



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF WASHINGTON

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2018 ISSUE PAPER – FORESTS AND RIVERS

Forests

Wildfires in the summer of 2017 (like 2015) resulted in a loss of forests and escalating costs for the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), that manages our state forest lands. So far about 250,500 acres have burned, though most of this is on federal forests. In 2016 a bill passed to fund DNR firefighting efforts with more joint agency firefighting training, firefighters and equipment. In 2017 a bill passed that instructing DNR to comprise a risk assessment list of forests for fire prevention treatments of prescribed burning and thinning. Our State Trust forestlands, which are 3 million acres, are managed by DNR to fund school construction. This is unsustainable and there are many calls for change so our schools could be funded by less environmentally destructive alternative means.

There also is an increased appreciation of the role of Pacific Northwest forests in climate change by the sequestration of carbon resulting in a reduction of CO₂ in the atmosphere. Therefore, there will be more efforts to preserve all remaining old growth forests and lengthen rotation harvest times. We will also follow efforts at the federal level that would undermine protection of our forests including the Pacific Northwest Forest Plan (1994) Review and also bills in Congress such as the bad Westerman bill

Rivers

We will continue to support legislation that protects our river systems. If reintroduced we will support an Oil Transport Safety bill that adequately protects our marine waters, including the Columbia River and Puget Sound. We will also support bills that prevent invasive mussels from getting into the Columbia River basin waters, and that requires permits for motorized suction dredge mining. We will oppose efforts to ban dam removal or change the definition of a hydraulic project that doesn't protect stream banks and riparian areas. We are also following the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan and support its goals of increasing water supplies for irrigation and for fish, but have concerns about the costs to taxpayers, destruction of the Bumping old growth forest and the reliance on costly new dams for storage. Funding for this project is requested jointly from the state and federal government.

LWVWA is a member of the NPO Caucus for the **Columbia River Treaty** working with other environmental groups, tribes and First Nations for a revised the 1964 Columbia River Treaty with Canada that will soon be renegotiated. The LWVWA supports cooperative and mutually beneficial negotiations with Canada for a revised international treaty that insures low cost hydropower, flood control, and more natural river flows to support salmon recovery.

League Positions

LWVWA:

The benefits of all the forests - ecological, human and economic - are inextricable interconnected. Supports healthy forests that are essential habitat for a diversity of plant and animal life, to the hydrologic cycle, and to carbon storage to mitigate global warming. Laws and policies to ensure that forest management is carried out in a manner that will sustain healthy forests, streams and habitats. FQ1-2

Supports Columbia River Basin comprehensive basin-wide planning for optimum utilization, conservation, development and management of water resources. Machinery is needed to provide coordinated planning,

administration and conflict resolution among the federal, state and other agencies. Wise planning for the use of water in the Columbia River Basin requires an inventory of the 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. This information should be readily available to concerned agencies and the general public. 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. C1-3

LWVUS:

NATURAL RESOURCES

Promote an environment beneficial to life through the protection and wise management of natural resources in the public interest. Promote the management of natural resources as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems. Promote resource conservation, stewardship and long- range planning, with the responsibility for managing natural resources shared by all levels of government. Preserve the physical, chemical and biological integrity of the ecosystem, with maximum protection of public health and the environment. Supports policies that reflect the interrelationships of water quality and quantity, groundwater and surface water and address the potential depletion or pollution of water supplies.

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