



## COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Carolina Mejia  
District One

Gary Edwards  
District Two

Tye Menser  
District Three

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## BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

February 28, 2023

Hilary Franz, Commissioner of Public Lands  
Board of Natural Resources  
111 Washington St SE  
Olympia, WA 98501

Re: Legacy Forests in Thurston County

Dear Commissioner Franz and Board of Natural Resources,

The Hopscotch and Buttercup timber sales in Thurston County have been recently approved by the Board of Natural Resources. Each of those sales contained pieces of our rapidly-dwindling "Legacy Forests," which, as you know, are structurally-complex and biodiverse forest patches whose existence predates WWII and the rise of plantation forestry in Washington.

The Thurston County Board of County Commissioners has asked DNR on multiple occasions that sales/cuts of the County's 3,100 acres of unprotected Legacy Forests either be postponed and/or included in Phase 2 of DNR's new Carbon Project; these requests have not been honored to this point. Meanwhile, yet another Thurston County timber sale is planned for approval containing Legacy Forest acres: Juneau, Units 1-2.

Meanwhile, the State Legislature is actively working on two different programs that could provide a path for Thurston County to protect its last remnants of Legacy Forest. One is a proposal to fund the Transfer Land Trust program, which might allow Thurston County to apply to swap its Legacy Forest parcels for other forestland with less overall ecosystem value. The second is a proposal to use funding from the Natural Climate Solutions account of the Climate Commitment Act to protect carbon-dense older forests are at risk of harvest in the near-term. Either of these avenues may provide long-term solutions for Thurston County, but we are afraid that --- based on currently-scheduled cuts --- by the time these laws are enacted large numbers of our oldest trees will already be gone.

Therefore, the Board of County Commissioners respectfully requests: (1) that the upcoming Juneau sales be suspended, at least until such time as Thurston County can access any new tools that result from the 2023 Legislative Session that would allow it to protect its last remaining Legacy Forest; and (2) that DNR postpone any other upcoming sales that contain Legacy Forest remnants, which would allow it

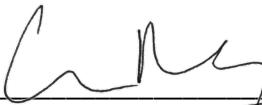
to work collaboratively with Thurston County to explore alternatives, in light of Commissioner Franz's recently-expressed desire to work with local communities on forest management strategies.

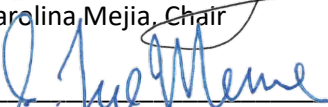
Thank you for taking time to consider these comments.

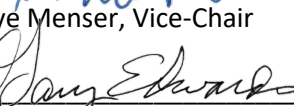
Sincerely,

Attest:

FR (Initials)  
County Manager/Asst. County Manager

  
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Carolina Mejia, Chair

  
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Tye Menser, Vice-Chair

  
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Gary Edwards, Commissioner