leave room for a very crucial question: ***how do we address climate change and support local economies, communities, and forests?*** Can there be a middle path for forest management that considers both ecosystemic balance and the forest’s material benefit to communities?

The History of Our Forested Lands

The history of state trust forestlands may not be something you learned about in high school history class, but it is wrought with controversy. The system governing these federally-granted lands, now managed by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), was created at statehood 131 years ago. Back then, Washington’s population was 22 times smaller than it is now. Trust beneficiaries that receive revenue from timber harvesting operations include K-12 school construction and major public universities. The counties, in turn, handed over management of about 600,000 acres of forestland to the State in the 1930s when private landowners defaulted on their county property taxes. Money generated from the state-managed county lands provide timber revenue for libraries, schools, and other essential services. While some rural counties still rely on this source of funding, other beneficiaries like the school construction account and the University of Washington receive a majority of their funding through other sources.

Today, there is an opportunity to reshape the state’s trust land management system to both address climate change and sustain thriving rural communities. Tradeoffs and compromise will always exist in forest management decisions, as they do in any system where multiple needs and interests are at play. Forest management

practices are a result of differing values. Companies that intensively manage forests value efficient timber production and its economic impact. Communities who live alongside forests may value recreation, trails, and other health benefits. Frontline communities might value the climate mitigation opportunities that forests present.

However, this doesn’t mean that Washingtonians have to take an all-or-nothing stance between managing forests to maximize timber volume and revenue, and healthy forests that protect air, water, habitat and cultural lifeways.

A Middle Path for People & Planet

Here at WEC, our forest team has a philosophy of balanced forest management that rejects the false dichotomy pitting our human social economy against ecological well-being. ***We believe that just, wise forest management means working with the land in the long-term best interests of all people, rather than prioritizing short-term revenue generation above all other forest benefits.***

There is a way to do both, and it has been done before. Kimmerer, the scientist and writer, points to the Indigenous or “old-growth” culture and people of our region who have lived symbiotic relationships alongside forests since time immemorial. In this worldview, humans are not some external force managing the land but yet another node in the forest’s web of ecosystem connections.

“Wise use and care for a huge variety of marine and forest resources, allowed them to avoid overexploiting any one of them while extraordinary art, science, and architecture flowered in their midst,” write Kimmerer. She challenges us to unlearn our modern-day conception of wealth generation at the expense of ecological health, an ethic that should apply to our current state forest management practices.

“humans are not some external force managing the land but yet another node in the forest’s web of ecosystem connections.”

Society's collective mismanagement of forests and the conception that forests can *either* benefit people *or* shut them out completely, indicates our disconnected sense of belonging to the environment. Finding solutions that work for both land and people is not just about environmental protection and future resilience. *These solutions invite us to question the extractive nature of our connection to forests and help us reimagine what a harmonious relationship with our forests could look like.*

