

Timber sales of concern in Thurston County

Upcoming Sales Containing Mature Structurally Complex Forests

Compiled by the Center for Responsible Forestry, September 2023

Photos by Legacy Forest Defense Coalition and Center for Responsible Forestry



Mature “legacy” forests in Western Washington are rapidly disappearing, as the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) auctions them off on a monthly basis to the highest bidder. The Center for Responsible Forestry (CRF) advocates for the creation of a new mature forest conservation policy on forest lands managed by DNR. Thurston County has been leading the way in this effort by calling for an immediate end to logging of mature forests in our County. This packet is a work in progress, and our goal in producing it is to inform the people of Thurston County about what is at stake so that we can mobilize together to protect the forests we love.

For more information, contact southsound@c4rf.org.

Criteria for selecting mature, carbon dense forests using natural climate solutions funding

Purpose

In its 2023 legislative session, the Washington Legislature allocated funds from the state's Climate Commitment Act (CCA) to protect 2,000 acres of "structurally complex, carbon dense" forestland owned by the state; however, the legislature did not provide additional details about how these acreages should be selected. To determine which forests are eligible for protection under the CCA proviso, we propose DNR uses the below criteria, which is based on DNR's "Maturation I" classification (Guide to Identifying Mature & Old-Growth Forests, Van Pelt 2007). Numerous scientific studies have documented the ecological, hydrologic, and carbon benefits that mature, structurally-complex forests provide. Conservation organizations believe this criteria provides a clear, science-based process for DNR to select which stands will be protected under the CCA proviso.

Criteria

- **Large trees**
 - Dominant cohort: ≥ 20 " DBH.
 - Some dominant trees ≥ 30 " DBH
 - Dominant cohort: $\geq 60\%$ of site potential tree height
- **Diversity in tree size**
 - Range of tree heights and tree diameters.
- **Establishment of understory**
 - Shade tolerant trees (e.g. hemlocks and cedars) naturally recruited in the understory.
- **Biodiversity**
 - Presence of three or more tree species.
 - Presence of various shrub species unevenly distributed throughout the stand

Surveys

CRF has conducted surveys of the timber sales within this report. Our surveys concluded that all of these sales contain stands of mature forest that meet the above criteria. The only exception is measuring site potential tree height. This can only be done using GIS, and can be verified by DNR or independent GIS specialists.

Prioritization

The first three sales on this list contain old-growth trees and are our highest priority for conservation. We strongly recommend a thorough old-growth assessment from DNR for all three of these sales. All sales listed after these three contain large areas of mature forest and are ordered by estimated decision date. The final page of this document contains sales with varying of mature forest that have yet to be surveyed, but will be in the coming months

Starwagon

Decision date: 8/13/2024

Trust beneficiaries: 103.16 acres Common School Fund, 38.95 acres Scientific School, 68.04 acres State Forest Transfer

Size: 210 acres, all mature forest with notable large trees in unit 1

Spread across a wide area between Summit Lake and Eld Inlet. Unit 6 is only two miles from the city of Olympia. Out of all the Capitol State Forest sales we've surveyed, this is the one we're most concerned about. The trees here are modeled by DNR to be between 84 and 106 years old, but we believe many of them are much older. Unit 1 contains Western Red Cedars up to 67" and Douglas Firs up to 85" in diameter. Units 2, 5 and 6 of this sale border residential neighborhoods, and unit 2 is right behind the Summit Lake grocery store.

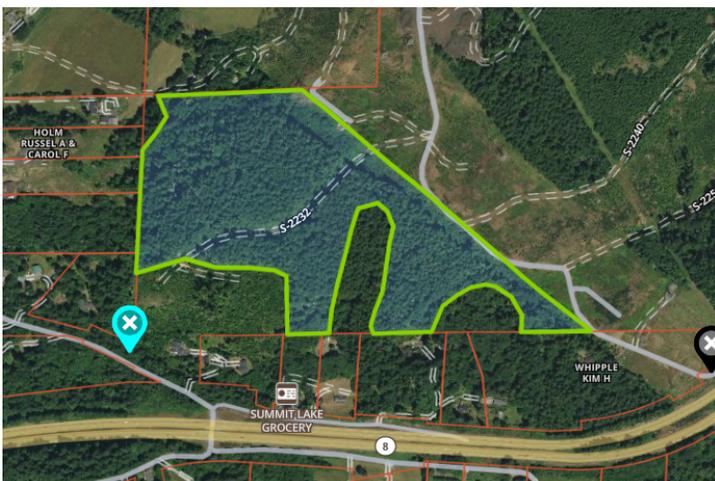
Impressive double-trunk Douglas Fir, unit 1



