



Community Forest Legislation Talking Points for HB 1946/SB 5873 in the 2019 Legislative Session

Overarching Message:

Community Forests allows for people living in rural areas to participate as stakeholders in forest management decisions and to organize economic development efforts in a way that balances multiple values and maximize local public benefits. The Washington Association of Land Trusts (WALT) recognizes that community forests offer a collaborative solution towards protecting Washington's lands and communities, and supports the creation of a competitive grant program to allow local entities to establish community forests as proposed in HB 1946/SB 5873.

Community Forest Definition:

Community forests are working forests owned and managed by municipalities, government agencies, Tribes and non-profit organizations for the benefit of local communities.

Community Forest Principles:

Community forests are as diverse as the lands they occupy and the communities they represent but they all share a commitment to four common principles:

- Community has secured access and rights to the forest resource at the community-level
- Community participates in management decisions
- Community receives value and benefit from the land that reinforce local development goals
- The conservation values of the property are permanently protected

Opportunity for Rural Communities: These projects have the potential to produce real benefits for communities by strengthening local economies, protecting drinking water, reducing wildfire risk, mitigating climate change, providing habitat and keeping forestland open for public use and education.

Proviso Results: This summer, DNR identified 11 community forest projects that are underway and 20 community forest projects across the state that are looking for support within the next few years. In the case of the Mt. Adams Community Forest, this project has already produced more than \$8 million for the local economy and 59-months of full-time equivalent work in just over 4-years by managing 400-acres to meet community goals.

DNR's Community Forest Trust: DNR's Community Forest Trust program is an important tool for the agency to be able to buy and protect lands that are at risk of conversion. DNR can then manage these lands without the same financial requirements and with greater community input than other trust lands. However, there is still a need for public investment in locally-owned community forests for those communities that have the capacity, know-how and opportunity to develop a

community forest project of their own.

Community Forests and Other Public Lands: Other state and public lands are designed to achieve specific outcomes, like habitat recovery, or to benefit a narrow range of beneficiaries, like public education. When trying to manage forests for multiple values, this can mean that for some communities, certain priorities are unmet or underrepresented in management plans. Community forests provide a space for local communities to define their needs and to fill those gaps with projects that provide a full range of local public benefits.

Community Forests and Forest Economy: Though they are managed around a range of community priorities, community forests are first and foremost working forests. Forest management activities on community forests support local jobs for loggers, forest workers, foresters, log truck drivers and mill workers. This work also has a multiplier effect that means that the overall local economy benefits wages from more steady, regular work for local residents and increased local spending. All revenues that are earned are then reinvested back into the management of the land as well as into community-identified priorities that benefit the public.

Community Forests and Industrial Lands: Community forests provide an opportunity for industrial landowners to partner with community interests to create a conservation legacy. Community forests also protect sensitive lands from conversion and development that reduces the available land base for mills to source their materials. In addition, by protecting lands often times at risk of conversion to development, community forests provide an important buffer between developed areas and industrial forestland while engaging local residents around the benefits of working lands.

Value for all Washingtonians: When the stewardship of Washington's forests are aligned with community goals that means that all Washingtonians benefit through healthy local economies, cleaner air and water, reduced wildfire risk and space for outdoor activities and recreation.

Driving Values:

Communities: Community forests are about centering communities and their needs when it comes to natural resource management. Protecting and enhancing community wellbeing and civic life is the number one goal of all community forest projects.

Resilience: Whether it's transitioning economies or the increasing impacts of climate change, rural communities need the tools, resources and opportunity to respond to the range of issues that threaten their quality of life. Community forests are one of those tools and provide a stable space around which communities can plan their long-term community and economic development goals and address some of their most pressing concerns.

Safety: The health of our forestlands means a lot when it comes to the safety of our communities from wildfire and potential impacts to our drinking water sources. Community forests give communities the opportunity to be proactive about addressing these concerns before they get out of hand.

Collaboration: Community forests bring together a wide range of partners. They build connections between people and the land by welcoming them as shareholders in the management and care of the natural resources they depend upon.