

Weekly Legislative Update: **Forests**

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Updates – Changing Status from Support to Watch

Two bills related to ecosystem services marketing are being amended in ways in which are of concern to the League and Environmental Priority Coalition partners. We are changing the status from Supports to **Watch**.

HB 1789 Expanding revenue generation and economic opportunities from natural climate solutions and ecosystem services. This bill was made at the request of the Department of Natural Resources. The prime sponsor is Representative Reeves. This bill is related to SB 5688.

SB 5688 Providing carbon sequestration and ecosystem services in the management of public lands. This bill was made at the request of the Department of Natural Resources. The prime sponsor is Senator Lovelett. The intent of this bill to provide the Department of Natural Resources with specific authority, procedures, and criteria for development and implementation of carbon storage projects and associated ecosystem services. This bill would codify a new way for revenue to be generated from land and waters in the state, i.e., through the carbon offset markets.

Concerns in the amendments:

- Providing that ecosystem service projects must result in no net decrease in decadal sustainable harvestable **volume**; this negates the intent of carbon offset marketing. [Intact tracts of mature timber are the "commodity" of value in the carbon offset markets.]
- Requiring that ecosystem service projects **must** result in a **net increase** in future sustainable harvest volume is an unrealistic management objective.
- The amendments restrict the authority of the Board of Natural Resources.

Likewise, amendments to HB 1720 regarding protection and restoration of riparian areas are raising concerns.

HB 1720 Concerning the protection and restoration of riparian areas through the establishment of a fully voluntary, regionally focused riparian grant program designed to improve the ecological functions of critical riparian management zones. (This bill replaces HB 1215.)

Amendments to HB 1720 seem to be establishing two funding/administration pathways for implementing projects, a possible duplication of efforts.

Bills We Support

[HB 1032/SB 5039](#) Mitigating the risk of wildfires through electric utility planning and identification of best management practices appropriate to each electric utility's circumstances. LWVWA supported SB 5803-2022, but it was met with much resistance from the electric utilities. Senator Rolfes considered the concerns and introduced SB 5039. It now appears that the electric utilities are mostly in favor.

[HB 1460/SB 5372](#) Concerning the Department of Natural Resources land transactions, revenue distributions, and creation and management of a trust land transfer program. These bills will help revitalize the Trust Land Transfer program. Here is a [fact sheet](#) about TLT. The Governor's budget included \$10.6 million for Trust Land Transfer – an insufficient, yet promising start to revitalizing TLT. Advocates for the TLT revitalization program will be asking the legislature for \$25 million for the 10 projects on the list. For more details about the program and list of the projects see DNR's [Trust Land Transfer-Land Portfolio Management Tool](#).

[HB 1578](#) / [SB 5611](#) Improving community preparedness, response, recovery, and resilience to wildland fire health and safety impacts in areas of increasing population density, including in the wildland urban interface. These bills intend to improve community preparedness and resilience, while mitigating wildland fire health and safety impacts in the urban/wildland interface.

[SB 5390](#) Establishing a programmatic safe harbor agreement on forestlands. This bill would facilitate participation in safe harbor agreements for spotted owl habitat protection. These agreements would be voluntary, incentive-based and available to any nonfederal forestland owner. The Department of Natural Resources would consult with and rely on the Department of Fish and Wildlife for technical assistance (interagency agreement).

Bills We Are Watching

[HB 1078](#) Concerning urban forest management ordinances. The intent of the bill is to provide guidance for cities or towns that enact an urban forestry program on the use of tree banks. The bill would require the Department of Natural Resources to create a model ordinance and provide scientific guidance for the use of tree banks for cities or towns that choose to use this model.

HB 1720 Concerning the protection and restoration of riparian areas through the establishment of a fully voluntary, regionally focused riparian grant program designed to improve the ecological functions of critical riparian management zones. This bill replaces HB 1215.

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How You Can Be Involved

- 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 into consideration as we determine our support for legislation and prepare testimony. Sherri Dysart, Forests Issue Chair, sdysart@lwvwa.org.
- [Pacific Northwest Forest Climate Alliance](#) is an organization dedicated to exploring the intersection of forest protection and climate justice. Many of the most renowned forest scientists are affiliated with this organization.