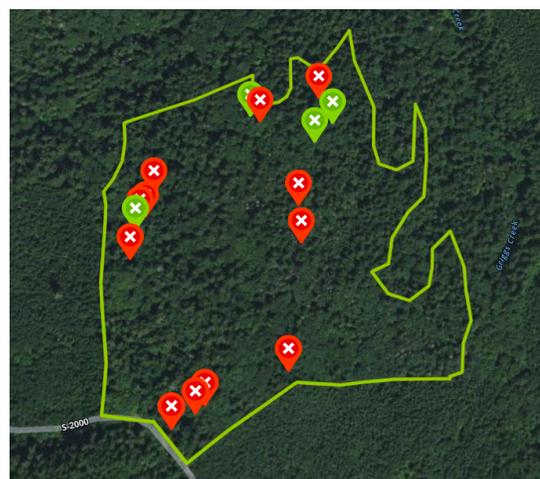
Old-growth Western Red Cedar, Unit 1



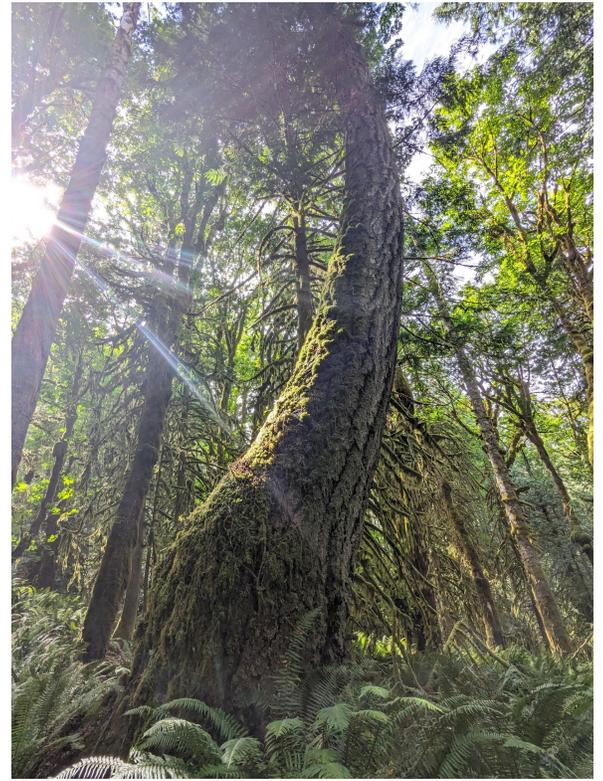
Map of Unit 2 and Vicinity



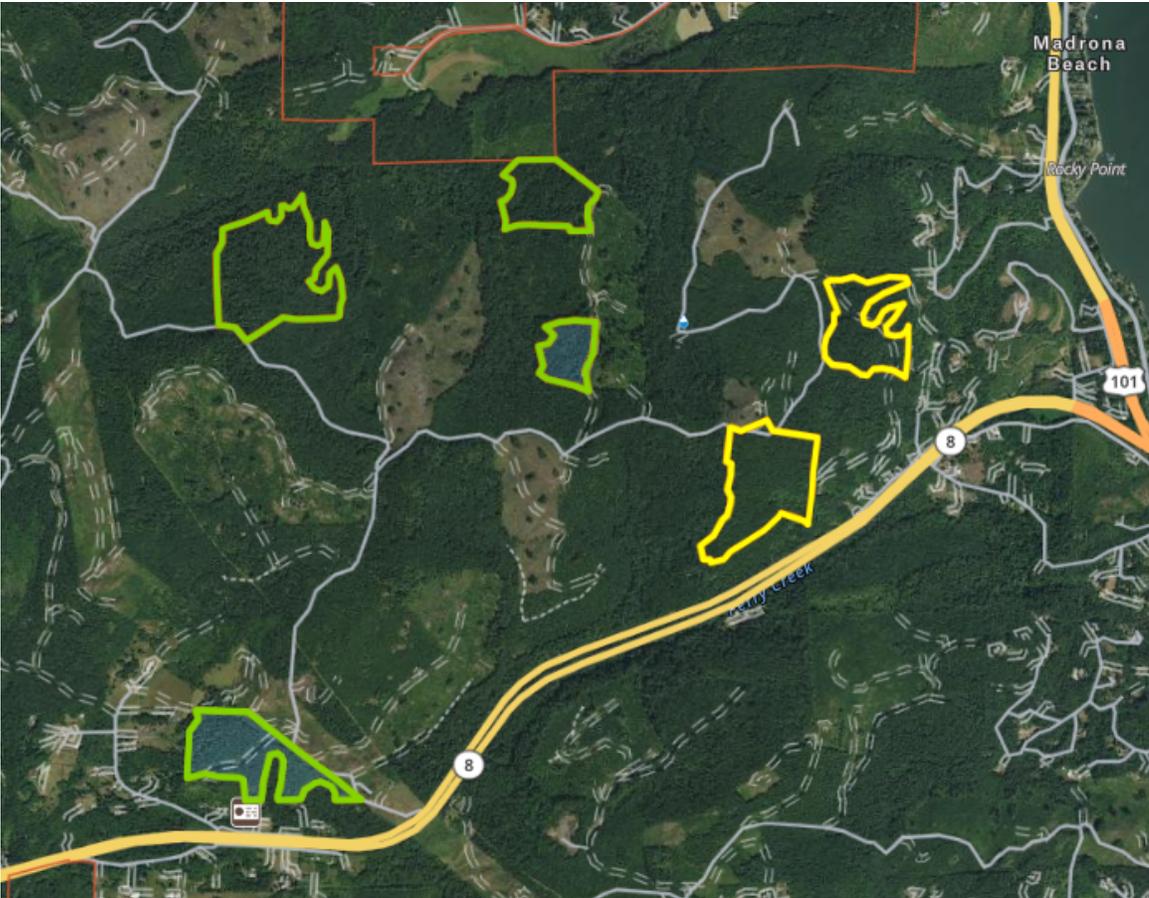
Map of Unit 1 showing notable large trees



Typical photos of Star Wagon timber sale



Map of Star Wagon timber sale



Chai

Decision date: 11/12/24

Trust beneficiaries: 166.01 acres Common School Fund, 39.49 acres State Forest Transfer

Size: 206 acres, all mature forest with notable large trees in unit 3

The "Chai" timber sale contains some of the most pristine old-growth trees remaining in Capitol Forest. We found Douglas Firs up to 77" in and Western Red Cedars up to 72" in diameter. This sale is entirely mature forest with a healthy understory and is just uphill from a very popular recreation area, the Grays Harbor ORV park. Units 2 and 3 of the sale are in Thurston County, and unit 1 is in Grays Harbor County. The trees in this area are modeled by the DNR to be between 61 and 118 years old, with some Cedars much older than that.

