

Water Quality

As Washington becomes more populated and our economy grows, the urgency to find innovative solutions for a balanced, reliable, and sustainable water supply also increases. We need our water sources to benefit people, honor treaties, wildlife, and local ecosystems around them. In "Whatcom County v. Hirst", the Washington State Supreme Court ruled that new developments cannot move forward without legal and practical access to safe drinking water, and to ensure that new wells do not violate the highest rule of the land, treaties with our tribal nations (WA Department of Ecology).

Washington State needs solutions that will protect salmon, and the people who rely on them, our drinking water, our local people, and farms. The legislature must protect our most precious resource. The Hirst decision should be supported as it requires planning for population growth in a way that protects instream flows. It also provides long term, reliable access to safe and clean drinking water to protect our homes, farms, and the creatures who live in streams and rivers.

Reducing Toxic Pollution in All Communities

The Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA) was approved by voters and was established to create administrative processes and standards to identify, investigate and clean up facilities where hazardous substances are found. MTCA has been a successful law that is dedicated to cleaning up toxic waste sites, protecting water quality due to pollution, and supporting local communities as they address toxic pollution threats.

Toxic waste sites are often placed close to marginalized communities, including communities of color and low-income families. Hazardous waste sites not only affect the environment, but they disproportionately affect communities who need the most protection. MTCA seeks to support these communities and keep them safe.

MTCA relies on funding from a hazardous substance tax, which is currently one of the most unreliable revenue sources in Washington State's budget. We urge legislators to help solve a budget shortfall that could stall the reduction of harmful pollution and toxic waste cleanup. We also encourage legislators to impose a tax surcharge to ensure funding is more stable and predictable in the coming years.

Put a Price on Pollution: We need a Carbon Tax

Climate scientists, along with economists, have long said that one of the best ways to fight climate change is by putting a price on greenhouse gas emissions, with the goal of increasing that rate over time. This will encourage the switch to clean energy sources which in turn will be beneficial to the environment and create new living wage jobs in clean energy industries. International communities, such as British Columbia, Ireland and Sweden, have successfully put in carbon taxes, to the benefit of the environment and their economies. Washington State would be the first in the US to implement a carbon tax, and lead the nation on this important issue.

Washington State needs a strong carbon tax that supports workers' needs and transitions us towards a renewable energy based economy in an equitable manner.. Proceeds from a carbon tax could fund investments in reducing emissions, which is beneficial for all residents of Washington State. We must raise prices on emissions and make big emitters offset their pollution's impact. A share of the investments will go towards communities that are most burdened by pollution, climate change, and poverty.

Oil Transportation Safety

Rapid and dramatic changes to oil transportation are creating serious threats to Western Washington communities and waterways. Washington's water faces the risk of oil spills on a daily basis. We need to do more to protect the health of people who use Washington's water sources, as well as the organisms who live in aquatic habitats. Any spill in key waterways could irreversibly damage salmon habitat and violate treaties with tribal nations. New proposals to move more oil through our state make the threat of oil spills more urgent than ever. We urge legislators to look at recent events, such as the recently approved Kinder Morgan pipeline, which would increase tanker traffic through the Salish Sea. Washington State can no longer be a target for such dangerous oil shipments. We are currently under threat for more export terminals, and the legislature must take action to protect their constituents and the ecosystems in which they live.

Furthermore, legislators must ensure sustainable and adequate funding for oil spill response, and be prepared to address and mitigate the risks posed by pipelines.

Protect Oyster Dome

The WA Department of Natural Resources reached an agreement with the state in 2006 that would prevent logging Blanchard Mountain's core. This area includes the Oyster Dome, North Butte, and Lily and Lizard Lakes. The DNR is mandated to provide revenue for schools and counties through timber sales, and the 2006 agreement requires the State Legislature to provide necessary appropriations to purchase nearby replacement lands that could instead be harvested (Conservation Northwest).

By 2016 the legislature had not completed its half of the agreement. They have only provided funding for \$6.5 million of the \$14.2 million needed to purchase lands that would replace the clearcutting at Blanchard Mountain's core. The funding for this project must be complete by the end of the 2017 session, or the DNR will have to begin logging Blanchard's core this summer (Conservation Northwest). \$7.7 million is still needed to protect Blanchard Mountain's core area. Governor Inslee's budget for the 2017 year includes \$1.5 million for Blanchard, leaving a \$5.7 million shortfall (WA Office of Financial Management).

Legislators must honor the agreement they made with the DNR and advocate for the full \$7.7 million shortfall. The 2017 legislative session is the last chance we have to prevent this beautiful, recreational landmark from being undermined. Hikes at Blanchard Mountain are often some of the first and most famous that Western students get to experience. Furthermore, the ecosystems that exist within Blanchard Mountain would be seriously compromised or destroyed if the clearcutting were to happen.

Citations

"Understanding the Whatcom County vs. Hirst. Futurewise. Et Al. Decision." Understanding the Whatcom County vs. Hirst. Futurewise. Et Al. Decision | Water Resources Home | Ecology Home. Washington State Department of Ecology. 19 Jan. 2017. Web. 31 Jan. 2017.

"Blanchard Mountain." Blanchard Mountain — Conservation Northwest. Conservation Northwest. 2016. Web. 31 Jan. 2017.

"Governor Jay Inslee's Proposed 2015-17 Budget." Office of Financial Management. WA State Office of Financial Management. Dec. 2016. Web. 31 Jan. 2017.

