



2024 Issue Paper: Forests

Position Statement

The League of Women Voters supports [natural resource management](#) and protection policies that promote the management of natural resources as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems. The League 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.

League of Women Voters of Washington adopted several [position statements](#) regarding forests in 1999 and 2001:

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.

The Situation Now

The legislature has made steady progress over the last several years in passing bills to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) 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 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. Recent [research](#) about the importance of this strategy is being heralded by the scientific community around the globe.

The most effective natural climate solution is to preserve and protect our mature and old-growth forests on public lands (state and federal). Mature forests provide vast benefits in addition to carbon storage and sequestration. They protect salmon, provide forest habitat, improve one's mental and physical health, are more wildfire resistant, and combat erosion.

Over the last few years, the Legislature has recognized these benefits through adoption of key legislation that addressed forest health and reduction of wildfire dangers, provided funding for projects that support transition to clean energy and support carbon sequestration, and more. In 2023, the Legislature created and funded the Trust Land Transfer program, expanded revenue generation and economic opportunities from natural climate solutions and ecosystem services: and directed protection of structurally complex and carbon-dense mature forests that are vulnerable to logging, requiring that newly acquired timber lands must be managed for a combination of increased carbon sequestration and sustainable wood production.

What to Look for in the 2024 Washington State Legislative Session

Several bills that were introduced in the first part of the biennium will likely be brought up again in the 2024 session, including these:

- [HB1789](#) Expanding revenue generation and economic opportunities from natural climate solutions and ecosystem services
- Additional funding for the Natural Climate Solutions account through a supplemental budget action
- Salmon recovery bills

Coalitions: The League belongs to the [Environmental Priorities Coalition](#) and partners with the [People's Voice on Climate](#).

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