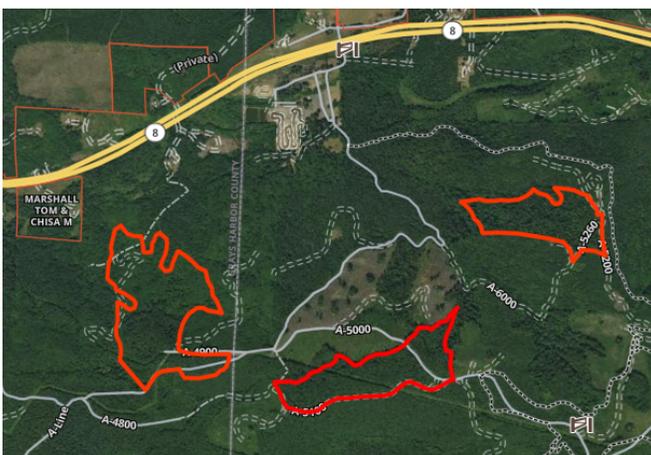
77" Douglas Fir in Unit 3



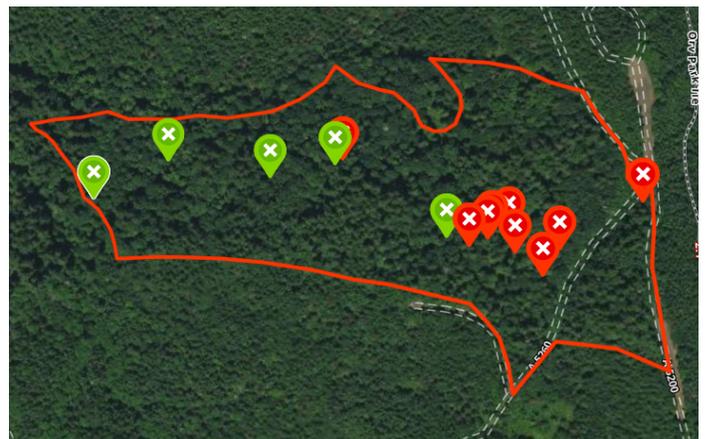
72" Western Red Cedar in Unit 3



Map of Chai timber sale



Locations of notable / old-growth trees in Unit 3:



Bears

Decision date: 1/1/2026

Trust beneficiaries: **140.32 acres State Forest Transfer**, 41.8 acres Common School

Size: 182 acres, all mature forest

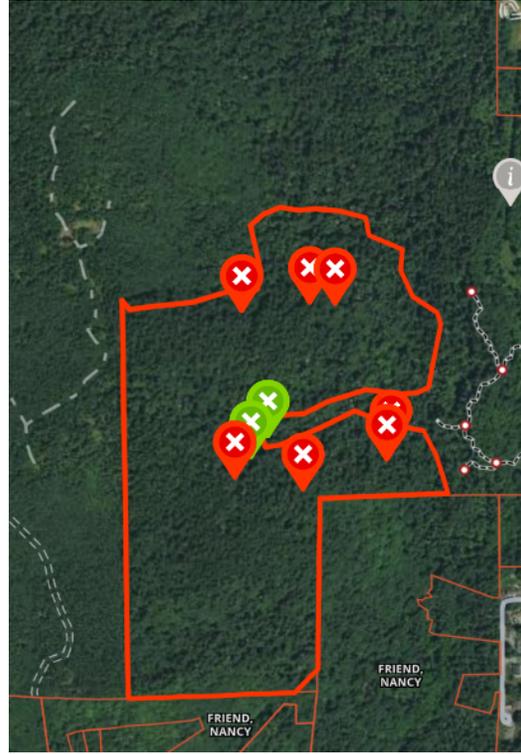
Bears unit 2 is a stand of beautiful, mature trees just 20 minutes from downtown Olympia, right across McLane Creek from the popular McLane Nature Trail. McLane Creek has salmon in it, and it's a popular place to go to see them spawning in the Fall. If approved, this clearcut could have significant negative impacts on salmon habitat and on recreation. The trees in this area are modeled by DNR to be between 75 and 100 years old, but many of them are much older.



Map of Bears timber sale and surrounding area, showing modeled mature forest:



The largest tree we found in this area was a Douglas Fir exactly 84" (7 feet) in diameter. This is surrounded by a group of 40-50" Douglas firs with unique characteristics. There's also a memorable 64" Western Red Cedar just downhill from here. The green points on the map below are the two largest trees.