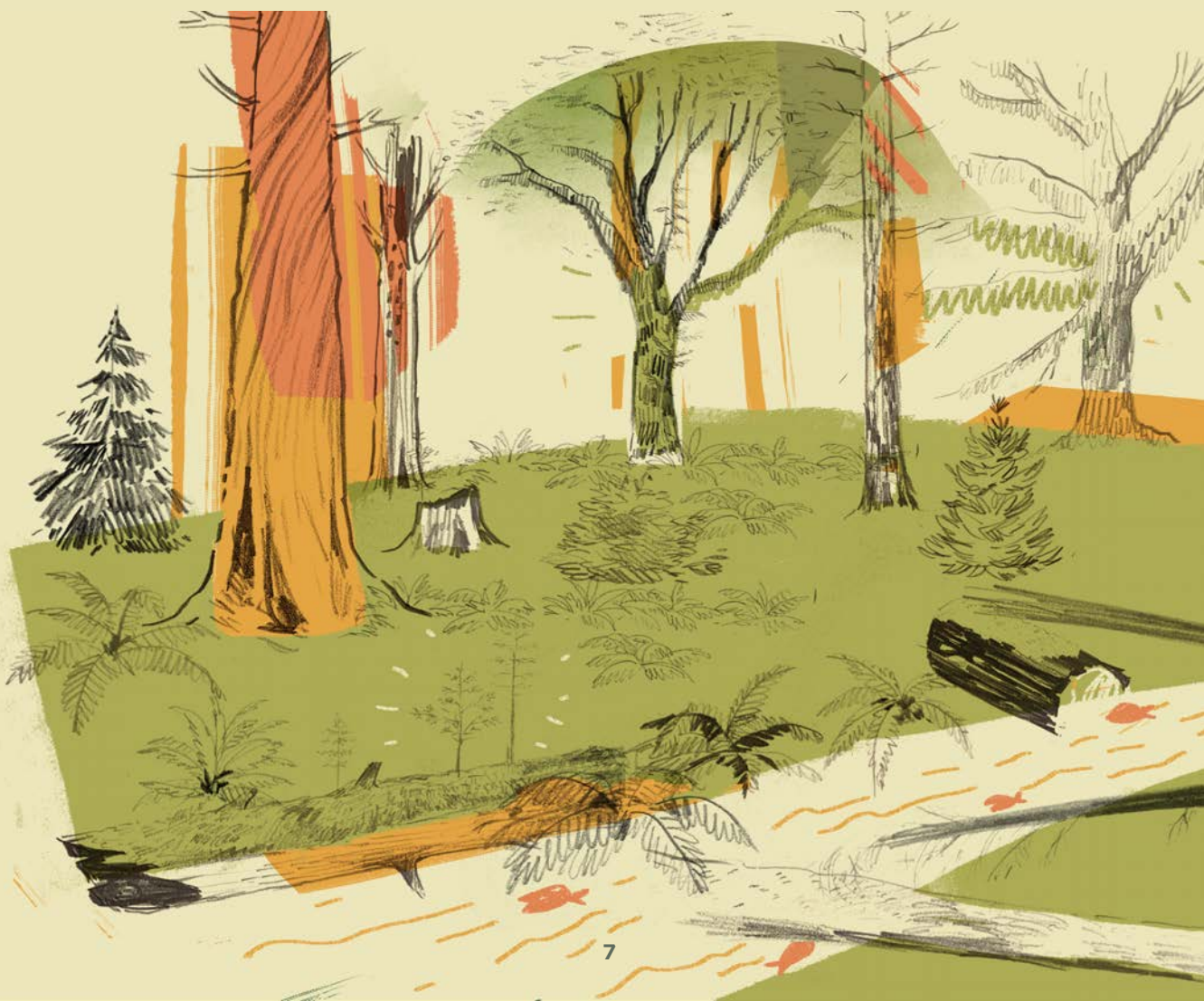
Solutions For Climate & Community

While there are many interests and complexities between stakeholders — conservationists, communities, state agencies, local governments, and timber companies — there are also as many

solutions. Here are four solutions that could prove successful for a more balanced forest management on state trust lands:

1. Move to an **ecologically based management strategy** that unlocks the benefit of older forest relationships

As forests grow older they provide many invaluable ecosystem benefits. *Allowing trees to grow older before harvest could also produce more timber volume in the long-term.* Currently, trees are harvested young to maximize short-term revenue. This does not allow trees to reach their full potential to benefit the surrounding ecosystem and store carbon — or produce timber. At present, rotation lengths on state lands are 40-50 years. Extending that timeframe would mean advocating for somewhere around an



80-year rotation period. Letting trees mature by increasing the length of harvest rotations is an important strategy we can use to mitigate climate change while also sustaining the local economy, people, and forests.

Another ecologically-based strategy is to manage forests in a way that mirrors natural ecosystem functions, including the disturbances that lead to regeneration. Indigenous peoples across the world have carried out ecologically-based practices for generations to manage for both long-term sustainability and immediate material needs. These practices would help store more carbon, protect water quality, prevent flooding and landslides, and ensure employment and revenue for Washington's rural communities.

An ecological management approach can deliver a wider range of sustained forest benefits than the intensively-managed industrial forests across much of Washington's forest landscape. It is much more aligned with the complex needs of the world we live in today.

2. The Department of Natural Resources can create a carbon policy framework:

No that climate change is embedded in public discourse as fact, the role of forest lands in mitigating climate impacts is also a public discussion. Currently, the Department of Natural

“If ecological management were as financially viable as traditional logging, then dedicating land to ecological forest management and carbon sequestration could feel like a tangible reality for landowners and rural communities of all sizes.”

Resources does not have a policy to incorporate climate mitigation or carbon sequestration into forest management decisions. The recent [Washington Forest Ecosystem Carbon Inventory](#) conducted by DNR and the US Forest Service underscores the need for a policy to guide carbon

management. The study's results suggested that when accounting for carbon emitted and sequestered, forests across the entire state of Washington sequester a net amount of carbon equivalent to approximately 16% of the state's annual greenhouse gas emissions. According to the study, the annual net carbon sequestration rate on DNR-managed lands is close to zero; the lands may not be sequestering any more carbon than they emit. Clearly, an opportunity exists to enhance carbon sequestration on state lands.

With a carbon policy, DNR would have a built-in framework to guide the consideration and prioritization of carbon sequestration and climate resilience alongside — not instead of — other management objectives. Such a policy would ensure DNR balances the multiple values in forest management decisions to reflect the climate realities of our present and future.

3. Provide financial incentives for communities and landowners for this ecologically-based management approach:

We can be creative about how we compensate landowners and counties for maintaining forests and restoring forest ecosystems. Payment for ecosystem services and carbon pricing provide an opportunity to use financial incentives to enable improved forest management, including through the new Climate Commitment Act. Landowners could receive incentives for carbon sequestration on their forestland, for extended rotation lengths, or for conserving old and structurally unique forests. This approach would inspire a balanced and mutually-beneficial scenario for communities and climate. If ecological management were as financially viable as traditional logging, then dedicating land to ecological forest management and carbon sequestration could feel like a tangible reality for landowners and rural communities of all sizes.

