

2020 ISSUE PAPER: FORESTS AND RIVERS

Position Statement

Forests

FO-1 Healthy forest are essential to habitat for a diversity of plant and animal life, to the hydrologic cycle, and to carbon storage to mitigate global warming.

AQ-1 Coordinated action by all levels of government to control, limit and reduce air pollution.

Rivers

CR-1 In order to meet present and future water needs within the Columbia River Basin, comprehensive basin-wide planning must occur for optimum utilization, conservation, development and management of water resources...Procedures should be established to provide information and citizen participation in policy decisions affecting water resource development.

CR-2 Wise planning for the use of water in the Columbia River Basin requires an inventory of basin water resources. This inventory should include water related information such as ground and surface water sources, viable water rights, current use and projected future needs.

CR-3 Minimum stream flows should be established as a public right and maintained on all streams in the Columbia River Basin and all other river basins in the state.

IT-1 ...This relationship recognizes the dependent sovereignty of [tribes] and the constitutional recognition of treaties made between the US and tribal governments.

IT-2 It is the state's responsibility to enhance the salmon resource by protecting and improving fish habitat,

Forests: In 2018 Washington experienced 1850 wildfires on both the east and west side, creating more carbon emissions and intolerable smoke, impacting air quality and creating a health hazard. The 2019 legislative session saw added progress in bills passed that enhanced the preparation for and prevention of wildfires. Bills passed advancing wildfire preparation in integrated training and deployment among the various Department of Natural Resources (DNR) firefighters, National Guard members and Correctional Department prisoners. Funding for more DNR firefighters, helicopters, fire engines and other equipment were secured. DNR has a twenty-year forest health program to help prevent wildfires especially focused on at risk forests treatments of prescribed burning and thinning. Last summer there were a fewer fires that were contained early.

Rivers: State rivers are needing much better protection from heat and toxic pollution, drought, diversions, and low stream flows. They are highly utilized for hydropower dams, transportation, irrigation, water and aquatic mining. Our exploitation of rivers has far exceeded any efforts for their protection and restoration, and now we are faced with the impacts of climate change. One result is the orca and salmon crisis, as our southern resident orca population in Puget Sound is imperiled because of the lack of their prey food, chinook salmon. Some progress was made last session with the passage of SHB1579: Increasing Chinook salmon for Orcas, and restricting hydraulic project permits that damage the fish's spawning habitat. The operating budget also included funding for a study regarding preparing for the outcome of the lower Snake River dams breaching or removal. The removal of the Snake River dams is the most important way to help salmon. Also, the Transportation budget included funding for fish barrier removal, which will also help salmon.

Other issues we follow are: the **Yakima River Basin Integrated Plan**, where we have concerns about the proposed new Bumping River dam that would inundate an old growth forest and endangered bull trout habitat; and the **Chehalis River Integrated Plan's** proposal for a new retractable flood storage dam; and the **Columbia River Treaty** with Canada which is currently being renegotiated, where we support adding ecosystem function to the

other treaty goals of flood prevention and hydropower production.

As 80% of Washington State's electrical energy comes from our 1166 hydroelectric dams, current rapid changes in the industry will have a great impact on our rivers and salmon. The Bonneville Power Administration which markets the electricity from our federal Columbia River dams is facing financial problems. Our tribal nations are exerting their treaty rights to salmon and are strongly involved in these issues. Recently the Lummi and Yakama Nations have advocated for removal of three Columbia River mainstream dams (the Bonneville, The Dalles and John Day Dams) as the only way to recover the salmon.

Summary of Issues for the 2020 Legislative Session

Forests: Because of the huge costs of previous big wildfires, Commissioner Franz may make another attempt at an agency request bill to secure a dedicated funding source for these costs. Last session this bill that relied on an increased surtax on home and casualty insurance was defeated with strong opposition from the insurance industry. There also may be bills protecting forests for carbon sequestration and their role in the hydrologic cycle.

Rivers: In 2020 bills that failed will be reintroduced to restrict motorized or gravity siphon aquatic mining in certain rivers and for revising hydraulic project eligibility standards, and more funding for fish barrier removal.

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