More photos of the Bears timber sale:



Juneau

Decision date: 4/25/2023

Trust beneficiaries: **51.38 acres State Forest Transfer**, 105.49 acres Forest Board Repayment

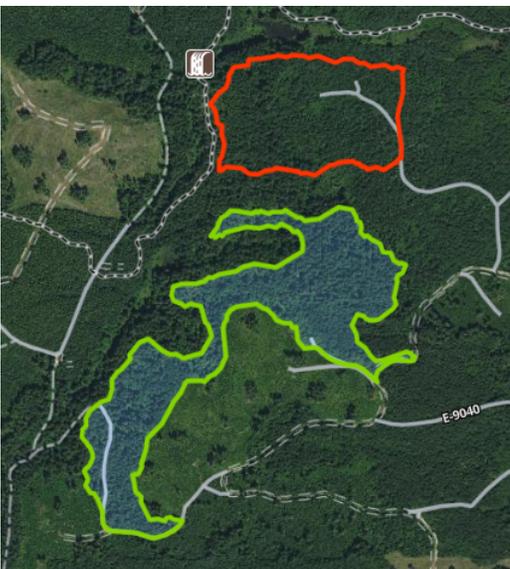
Size: ~172 acres, ~105 acres of mature forest

This timber sale was taken off of the the proposed sales list by DNR earlier in 2023 due to widespread community opposition, including from the Thurston County Commission. The mature forest in this area is still in need of permanent protection, as the sale could be re-introduced at a Board of Natural Resources meeting at any time. Units 1, 2, and 3 contain mature forest, with unit 1 being completely mature. We found Douglas Firs up to 49" in diameter in unit 2 and up to 55" in diameter in unit 1, with Western Red Cedars up to 50" in diameter. Unit 3 of this sale is right by the Mima Falls trail, which is one of the most popular hiking trails in Thurston County, with visitors from all over the world.

Examples of large trees in the Juneau timber sale



Map of units 1 and 3 showing Mima Falls



Carrot

Decision date: 12/12/23

Trust beneficiaries: ~ 95 acres Forest Board Repayment, ~ 5 acres State Forest Purchase

Size: 100 acres, all mature forest

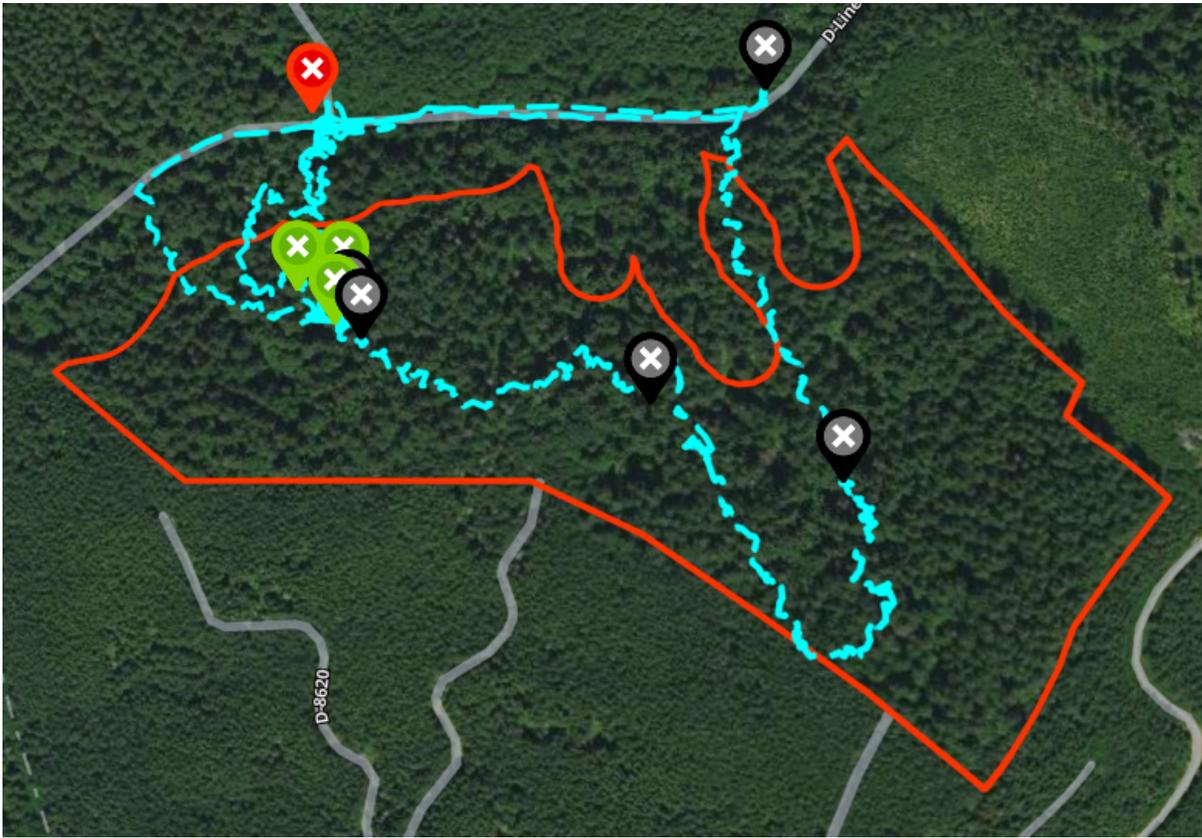
The trees in the Carrot timber sale are modeled by DNR to be between 87 and 98 years old, with plenty of doug firs and cedars 35-45" wide (and some even larger, like 50" cedars in unit 1). Every part of this sale that we saw has a complex canopy and healthy forest floor.