4. Clarifying DNR's Responsibility to Manage Forests for “All the People”

Currently, DNR manages state trust forestlands to maximize revenue for trust beneficiaries, even at the potential expense of other forest

benefits. *We think that there is room even within DNR's current view of their "trust mandate" to better balance management for multiple benefits, but recognize that the agency and others disagree.*

Conservation Northwest, WEC, Olympic Forest Coalition, and local individuals filed a lawsuit to gain clarity on DNR's authority and flexibility to manage forests for a diversity of values beyond only economic return. The case has been accepted for review by the State Supreme Court and a decision is anticipated by mid-2022. The lawsuit urges the courts to interpret language in the state constitution which says public state lands are held in trust "for all the people."

This constitutional language requires state trust lands to be managed in the long-term best interest of all Washingtonians, instead of prioritizing revenue above all other forest benefits. If decided in our favor, this historic case could lay the groundwork for re-imagining the way state forestlands are managed by expanding DNR's decision-space to balance multiple values.



As our beloved summers turn into wildfire smoke seasons and we experience more extreme temperatures and weather events year after year, climate change has permeated our life rhythms already. We need to see ourselves in relationship with our natural resources, particularly our forests, to mitigate the harrowing effects of climate change and move through this reality together.

Rather than distancing our human actions and interests from the forest's intricacies, it is beyond time for us all to recognize we are another thread in the web of the natural world. As Kimmerer writes, our current processes both in the ecological world and in the social world will lead us to hit a wall. Then "... balance and regeneration are the only way forward, wherein there is a reciprocal cycle between early and late successional systems, each opening the door for the other." An ecological approach to forest management is an invitation for us to forge a stronger, more generous relationship with the natural resources that sustain us for now and for generations to come.



Communities that **STAY TOGETHER & VOTE TOGETHER...** **THRIVE TOGETHER**

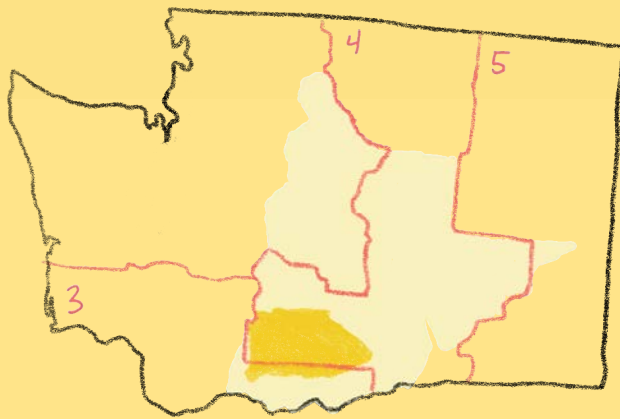
The sun beats down, harsh and unrelenting as smoke tints the sky hazy orange. For farmworkers bent over the fields in the Yakima valley, wildfire smoke and extreme temperatures do not exempt them from working in harsh conditions. Agricultural workers are central to keeping our food system churning. Many of them are Latinx and this past year, they were disproportionately affected by COVID-19. There are hardly any protections for these invaluable workers as they are exposed to extreme climate conditions, high levels of pesticide, and occupational hazards.

The strength of policy and protection laws are always touted as a way to grant important protections to farmworkers. But farmworkers and the broader community networks they exist in only have so much influence without collective voting power. Unfortu-

nately, the Latino community in Yakima county, a county known most for its agricultural economy, is split between multiple legislative districts. Splitting communities, a practice known as cracking, dilutes their voting power and directly reduces how much agency they have to push environmental justice policies that could create healthier and more humane working conditions for our essential farmworkers.

This is why the routine civic process of redrawing our state's districts matters. **Keeping communities together gives them collective agency to elect representatives who will represent the needs and interests of their community.** A community will be stronger and be able to thrive when their most pressing issues are addressed.





- congressional boundaries
- Yakama Nation reservation boundary
- Yakama Nation ceded lands



Let's consider a scenario in the fourth congressional district in southwestern Washington. Right now, the Yakama Nation is split between the three legislative districts. Meanwhile the city of Yakima — which has a large Latino population — is split between the 14th and 15 legislative districts. The voting power of both these communities is diminished when their vote is split across districts. In

the case of the Yakama nation, preserving the Yakama Nation's boundaries within one district is part of the responsibility to honor Tribal Sovereignty and to allow Native members to have a fair influence over the decisions that affect them.

"We have an obligation to prioritize keeping Indigenous communities and communities of color together. We do a great disservice and perpetuate horrible messaging when, for example, we split the Yakama Nation and Colville Tribe between congressional districts and legislative districts," said Jeffrey Robinson, a constituent from the fourth congressional district during a recent public hearing before the Washington Redistricting Commission. "We are telling them they are not people and they do not matter...We owe ourselves maps that recognize this."

This year, we have a chance to advocate for equitable and fair representation by participating in the redistricting process.

So...What is Redistricting Anyway?

If you aren't familiar with the term "redistricting," you are not alone. This is the process of redrawing districts based on census data to account for population changes and growth. Districts have to remain in proportion to each other, which means as populations shift in each district, geographical boundaries have to be redrawn. Just as an accurate census count affects how federal and state resources are distributed to communities, redistricting determines whose interests are represented and who receives resources.

