

## 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.*

Last year, strong public support for conserving mature forests led the State Legislature to permanently protect 2,000 acres of mature forests with funds from the Climate Commitment Act (CCA). However, the demand from counties to protect their threatened mature forests far exceeded this original investment. This year, there is another opportunity to protect additional mature forests. Urge your legislator to continue to conserve mature forests and buy replacement lands for economically impacted rural counties using additional CCA funds in this year's supplemental budget.

This kind of investment is a win/win solution for public lands and communities alike. Washington's older state forests are among the most carbon-dense in the world, making them invaluable tools for fighting climate change. They are not only in their prime for carbon storage and sequestration, but they also provide essential ecosystem services that make us more resilient to the growing impacts of climate change. This funding is essential for conserving our best carbon sequestering forests that are at risk of being lost, while also purchasing replacement lands to add to the overall public lands base. [See more here.](#)

 **This week, ask your legislators to [continue to conserve mature forests and buy replacement lands for economically impacted rural counties here.](#)** Legislators are making crucial decisions on the state budget right now!

**SSB 5667 Concerning eligibility, enrollment, and compensation of small forestland owners volunteering for participation in the forestry riparian easement program.**

 **Sign in [PRO here](#)** before 9:30 AM on February 20.

The bill increases the amount Small Forest Landowner Office would offer a small forest landowner from 50% to 90% of the value of the qualifying timber in the Forestry Riparian Easement Program. It increases payments for qualifying timber on unstable slopes from \$50,000 to \$150,000. Protecting our riparian areas and steep slopes is essential for salmon recovery. Trees cool stream waters for salmon and other aquatic species. Standing trees on steep slopes prevent

landslides and stream sedimentation. This bill highly incentivizes small forest landowners to protect their trees instead of harvesting them.

## Bills We Support

**HB 1818 Concerning the exclusion of compensating tax when land is sold to a governmental entity intending to manage the land similarly to designated forestland or timberland.** This bill creates an exception to additional and compensating tax when there is a sale or transfer of designated forestland or timberland to a governmental entity. Typically, when forestland is changed to another use, it is then taxed at market value. This allows DNR to purchase forest land likely to convert to housing without paying hundreds of thousands of dollars in compensating tax because the forest is zoned residential.

**HB 2483/SB 6121 Concerning biochar production from agricultural and forestry biomass.** Biochar is a carbon-rich material produced by heating biomass. It is mainly used to improve soil nutrient availability, aeration in soil, and soil water filtration. This bill asks the Department of Natural Resources to encourage a specific process to produce biochar using mobile units that reduce emissions. The bill specifies using less than 150 green tons a month of clean biomass. Clean biomass cannot contain contaminants at concentrations not normally associated with virgin biomass. Small scale biochar production is preferable to corporate, industrial scale biochar which some conservationists fear will lead to the inappropriate exploitation of forests.

**Concerning the capital budget: Senate Proposed 2024 Supplemental Capital Budget.** The budgets contain funding for proposals LWVWA supports:

### Natural Climate Solutions funding:

- **Create and manage a trust land transfer program** that moves ownership of trust lands that are determined to be more suitable for natural or wildlife areas, parks, recreation, or open space out of 'trust' status. It also provides revenue to K-12 trust beneficiaries by depositing the timber or lease value of transferred parcels into the Common School Construction Account. The land value of the transferred properties is then used to purchase replacement trust lands that have better income potential for trust beneficiaries. \$8 million has been allocated.
- **Community Forest Projects:** LWVWA signed on to a **letter** to Governor Inslee asking for funding for Hoquiam Community Forest and Lagoon Point Community Forest.

## Bills We Are Watching

**HB 2243 Social equity land trust By Request: Department of Natural Resources.** This bill would create a new trust beneficiary for supporting childcare. DNR could buy new land, harvest it or (potentially) sell it for conversion. It does not require use of carbon credits to create revenue. Childcare is an important public purpose that needs greater state and federal support. The new

WA capital gains is earmarked in part for this purpose and just delivered 500 million to early learning.

## Bills We Oppose

No bills at this time.

## How You Can Be Involved

- If you are interested in a particular bill, use the links above to go to the webpage for that bill. These pages include staff summaries and reports including those who testified PRO versus CON on the bill. There is also information about how to access videos of hearings that have been held.
- If your available time permits you to do nothing else, please scan the [LWVWA Legislative Action Newsletter](#) each week (it's distributed each Sunday during the legislative session) and respond to the Action Alerts .
- If you have more time and are interested in a particular topic, we always appreciate and can use your assessments of bills, law implementation, and future concerns. For Forests topics send assessments of a few paragraphs to a few pages and include the sources of the facts you rely on. Send them to [Kate Lunceford](#), Forests Issue Chair.
- If you want to engage more in a current topic, such as [Dept. of Natural Resources Sustainable Harvest Calculation](#) or other forest issues, one of our coalition partners probably has a focused action project underway that you can join. Contact me to discuss opportunities.

[Kate Lunceford](#), Forests Issue Chair.