

Weekly Legislative Update: **Forests**

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Important Note: Every bill introduced in the session goes through multiple committees during the legislative process. **At each step, where there is a public hearing, you have the opportunity to make your position known.**

Take Action

SB 5390 Establishing a programmatic safe harbor agreement on forestlands. This bill would facilitate participation in safe harbor agreements for spotted owl habit protection. This bill has passed out of its house of origin (Senate) and now needs support on its journey through the House.

Scheduled for a hearing in the House Agriculture and Natural Resources committee at 10:30 AM on March 21.

Please sign-in PRO [here](#) by 9:30 AM on March 21.

HB 1460 Concerning the Department of Natural Resources land transactions, revenue distributions, and creation and management of a trust land transfer program. This bill has wide support. Please continue to show support so it crosses the finish line on 4/24.

Scheduled for a hearing in the Senate Ways & Means committee at 4:00 PM on March 23.

Please sign-in PRO [here](#) by 3:00 PM on March 23.

HB 1578 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. This bill has wide support. It passed the House unanimously (yeas, 95; nays, 0; absent, 0; excused, 3). We can continue to show support for the bill's journey through the Senate.

Scheduled for a hearing in the Senate Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks committee at 1:30 PM on March 20.

Please sign-in PRO [here](#) by 12:30 PM on March 20.

[HB 1789](#) Expanding revenue generation and economic opportunities from natural climate solutions and ecosystem services. Several troubling amendments to the bill have thwarted the intention of the bill. Our Environmental Priority Coalition partners are now opposing the bill. Here are the two most significant issues:

- Restricts eligible ecosystem service project types to reforestation, afforestation, and aquatic lands. It does not allow improved forest management projects, which includes extended rotation projects or more conservation-oriented projects like DNR has proposed for the 10,000-acre project. This would limit ecosystem services to the point of being nearly functionally irrelevant and would not allow DNR to meaningfully engage in carbon markets. This is not in the best interest of the trust or the state's climate goals.
- Requires that ecosystem services (ES) projects increase revenue to beneficiaries. This erodes the progress of *CNW v. Franz*, which makes clear that DNR is not required to maximize revenue on trust lands and must balance the interest of beneficiaries and the public. It also sets a different standard for ES projects compared to other commodities. It is unclear how this would be enforced given fluctuations in price of timber and carbon credits, and the long-term nature of ES projects. It would no doubt be used as grounds for legal challenges to any ES projects.

Scheduled for a hearing in the Senate Environment, Energy & Technology committee at 8:00 AM on March 22.

Please sign in **CON** [here](#) by 7: 00 AM on March 22.

Bills We Support

[HB 1032](#) 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](#) 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 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 Opposing

HB 1789 Expanding revenue generation and economic opportunities from natural climate solutions and ecosystem services. *Several troubling strikers and amendments were passed on March 7 in the House floor vote. The bill has been referred to the Senate Environment, Energy & Technology committee.*

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.