

Re: Support for Community Forests 2021 - 2023 Capital Budget Request

To Members of the Washington State Legislature,

We are writing to ask for your strong support for the Recreation and Conservation Office's (RCO) Community Forest Program during the 2021 legislative session. Community Forests allow people living in rural areas to have a direct stake in the ownership, use, and long-term management of important forestlands, while protecting their working status in perpetuity. In centering the needs of local stakeholders, community forests act as a critical tool to safeguard and unlock the economic, ecological, and social benefits Washington's working forests hold.

For nearly a decade, our state has seen increasing awareness of and support for this model of forest ownership in Washington and its potential role in rural economic development. In 2019, at the request of the Legislature, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) produced a report demonstrating the diverse statewide interest in locally-owned community forestry among cities, counties, Tribes, and nonprofits. In addition, an economic analysis of the Mt. Adams Community Forest in Klickitat County conducted in 2018 illustrated how more active management, cross-boundary partnerships, and the leveraging of local support typical of community forests can derive significant new economic benefits.

In recognition of this potential, the Legislature passed a budget proviso in 2020 directing RCO and DNR, to establish funding criteria alongside stakeholders and submit a ranked list of proposed community forest projects for funding consideration in the 2021-2023 biennium.

In response to the call for applications from RCO, the agency received 15 community forest applications from diverse partnerships across the state, from the Olympic Peninsula to Spokane County. Whether emphasizing new jobs in the woods, developing the next generation of foresters, preventing sprawl in fire-prone areas, or provisioning the cool, clean water we all rely on, these projects represent what is possible when diverse voices come together to envision a shared future for keystone forested lands.

Funding these projects will catalyze an extensive array of planned restoration, forest management, and recreational development activities. This on-the-ground work leverages significant local and federal funding, and will spur rural economies at a time when that investment is needed more than ever.

We urge you to show your support for these communities by providing \$22 million for community forests in your 2021-23 capital budget, as recommended by the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board. At a time when the health and well-being of our people, our environment and our economy are at the forefront of everyone's minds, community forest projects like these guide meaningful investments to protect jobs, lands, livelihoods, local business, and our quality of life.

Sincerely,

Local Governments

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Director, District 2

Chelan County Natural
Resources Department

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Commissioner, District 2

Doug Englund
Chelan County
Commissioner, District 3

Kevin Overbay
Chelan County
Commissioner, District 1

City of Hoquiam

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Mayor

Al Dick
City of Hoquiam
Councilmember, Ward 4

Brian Shay
City of Hoquiam
City Administrator

Brenda Carlstrom
City of Hoquiam
Councilmember, Ward 5

William Nelson
City of Hoquiam
Councilmember, Ward 3

City of Ilwaco

Matthew Lessnau
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Councilmember, Position 4

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David Sullivan
Jefferson County
Commissioner, District 2

Jacob Anderson
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David Sauter
Klickitat County Commissioner, District 2

Dan Christopher
Klickitat County Commissioner, District 3

Derek Gruber
City of Roslyn
Councilmember, Position 1

Catherine Cook
City of Roslyn
Councilmember, Position 4

Tribes

Kalispel Tribe
Nisqually Indian Tribe
Nooksack Indian Tribe

Organizations & Businesses

Bainbridge Island Land Trust
Chelan-Douglas Land Trust
Columbia Land Trust
Conservation Northwest
Dishman Hills Conservancy
Ecotrust Forest Management
Evergreen Ecoforestry LLC
Forterra
Great Peninsula Conservancy
Jefferson Land Trust
Kitsap Audubon Society
Kittitas Conservation Trust
Kittitas County Chamber of Commerce
Lummi Island Heritage Trust
Methow Conservancy
Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust
Nisqually Community Forest
Nisqually Land Trust
Nisqually River Council
Nisqually River Foundation
Northwest Community Forest Coalition

Northwest Natural Resource Group
Okanogan Land Trust
Recreation Northwest
Ride Roslyn Bikes
Sports Safety and Education Association
Sustainable Northwest
The Nature Conservancy in Washington
The Trust for Public Land
TMK Consulting
US Forest Capital
Vashon Maury Island Land Trust
Washington Association of Land Trusts
Washington Environmental Council
Washington Resource Conservation
and Development Council
Washington Water Trust
Washington Wildlife & Recreation Coalition
Whatcom Land Trust
Wildlife Forever Fund

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