



2023 Issue Paper: Forests

Significant League Positions on Forests

The LWV supports [natural resource management](#) and protection policies that promote the management of natural resources as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems. The LWV promotes resource conservation, stewardship, and long-range planning, with the responsibility for managing natural resources shared by all levels of government. The goal is to preserve the physical, chemical, and biological integrity of the ecosystem with maximum protection of public health and the environment.

In 1999 the League of Women Voters of Washington adopted a [study](#) “Washington’s Dynamic Forests: A Study of Forests and Forest Issues, Phase II”, which examined pressures on Washington State forests that diminish our ability to pass on to future generations all the benefits of healthy forest ecosystems.

League of Women Voters of Washington adopted several [position statements](#) regarding forests:

Forests (1999, 2001) The League of Women Voters of Washington finds:

FO-1: That all benefits of the forests—ecological, human and economic—are inextricably interconnected. 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. In addition, healthy forests are essential to a forest products industry with the jobs and goods they provide, and to the economic and aesthetic values of their recreational opportunities.

FO-8: Forest management must be responsive to scientific research and knowledge and should include:

- Mapping, classification, and protection of all streams,
- More and better data—including total watershed analysis,
- Evaluation of cumulative effects of various activities in the forest in the consideration of individual forest practice permits, and
- Planning for sustainability of forest ecosystems.

Find the details of all [League positions](#) on our web site.

The Situation Now

The legislature has made steady progress over the last five years in passing bills to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from electricity generation, transportation, landfills, and large buildings.

In addition to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions, we must draw down the [dangerous levels of CO₂](#) in the atmosphere. The most efficient and effective way to accomplish this goal is to preserve and protect our mature and old-growth forests on public lands (state and federal).

Recent [research](#) about the importance of this strategy is being heralded by the scientific community around the globe:

“The climate is changing rapidly at an accelerating rate in every region of the planet. Immediate and sustained actions are needed to reduce dangerous and amplifying warming feedbacks. To avoid catastrophic, irreversible release of heat trapping methane and carbon dioxide, it is essential that natural land and ocean sinks remove and store substantially more atmospheric carbon dioxide to halt Arctic warming that is increasing over 3 times faster than the planetary average.”

—Beverly E. Law, William R. Moomaw, Tara W. Hudiburg, William H. Schlesinger, John D. Stermann and George M. Woodwell

The 2021 [report](#) by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPBES-IPCC) stresses that climate change and biodiversity need to be examined together as parts of the same complex problem when developing climate mitigation and adaptation solutions.

“Climate change and biodiversity loss are two of the most pressing issues of the Anthropocene. While there is recognition in both scientific and policy-making circles that the two are interconnected, in practice they are largely addressed in their own domains. Urgent, timely and targeted actions can minimize detrimental trends and counteract escalating risks while avoiding costly and effort-sapping errors. Humankind has no time to lose and we hope that this report will inform such urgent actions toward “The Future We Want.”

— [Scientific steering committee](#) for the IPCC-IPBES co-sponsored workshop: Hans-Otto Pörtner and Robert Scholes, Co-Chairs.

On 8/30/2022 the LWV, along more than 100 other organizations, sent a [letter](#) to USDA and BLM leadership urging protection of mature and old-growth forests on federal lands.

Recent Legislation in Washington State

2019 Concerning Wildfire prevention [HB 1784](#).

2020 Recognizing the contributions of the state's forest products sector as part of the state's global climate response [HB 2528](#).

Amending state greenhouse gas emission limits for consistency with the most recent assessment of climate change science [HB 2311](#)

2021 Concerning long-term forest health and the reduction of wildfire dangers [HB 1168](#).
Concerning urban and community forestry [HB 1216](#).

2022 Incentivizing the use of biochar in government contracts [SB 5961](#). (The League testified to clarify language of the bill to carefully define that feedstock for biochar production did not include whole trees.)

Concerning state laws that address climate change [SB 5842](#). Several accounts were created under the program, including the Climate Investment Account, providing funding for projects that support the transition to clean energy, build ecosystem resilience, and support carbon sequestration. After administrative costs to implement the Program are covered, 75 percent of the Account will be distributed to the Climate Commitment Account, and 25 percent to the Natural Climate Solutions Account.

**What to look for in the 2023 Washington State Legislative Session
Biennium Budget (2023-2025):**

The primary focus of the session will be the budget. The [Climate Commitment Act \(2021\)](#) created a [Natural Climate Solutions](#) account.

One focus of the Natural Climate Solutions account is carbon sequestration in forests.

- Either preserve or increase, or both, carbon sequestration and storage benefits in forests, forested wetlands, agricultural soils, tidally influenced agricultural or grazing lands, or freshwater, saltwater, or brackish aquatic lands.
- Healthy forest investments to improve resilience from climate impacts. Increase forest and community resilience to wildfire in the face of increased seasonal temperatures and drought.
- Improve forest health and reduce vulnerability to changes in hydrology, insect infestation, and other impacts of climate change.

It will be imperative that funds are appropriated and used for their intended purposes.

[Salmon Recovery:](#)

Supporting salmon recovery continues to be a priority for Governor Inslee and the Tribes. Appropriate riparian zones that shade and cool salmon bearing rivers and streams need to be addressed.

Coalitions: the [Environmental Priorities Coalition](#) and [People's Voice on Climate](#).

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