Districts are being redrawn this fall in a process that happens quietly but has a tangible impact on how decisions are made for legislative districts. Here's how it works: Every ten years Washington State forms a non-partisan redistricting commission that has two commissioners appointed by Democratic and Republican House and Senate leadership. Those four commissioners select a non-partisan chair. Together these five commissioners redraw the district map based on census data with input from public hearings where district constituents can come and advocate for the resources and priorities that are most important to them.

Redistricting is About Equity

[Redistricting Justice Washington](#) was formed by over 30 coalitions who were initially dedicated to making sure "Hard to Count" communities of color throughout the state were included in Census data. After data was collected, the coalition decided to refocus on making sure these same communities could gain access to public hearings and share their testimony to advocate for redistricting priorities. RJW's main goal this year is to keep communities of color and Native nations together, and to ensure the testimony process is easy to access.

Let's consider an example where it would be beneficial for a district's boundaries to move. The 9th Congressional district includes South

Seattle, South King County, Mercer Island and Bellevue. While those areas have high concentrations of communities of color, these communities have different needs and interests.

South Seattle and South King County have a higher population of working class people of color which means that as a voting block they have shared experience and resulting common interests. Mercer Island and Bellevue are, overall, affluent areas whose inclusion in the 9th Congressional district splits the vote across varying priorities in these very different communities.

If we don't think about redistricting justice, one voice runs the risk of being louder than the other and can contribute to marginalizing minority communities.

"We do a great disservice messaging when, for example, the Duwamish Tribe and Colville Tribe are split across districts and legislative districts."

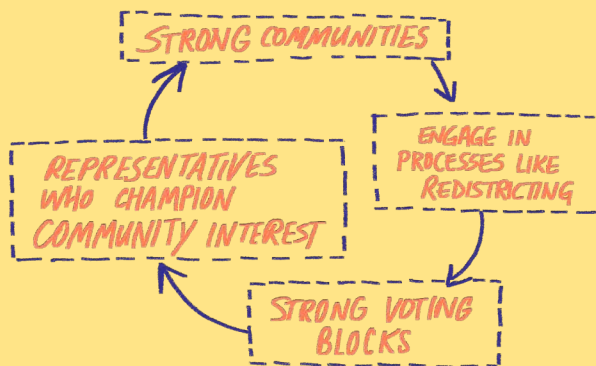
Testify Loud and Clear!

The Redistricting Commission decides how to shift boundaries and regroup cities with input from public testimony. That means community members - including you - can attend public hearings for your district and present a case for how you want your district to be drawn. Public engagement is vital to making sure this process moves forward equitably.

Coalitions like RJW have been hard at work mobilizing this year so that communities of color across the state understand how redistricting affects the issues that matter most to them. They've conducted community mapping

sessions so people know who is currently split up and losing voting power. They have also advocated to improve language accessibility; you can submit public comments in any language and it will be translated for the commissioners.

Before every public hearing, RJW provides an advocacy toolkit to review and a testimony template that community members can use to share their concerns and issues.



Civic Engagement is a Cyclical Journey

Redrawing boundaries isn't something that happens in a vacuum. Remember the frenzy around collecting Census data last year? Redis-

tricting is the next step in translating that data into voting justice. It's a part of the cycle of civic engagement that we all have the opportunity and responsibility to engage in. When our communities are involved throughout these processes, we can help create an equitable civic foundation to support policies and laws that uphold racial, environmental, and economic, and electoral justice for everyone.

If you'd like to participate in upcoming hearings, please go to: <https://www.redistricting.wa.gov/commission-meetings>

"and perpetuate horrible
mple, we split the Yakama
e between congressional
istricts."



WHY ARE
You HERE?


WHAT DO YOU
WANT THE
COMMISSIONER
TO...

1) **ACTUALLY
DO?**
2) **TAKEAWAY?**

WHAT COMPELLED
YOU TO TESTIFY?

NAME,
Where you
Live

WHY DOES
THIS
matter?

WHAT
evidence
DO YOU HAVE
TO MAKE
YOUR POINT?


WHAT IS AT STAKE
if nothing changes?



Climate & Environmental Justice Wins: 2021 Legislative Session

For years, climate and environmental justice policies were a lesser priority in the state legislature. 2021, however, marked a noteworthy shift. Legislators responded to the stark reality that the climate crisis is here, and no longer a worst-case-scenario forecast. **This year's legislative session also set a precedent for transformative racial justice, pandemic recovery, and police accountability.**

Because of the pandemic, the 2021 legislative session was held virtually. A first. While there were doubts about how efficient a virtual process could be, the session was productive. Organizers and activists mobilized the public using Zoom and other virtual means. With the help of volunteers and our partners on the Environmental Priorities Coalition, WEC mobilized the public in digital advocacy actions.

There is also growing public and political awareness that climate impacts intersect with race and class.

According to our analysis of the 2021 legislative session, 59% of the bills we supported passed. This compared to 35% passed just two years ago in 2019.

