



## Washington's Working Forests Newsletter

### May 2021

#### What are "Working Forests?"

A Working Forest is professionally managed to provide a continuous supply of renewable, sustainable wood products for building materials -- with a focus on protecting fish, water and wildlife. Using scientific practices and adhering to comprehensive state forestry laws, Washington's working forests work to give back to our entire state. Growing working forests absorb carbon, wood products store carbon, and the forest sector taken as a whole currently operates with a negative carbon footprint that supports greenhouse gas reduction goals and rural economies across Washington, a fact that is recognized in state law.

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#### The Good News From the Woods

### Rural leaders are making the case for balance in Washington state's approach to natural resource policy

An end to timber harvests? An end to a supply of sustainable, renewable wood?

As absurd as those ideas might sound in light of what we know about the benefits that come from using sustainably grown and harvested wood, as well as the science that supports working forests as providing natural solutions to carbon reduction, that case was breached by two former public officials earlier this year in an article in the Seattle Times.

The best response to a bad idea is to argue against it, and that is what State Sen. Kevin Van De Wege (D-Port Angeles) and former State Rep. Brian Blake (D-Aberdeen) have done – penning op-eds in the Sequim Gazette and The Seattle Times, respectively. Blake and Van De Wege criticized the plan to cease logging on state-managed forestland as flawed and neglectful of concerns for forest health.

Wrote Sen. Van De Wege in [the Sequim Gazette](#):

“This strategy would surrender vast areas of forest to wildfires. We’ve witnessed the futility of such policy at the federal level for 30 years in national forests across the West... We don’t want to repeat that strategy here, setting aside lands only to see a massive wildfire erase all gains from our sequestration efforts. The only proven way to capture carbon without fire risk is to responsibly harvest timber on a sensible schedule.”

In his opinion piece published in [the Seattle Times](#), Blake underscored that it is critical that Olympia lawmakers enact “reasoned and evenhanded approaches to state policies that consider both rural and urban communities.”

He went on to write that many rural Washington voters who might otherwise vote Democratic have shifted their votes toward right-leaning candidates because there is a growing perception “that most Olympia policymakers who represent urban areas have little regard for how state decisions impact the less populated communities.”

Wrote Blake:

“Strengthening traditional natural resource economies is a virtue, not a vice. And natural resource jobs in the modern forestry sector are part of our future and one part of the climate change solution.”

Like other natural resources-based industries, the forestry sector represents a significant source of family-wage jobs and economic opportunity in many rural communities. In addition, money generated from state trust lands harvest help fund local school construction and other local programs.

Public Lands Commissioner Hillary Franz also has gone on record to say that she does not support the plan and that it would be harmful to wildfire prevention efforts and negatively impact local economies. Elaborating further on Franz’ stance, DNR spokesman Kenny Ocker stated, “eliminated forestry on state lands would force the state to import more timber...which would carry a greater carbon footprint.”

Said Blake:

“The reality is we need wood, and Washington state has arguably some of the most rigorous sustainable forestry standards in the world. The alternative would be to import wood from elsewhere, possibly parts of the world that adhere to lower environmental standards and harvest in a far less sustainable manner.”

As always, we will make sure you stay informed as this conversation develops.

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## The Future of Fish

### **Progress on water quality and fish passage under the Forests & Fish Law is notable, but big priorities still remain.**

For more than 20 years, private forest landowners have been actively collaborating on the mission to ensure that our region's salmon can thrive. The work has protected cool, clean water on upland streams where fish spawn and are born, and the ability of these heritage species to reach those places. Still, there are threats along the length of those streams that remain and are endangering the survival of salmon.

A new graphic is circulating that tells the story of where we are in terms of achieving ultimate success on salmon recovery, as well as new polling data showing that voters in Washington state's most populous county are clear about what they think our priorities should be.

## Priorities do matter.

Twenty years of progress on salmon recovery under Washington's Forests & Fish Law.



Changes in forest practice rules since 1999 have prioritized hard and important work done by private forest landowners to protect cool, clean water so that salmon have a chance to thrive.

Investments on forestland streams have improved the conditions on critical parts of salmon's habitat – enabling state and local authorities to focus on the **other threats and dangers that persist**.



Stormwater runoff is killing Coho as soon as they return to their natal streams during the spawning cycle on 40% of their range in the Puget Sound.

Source: Seattle Times, 03/17/2017



In a March/April poll of voters in King County, **68% agree that water quality in upper watersheds is healthier for salmon.**

And **84% believe that state government should make lower watersheds a bigger priority.**

## Recognize progress on salmon.

Thanks to scientific forest practices, Washington's working forests protect cool, clean water on 60,000 miles of forested streams.

- Private foresters have removed 8,100 barriers to fish passage and reopened 6,200 miles of streams.
- Diverted 90% of the run-off from forest roads, away to the forest floor, to naturally remove sediment from streams so that fish can lay eggs.
- And set aside 2.2 million acres of forests for conservation in uplands and streamside buffers to meet standards in the Clean Water Act for fish temperature and sediment.
- 86% of voters in King County support the forest products industry's efforts to restore salmon populations.

To find out more about investments in salmon and water quality go to

[forestsandfish.com](http://forestsandfish.com)



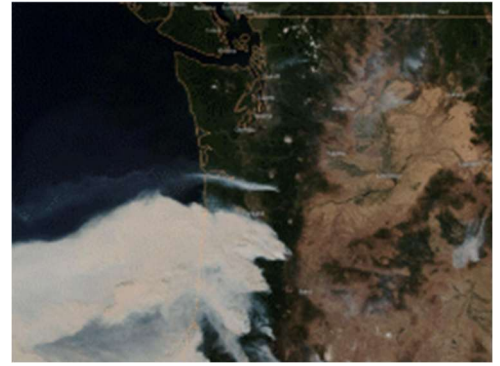
You may see this information on social media and possibly even in mailboxes -- we believe it's too important to keep to ourselves. If you see it, or have reactions to it, please drop us an email and let us know. We'd love to hear from you.

### An Update from Olympia

**Bold, strategic plan for wildfire reduction and forest health now in Gov. Inslee's inbox**

In our last newsletter, we invited you to subscribe to receive information about events affecting Washington's approach to combating catastrophic wildfire. Many of you did sign up, but for those who didn't we have good news worth sharing with all of you.

During the 2020 session of the Washington State Legislature, State Commissioner of Public Lands Hilary Franz and bipartisan sponsors proposed a bold approach – [House Bill 1168](#) – to promote long-term forest health for the purpose of reducing the dangers of wildfire. HB 1168 passed the House and Senate with unanimous approval and now moves to Gov. Jay Inslee.



The superb news is that HB 1168 includes full funding for critical prevention and fire fighting programs, while also containing the guideposts we feel are critical for any successful approach to wildfire reduction: **reduce fuel in forested landscapes, suppress fires early, prioritize prevention, and invest in environmental recovery.**

**If you would like to receive updates on this bill's progress, or would like to stay informed about other developments on Washington wildfire policy, please click [here](#) and add your name to our special list.**

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## Have You Signed?

Our drive toward the creation of a special Washington state vehicle license plate to support working forests is still moving forward. Your help is still needed. If you haven't already, [sign our petition](#) today and then please share with your friends. Thank you for helping to make sure our voices are heard.

**[SIGN THE PETITION TODAY!](#)**

