

## Statement from Western Rep Body

Dear Satpaul Sidhu and Whatcom County Council Members,

We, the senators and executive board of Western Washington University, are writing this letter to request restoration of public access to Canyon Lake Community Forest. As Western Students we pay tuition to the university and **deserve access to this space**. The forest is co-owned by Western Washington University and Whatcom County and is located in the Mt Baker Foothills (near Deming, WA). Established 20 years ago, this forest consists of roughly 2,300 acres, including over 700 acres of ancient old-growth forest. Hikers are given an epic view of Mt Baker, the Twin Sisters, and the Puget Sound as well as a scenic trail around the lake. Public access to the community forest has been restricted after a storm washed out the bridge on Canyon Lake Road in 2007.

Opening this forest is critical to the community because we currently have a lack of research in this geographic area. Access to the forest allows us to effectively study the area. These studies can contribute to the overarching fight against the climate crisis in various ways including analysis of old growth ecosystems, forest health and water monitoring. Access to green spaces is very important to us as Western students.