The legislature's focus on "pandemic response" included addressing housing, the economy and other issues traditionally seen as competing interests. Alongside the pandemic, our country dealt with the uniquely American legacies of racial injustice, sparked by the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd at the hands of law enforcement. A "people in the streets" organizing power swept through the country last year to demand defunding the police and addressing historical harms. This influenced the state legislature to prioritize racial and environmental justice policy.

Another shift in the 2021 legislative session were legislators and leadership from varying and historically underrepresented backgrounds, which brought much-needed vigor and energy to bills and policies previously shelved. 2021 saw the most representative legislature in our history, with 19 people of color in the state House and 8 in the Senate. Speaker of the House Laurie Jenkins is the state's first woman and openly-LGBTQIA+ speaker. These legislators are breaking barriers as they help inform policy.

The cultural changes we are witnessing now have given life to environmental and social policies that didn't have room to breathe — until now.

A Fundamental Shift

“We are entering an era of climate change where human cost is front and center,” says **Darcy Nonemacher**, WEC’s Government Affairs Director.

Climate impacts like wildfire and heatwaves compound the harms of pollution, poorly-insulated housing, and jobs that put essential workers at risk. While natural occurrences like wildfires and heat waves are normal parts of climate cycles, their severity and frequency have drastically increased.

There is also growing public and political awareness that climate impacts intersect with race and class. If you explore the [Washington Environmental Health Disparities Map](#), you’ll notice

high-pollution areas fall within exclusionary redlining boundaries that historically pushed out communities of color. Black people, Indigenous communities, and immigrant and refugee communities are disproportionately impacted by discrimination, health issues, severe climate events, and economic inequity. The same forces that have birthed racism and segregation are the culprits of intersecting oppressions; wage theft, unfair labor laws, environmental degradation and pollution, voter suppression and environmental burdens.

Undoing these injustices won’t happen quickly. Still, 2021’s legislative wins illustrate a new cultural zeitgeist; bills targeting racial and climate justice include solutions to the intersecting crises of housing, economy, and education, among others.

What Passed During the 2021 Session

Of the forty-seven WEC-backed bills that passed, three particular policy packages addressed intersecting climate, economic, and social justice issues:

HEAL Act:

The *Healthy Environment for All Act* codifies environmental justice into law. The Act created a state-wide Environmental Justice Council which directs agencies to incorporate data on health disparities in decision making, and requires culturally appropriate outreach to hear from impacted communities on a particular issue. The Council will set goals for incorporating environmental justice principles and action items into state agency work, decisions and processes.

Package of Police Accountability Bills

6 House bills & 4 Senate bills. Spearheaded by community activism this package of ten bills addresses a number of issues related to police reform. These include use-of-force tactics, investigation of police officers, bans on private prisons, and guaranteeing that youth can access an attorney.



HEAL Act community signing with Governor Inslee, hosted by the Front and Centered coalition of frontline communities at the Duwamish Longhouse. Thanks to the Duwamish Tribe for welcoming the community to their home, a place for which environmental hazard and injustices spotlight the serious need for the HEAL Act.

Photo credit - Front and Centered.

Wildfire Risk Reduction

Introduced by Commissioner of Public Lands Hillary Franz, this bill invests in wildfire prevention strategies, risk reduction, forest restoration and community resilience.

Capital Budget

The legislature passed a 6.3-billion-dollar capital budgets which includes appropriations for acquisition, constructions, and repair of state funded brick-and -mortar facilities. The budget also includes funds for environmental and natural resource projects such as parks and recreation, K-12 school construction and programs for public infrastructure, housing, community, art and heritage projects.

Conservation Works



Clean Fuel Standard:

This bill commits Washington to reducing carbon intensity in fuels by 10% before 2031 and by 20% by 2038. This bill would help decrease Washington's greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050.

The CCA is the result of a decade long push for a cap and trade program. The program is set to help the state reach net-zero emissions by 2050 using an economy wide approach. Couched in the policy are plans for an air quality monitoring network, reduction of harmful health-impacts from pollution, and direct investments in overburdened communities and in tribal nations. The Environmental Justice Council, created through the HEAL Act, will have oversight over the law including evaluation, budgeting and adaptation processes. Revenue from the program will be used to invest in tribal treaty rights, clean jobs, decarbonization of the economy, and will ramp up climate resilience efforts and prioritize the needs of communities most impacted by climate change effects.

Climate Commitment Act



The Climate Commitment Act is a monumental win, but it came with disappointments. Governor Inslee vetoed language that would have required tribal consent for any CCA funded projects impacting cultural and spiritual sites. WEC did not support this veto and supports sovereign Native nations. In response, Gov. Inslee has called a Summit of Tribal leaders to come to an agreement on honoring tribal treaty rights and cultural sites.

This veto harkens back to the centuries-long exclusion of Native nations in statewide decision making. Native nations are sovereign governments and their interests have been overlooked in both legislative processes and advocacy. Native people are the original inhabitants of this land and we must learn from their leadership to collectively uphold environmental justice. There is a deep need to heal and strengthen relationships so we can collaboratively tackle the challenge of climate impacts because an ocean of action lies ahead.

