

## 2022 Issue Paper: Forests

### LWVWA Supporting Positions

The [LWVWA Program in Action 2019-2021](#) has the following positions related to forests:

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

Riparian zones are an integral part of the forest ecosystem and must be regulated adequately to protect the streams and the wildlife dependent upon the streams. (FO-5)

The State should consider ecological protections the most important factor in deciding which activities to allow on state forest lands. (FO-9)

The State should fund independent scientific research that would include improved forest practices and ecologically sound alternatives to the use of wood. (FO-13)

### Climate Change Effects on Forests

Climate change causing higher temperatures, drought, pest infestation, decreased winter snowpack and less summer precipitation will test the resiliency of forests.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the window for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions to avoid catastrophic climate change is rapidly closing. In addition, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services warns that there is only a short time to act on threats to biodiversity.

[Top scientists](#) are advocating for increased protection of our native forests, for their ability to sequester carbon, and provide habitats that support biodiversity. [World leaders at COP26](#) affirmed the role of forests in balancing greenhouse gas emissions and removals, adapting to the impacts of climate change, and maintaining healthy ecosystem services.

Forests play a critical role in [maintaining water quality](#) in our watersheds, delaying rapid runoff into streams. There is increased attention to management of riparian zones alongside non-fish bearing headwater streams in western Washington. [Recent studies](#) indicate that certain logging activities are increasing stream temperatures above the levels allowed under the Clean Water Act.

The [growing consensus of scientific findings](#) is that, to effectively mitigate the worst impacts of climate change, we must not only move beyond fossil fuel consumption, but must also substantially increase protections of our native forests in order to absorb more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, and store more carbon in our forests. There is a need to reduce consumption of wood, and transition to tree-free alternatives for traditional products. Questions persist on the [effectiveness of approaches](#) such as carbon storage in cross-laminated timber (CLT) and other wood products

### 2021 Legislative Session

Seven bills related to forests were enacted. HB 1168 had bipartisan support and sets an intention to dedicate \$500 million over the next 8 years to support implementation of the Department of Natural

Resources (DNR) 20-Year Forest Health Strategic Plan for Central and Eastern Washington. Funds will support increased firefighting and aviation capacity; actions to restore forest health, including prescribed fire; actions to protect homes and communities; development of a forestry workforce; and creation of a small forestland owner forest health program.

Other bills enacted (supported by the League):

- **HB 1114** Encouraging municipal electric utilities and PUDs to assist customers with the mitigation of urban heat island effects.
- **HB 1216** Encouraging urban and community forestry.
- **HB 1423** Concerning smoke management civil enforcement.
- **SB 5063** Concerning extending the expiration date for the Invasive Species Council from 2022 to 2032.
- **SB 5158** Commissioner of Public Lands to establish a utility wildland fire prevention advisory committee.
- **SB 5454** Providing property tax relief to Washington citizens who lost their homes in the Labor Day fires.

## 2022 Legislative Session

[Washington state continues to lose forest land](#) each year. Loss of habitat means that rivers and shorelines around the region cannot support enough salmon today. Habitat restoration is critical, with emphasis on a new standard, Net Ecological Gain. We anticipate legislation focused on salmon recovery, with an update to Governor Inslee's Salmon Strategy. Salmon, and people, need forests.

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