

Weekly Legislative Update: **Forests**

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Bills Needing Action This Week

Remember, only authorized members can speak for the League; the Issue Chairs will do that, so **please leave the “Organization” box blank**. A more powerful influence is **many voices speaking for themselves** rather than many voices speaking for the League.

Sign in “PRO” for the following bills this week:

[HJR 4209](#) Adding a new section to the Washington state Constitution regarding the conservation and protection of the state's natural resources

⚠ Scheduled for public hearing in the House Committee on Environment & Energy on 2/1 at 8:00 AM. Please sign in **PRO** at:
<https://app.leg.wa.gov/csi/Testifier/Add?chamber=House&mId=29687&aId=145152&cald=19182&tId=3>

⚠ **If your representative sits on the House Committee on Environment & Energy, you could take an extra step to register your support and provide comments:** Rep. Fitzgibbon, Rep. Duerr, Rep. Dye, Rep. Klicker, Rep. Abbarno, Rep. Berry, Rep. Boehnke, Rep. Fey, Rep. Goehner, Rep. Harris-Rep. Rep. Talley, Rep. Ramel, Rep. Shewmake, Rep. Slatter. <https://app.leg.wa.gov/psc/bill/4209>

[HJR 4209](#) lets the public vote in a general election to add the right to clear air and clean water to the Washington State Bill of Rights. Three other states, Pennsylvania, Montana and New York, clearly identify the rights to clean water and air as fundamental individual rights that must be protected by the government to the same extent we protect other fundamental rights, like free speech.

Support for this bill is commensurate with the League’s longstanding position on natural resources management: The League’s Position Statement of Position on Natural Resources, as affirmed by the 1986 Convention, based on positions reached from 1958 through 1986: The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that natural resources should be managed as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems. Resources should be

conserved and protected to assure their future availability. Pollution of these resources should be controlled in order to preserve the physical, chemical, and biological integrity of ecosystems and to protect public health.

Bills We Support

[HJR 4209](#) Amends the state Constitution to provide that the people of the state have the right to a clean and healthy environment, that the state shall serve as trustee of the natural resources of the state, and that the state shall equitably protect these rights for all people. The rights stated in this section are inherent, inalienable, and infeasible, are among those rights reserved to all the people, and are on par with other protected inalienable rights.

[SB 5637](#) Increasing forest practices fees to pay for program implementation costs and a new online system for forest practices review. The Department of Natural Resources manages an information system that allows for public review of proposed forest practices and that the system is in need of an upgrade and maintenance. It is the intent of the legislature to have landowners who submit forest applications and notifications to share in covering the cost of the upgrade, as well as provide revenue to support the ongoing maintenance of the new forest practices online review system through increased fees.

[SJR 8210](#) Amends the state Constitution to provide that the people of the state have the right to a clean and healthy environment, that the state shall serve as trustee of the natural resources of the state, and that the state shall equitably protect these rights for all people. The rights stated in this section are inherent, inalienable, and infeasible, are among those rights reserved to all the people, and are on par with other protected inalienable rights.

Bills We Are Watching

[HB 1103](#) Buy Clean Buy Fair. Improving environmental and social outcomes with the production of building materials. Requires firms selected for large construction or building renovation contracts to provide an Environmental Product Declaration (EPD) and labor data for at least 90 percent of the weight of covered materials used in the project (primary reporting requirements).

[HB 1895/SB 5633](#) Keep Washington Evergreen. Aims to conserve at least one million acres of working forests, and reforest at least one million acres, including in burn scared and urban communities with disproportionately small amounts of tree cover, by 2040. This legislation calls for environmental and economic analyses to determine our highest value forests, and establishes an advisory council to develop a plan to reach the goals of the initiative.

Bills We Oppose

[SB 5721](#) Consolidating management of natural resources under the Commissioner of Public Lands by having the commissioner appoint the directors of the Department of Fish and Wildlife and the State Parks and Recreation Commission would create an efficient decision-making structure and provide for public accountability.

We're opposing this bill. This bill gives the Department of Natural Resources management of all the state's natural resources, bringing both Parks and Recreation and Fish and Wildlife under the purview of the Commissioner of Public Lands, including the commissioner appointing the director of Fish and Wildlife.

There is concern that the Department of Natural Resources tends to be unduly influenced by the timber industry.

The League believes this consolidation violates the principle of "checks and balances" of power.

How You Can Be Involved

- During the legislative session we will send Action Alerts in the [Legislative Newsletter](#). Please respond to these, which will direct you to an application to facilitate communicating with your legislators on an important vote in committees or on the chamber floor.
- Local Leagues in Washington have action chairs who coordinate action teams. Some local Leagues have environmental teams to take action locally. Contact your local League action chair to find out and join.
- You may also express your opinion on legislation with the LWVWA issue chairs. We will take your perspectives under considerations as we determine our support for legislation and prepare testimony. Sherri Dysart, Forests Issue Chair, sdysart@lwvwa.org.