What Lies Ahead

A number of policies did not pass this year and will make an appearance at the next legislative session, including updates to the Growth Management Act (GMA). The GMA has driven local land use planning across the state for decades and proven one of our best tools for a more resilient and equitable Washington. However, the law still has shortcomings in addressing climate change, salmon recovery, affordable housing, displacement, tribal engagement, and environmental justice. Some progress on housing was made this past session, but more work remains and WEC will continue partnering with Futurewise and support their “Washington Can’t Wait” campaign to update and pass legislation to address those shortcomings in the GMA.

Another important legislative proposal under reconsideration next year is a transportation revenue package, which looks at transportation and public transit needs from a climate and racial justice lens. Since vehicles emit a large amount of CO₂ and other greenhouse gasses, and transportation is a matter of access and affordability, this package holds weight for the future of transportation access, clean jobs, and disability and economic justice. WEC is working with Transportation Choices Coalition, Disability Rights Washington, and others to pass a strong package.

This session was historic because of the legislature’s commitment to climate and racial justice. Its success illustrates that equitable and inclusive representation in government, our policies can center communities whose voices are not traditionally prioritized.

One crucial challenge ahead is a relational one. While the Climate Commitment Act was monumental, the Governor’s veto of tribal consent language is an example of how the sovereignty of state Tribes has been repeatedly overlooked. We are dedicated to

transformative change and are part of a larger network of community who commits to do everything in our power to support tribal sovereignty. We must strive to go beyond land acknowledgements and performative lip-service to assure the role we play in policy is guided by the leadership and interests of our state’s sovereign Tribes. Our collective idea of justice in legislation and policy must be grounded in this at every level.

While the Climate Commitment Act was monumental, the Governor’s veto of tribal consent language is an example of how the sovereignty of state Tribes has been repeatedly overlooked.

Crafting these transformative policies required the collaboration and shared vision of many communities with varying histories, needs, and environmental burdens. Grassroots communities lead through the knowledge of their lived experiences. We have a responsibility to engage with communities early from a place of free, prior, and informed consent. Working in partnership with our communities requires wholehearted learning, reflection, and humility as we co-create our shared future.

The Roadmap to Zero Waste

Seattle Public Utilities

Sponsor Highlight

A national leader in protecting and sustaining community health and the environment, Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) has long recognized that how we manage waste has the power to drive transformative change for people and the planet. As the world faces increasing challenges brought on by climate change, pollution, and rising inequity, it is more important than ever to rethink what we produce, consume, and waste. This imperative is the basis of Seattle Public Utilities (SPU)'s commitment to Zero Waste.

Striving for Zero Waste means building on our world-class recycling and composting programs to promote waste prevention and the continual use of resources. Our aim is



to eliminate waste and toxins, prevent pollution and reduce carbon emissions, encourage product durability and reusability, conserve natural resources, and ultimately build a circular and inclusive economy.

SPU reached two important Zero Waste milestones in 2021, both aimed at addressing plastic pollution, which is a ubiquitous and growing threat to humans, wildlife, and the environment.

SB 5022 – Reducing Plastic Pollution & Improving Recycling in Washington

In May, after more than a year of hard work by SPU, King County, Zero Waste Washington, the Seattle Aquarium, and a number of other local government and NGO partners, Governor Inslee signed a new law to reduce plastic pollution and improve recycling throughout Washington. The law — SB 5022 — bans certain polystyrene products, requires customer opt-in for plastic takeout “accessories” like utensils and straws, and mandates post-consumer recycled content in bottles and garbage bags.

The passage of SB 5022 brought much-needed consistency around single-use plastics policies across the state. The bill’s post-consumer recycled content requirements are designed to create a strong market demand for the plastics we recycle every day, getting us nearer to achieving a circular economy.

U.S. Plastics Pact – Roadmap to 2025

In June, SPU, along with King County, the City of Tacoma, and almost 100 other signatories across the country, marked another milestone on the road to Zero Waste with the launch of The U.S. Plastics Pact’s “Roadmap to 2025,” an aggressive national strategy to build a circular economy for plastics in America.

The Roadmap is a comprehensive, coordinated strategy to support rethinking products, packaging, policy, and business models in order to transition away from today’s take-make-waste

model to a circular economy where plastics never become waste in the first place. It sets ambitious targets designed to prompt U.S. industry leaders and producers to take action. The targets include 100 percent of plastic packaging will be reusable, recyclable, or compostable by 2025, and plastic packaging will have 30 percent average recycled, responsibly sourced, bio-based content by 2025.

SPU and Seattle have a legacy of leadership around practices and policies aimed at preventing waste and achieving a circular economy, such as the city-wide ban on single-use plastic straws, utensils, and shopping bags. ***But if we are going to make big, impactful changes, we need to look beyond our local regions and build partnerships that help us collectively address the issues plaguing our environment.*** That’s why these two recent accomplishments are so significant. They represent the type of collaborative, far-reaching, **cross-industry approach** necessary to make meaningful change for the environment and our health.

There is much work to be done, but SPU is committed to moving forward with partners, advocates, and the public to build a more resilient future. We look forward to continued partnership with WEC and its members to help build a circular economy and related job opportunities for plastics, textiles, food, and building materials in our region. Together we can drive a just, green transition that reduces carbon and waste pollution, improves our environment, and protects the health of our communities.

Organizational Updates

Among our climate and clean fuel wins this year are the defeat of two projects that would have endangered neighboring communities and land.

Goldendale Pump Storage Water Permit Rejected!

The Washington Department of Ecology rejected a water permit for the proposed Goldendale Pump Storage facility. The hydroelectric project along the Columbia River in Klickitat County would have used more than 2.9 million gallons of water. The project would create a closed energy storage system that would have inundated Yakama cultural and spiritual sites and decreased already fragile water quality and temperature conditions. WEC was able to join hands with Columbia Riverkeeper and other partners to back the Yakama Nation's opposition to the pump project. Our joint effort was successful. In June, Ecology rejected the proposed project's water permit.

Port of Kalama Methanol Facility is Pulled!

For years, activists and advocates have wanted to stop a methanol processing plant spearheaded by Northwest Innovation Works. Though the Port of Kalama touted the project as a boost for local jobs and a clean energy win, the Department of Ecology found that the facility would release more greenhouse gasses than any other facility except for one in Centralia statewide. After Ecology denied the permit in January 2021, NWIW terminated the project in early June. The denial of the Kalama methanol facility comes at the heels of a slew of wins that defeated proposed oil-by-rail projects and natural and fracked gas pipelines that would endanger the health of local communities and ecosystems. WEC, along with partners like Earthjustice, Columbia Riv-

erkeeper, The Sierra Club and The Center for Biological Diversity, is thrilled to see this win after years of collective activism.

Whatcom County Bans New Fossil Fuel Projects

This July Whatcom County became one of the first refinery communities in the country to ban new fossil fuel and oil terminal projects. This groundbreaking policy also requires project upgrades at existing refineries to go through a robust and rigorous environmental review process. Whatcom County, home of two of the five Washington state refineries won this victory after over a decade of coal and oil struggles and a five-year temporary moratorium. With the Lummi Nation taking lead, WEC, local partners, and the Power Past Coal and Stand Up To Oil coalitions collectively fought new terminal proposals. Together we passed strong local land use protections limiting fossil fuels in order to safeguard the health of people and the environment. This win is an important example of how local governments can take clear action to protect community health, safety, and the climate from the impacts of fossil fuel facilities.



ORCA Action Month:

Every June, WEC participates in the Orca and Salmon Alliance's Orca Action Month. In 2007, Orca Network launched Orca Awareness month. They chose June as Orca Month since Southern Resident orcas gather around the San Juan Islands to feed on Fraser River Chinook salmon run. In 2007 there were 85 Southern Resident orcas. By 2021, that number has come down to 75.

This year's theme "We Are Family" looked to highlight the connections between orca and humans. There are many parallels between humans and orcas. Both raise their young, pass down songs and traditions, and mourn loss. Many Coast Salish Tribes hold orcas with the same love and protection extended to family. Losing an orca is like losing a loved one.

The month was packed with activities and ways to get engaged in the fight to protect the well-being of our region's already endangered orcas. Most events were virtual, including webinars on Orca recovery, youth participation, Coast Salish salmon and orca culture, and advocacy letter writing among many others. WEC hosted our weekly educational kayak tours at Alki Beach as well.

Orca Action Month emphasized taking actions specifically around restoring salmon runs and habitats. Salmon are orcas main source of food and their dwindling population has been a driving factor behind the Southern Residents' endangered status. advocating for wild salmon habitat restoration on the Fraser River, removing dams on the Snake River, and stopping the proposed building of the Chehalis Dam. Even though Orca Action Month has passed, you can still get involved. Go to www.orcamonth.com



Snake River involvement:

Tribal Nations, legislators, and other groups have been fighting for decades to remove the Snake River dams in southwestern Washington. WEC joined the fight in September 2020 when we supported the "Our Northwest Opportunity" campaign. In this new partnership effort, WEC is contributing to an important process that would help restore legacy salmon spawning grounds, leading to a thriving salmon population physically and spiritually connected to the state's Indigenous communities, as well as Puget Sound's Southern Resident Orca families.

Beginning at the Palisades alpine reservoir in Idaho, the Snake River meanders through Idaho and up into Washington before joining into the Columbia river. Four dams have controlled and blocked the flow of the river, which historically teemed with the largest salmon run in the Pacific Northwest. That salmon run is nearly extinct now.

Salmon are a keystone species, central to not only the ecosystem, but deeply tied to cultural lifeways, identity, and subsistence for Washington's Tribal Nations. The Indigenous communities who lived along the river and the border Pacific Northwest are inextricably tied to the Salmon. Southern resident Orcas as well were once nourished by Snake River salmon. But with dwindling food sources, the whales now swam to Alaska and California to feed.

Look forward to a deep dive into the Snake River dam issue in the winter issue of Convene in "[Our Northwest Opportunity](#)."



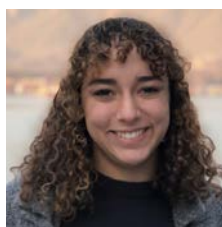
NEW ADDITIONS TO OUR TEAM!

Puget Sound Habitat Policy Manager



Charlotte Dohrn (she/her) joins WEC as the Puget Sound Habitat Policy Manager, where she collaborates with partners on the Natural Resources Asset Management Program for Kitsap County. With an interdisciplinary background in coastal conservation and management, Charlotte is committed to building a just, healthy, and resilient future for communities and the natural systems that sustain us. Prior to WEC, she worked on restoration planning, climate change adaptation, environmental strategy development, field research around the Salish Sea and beyond, and as an oyster shucker. She holds a master's degree from the School of Marine and Environmental Affairs at the University of Washington and a BA in Environmental Studies from Pomona College. After a stint in California, Charlotte is happy to be back in her hometown of Seattle — exploring new and old favorite trails, takeout spots, and coffee shops.

Development & Data Associate



Brooke Galberth (she/her) graduated from Seattle University with a degree in Environmental Studies, specializing in policy, politics, and justice. She also received her certificate in Fundraising Management from the University of Washington.

Brooke's education coupled with her passion for environmental justice brought her to the Washington Environmental Council as the Development and Data Associate. In her spare time, you can find Brooke at the beach looking for rocks, eating a taco, or cuddling her three cats and dog.

Events & Outreach Associate



Johanna Mannisto (she/her) graduated from the University of Washington with a BA in Linguistics. Prior to joining WEC, Johanna worked at Make-A-Wish Alaska & Washington and with PROVAIL serving children with critical illnesses and individuals

with disabilities. She's previously held leadership positions with the Student Philanthropy Education Program at UW, working to highlight the importance of philanthropy within the student population. In her free time, Johanna enjoys sailing around in the waters of Washington, backpacking, and learning new languages.

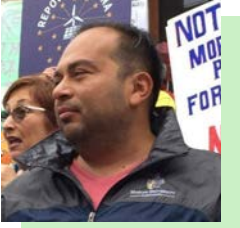
Administrative Associate



Maria McCausland (she/her) is a Seattle local, spending many years with environmental movements in California where she pursued her degree in Environmental Studies from the University of California Santa Barbara. With a particular interest

in marine conservation, Maria has gained experience working with science labs, documentary film production, environmental justice movements, and most recently was a coral restoration scuba diver in the Florida Keys. Few things make her happier than her puppy, Seattle coffee, and when people sing her name to the tune of "Maria" from West Side Story.

Tri-Cities Community Organizer



Esteban Ortiz (he/him/el) is an experienced professional in the government, nonprofit and private industry. He previously worked on the Georgia Senate runoff campaign, with the Garfield County Democratic Party, and Colorado

Democrats. He has experience in government organizations like the USDA, U.S. Census Bureau and is a U.S. Navy veteran. Ortiz worked on the 2008, 2012 and 2016 presidential elections doing GOTV for the Latino community, and worked with various nonprofits to focus on the actual needs of the growing Latino and diverse communities in the United States. Esteban is well experienced in educating and advocating for the needs of the community.

Events & Outreach Associate



Mariana Sanchez Castillo (she/they) — Mariana graduated from the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, with a BA in Sociology & Anthropology, and Environmental Policy in May 2020. She grew up in Mexico City, where she

visits family often throughout the year. During her time in Tacoma, she organized with her university's ECO Club and the identity club, Latinxs Unidxs, as well as interned with Downtown On the Go, a transportation justice non-profit. She is passionate about intersectional environmental justice and wrote her senior thesis on how news media narratives produced victims and disaster tropes in the aftermath of Hurricane María in Puerto Rico. Recently, she worked with Future Generations to elect candidate Beth Doglio to U.S. Congress. In her spare time she organizes with youth climate activists at Sunrise Tacoma, she serves on the WA Youth Council, cooks vegan meals, goes backpacking, practices acrobatic yoga, and bikes everywhere!

Content Manager



Kamna Shastri (she/her) is WEC's Content Manager. She has a BA in Environmental Studies and Sociology from Whitman College and spent five years in the local journalism circuit, freelancing, interning, and working with traditional

media and alternative community publications. Her experience inspired a love for the intersection of place, culture, people and justice. Outside of work, she enjoys reading, writing, spending time with friends, trying to sing and debating between buying coffee or making chai.

Check out our new strategic framework for 2021-2025 on our website now!

This five-year framework is the bedrock of our commitment to finding collaborative solutions that hold space enough for us all.

www.wecprotects.org/strategic-framework



In a letter sent to President Biden, Native youth call for urgent action that upholds the promises made to Northwest tribes and saves salmon from the brink of extinction. Show your support for Native youth. Sign and share the petition calling for bold leadership:

<http://chnng.it/JNSWHWgDWL>



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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.

The Carbon Conference is going virtual this year!

Stay tuned and sign up for updates at:

[https://wecprotects.org/our-work/
areas-of-work/evergreen-forests/
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VIRTUAL

CARBON FRIENDLY

FORESTRY

a West Coast Forest Carbon Conference

OCT 26-27

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