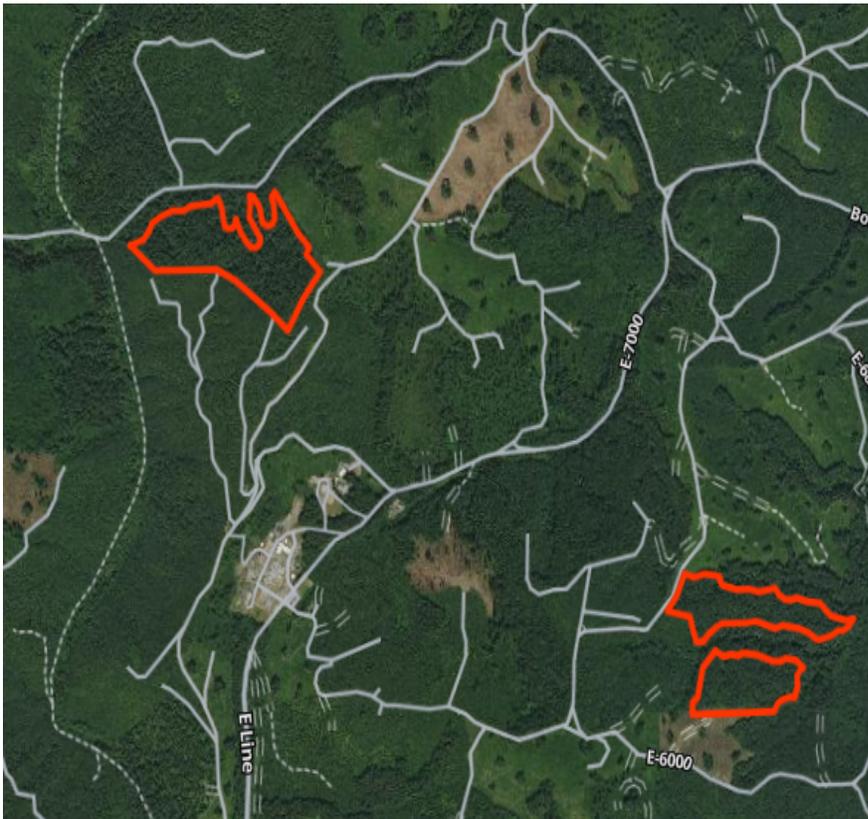
Unit 1 is both very wet and very steep. We took plenty of slope measurements between 25-30 degrees. The steepest slope measured in this area was 38 degrees, but 25-30 is a better average of the area. Logging steep slopes like this could result in severe erosion that could soon end up in the nearby Cedar Creek.



Map of Carrot unit 1 showing notable large trees and riparian areas:



Map of Carrot timber sale and surrounding area:



Evergreen Gold

Decision date: 3/26/24

Trust beneficiaries: 36.06 acres Common School, 105.57 acres Forest Board Repayment, 11.81 acres State Forest Purchase

Size: 153.42 acres, all mature forest

All three units of Evergreen Gold have many trees over 100 years old, with plenty of Douglas Firs and cedars 40-50" wide (and some even larger, like 66" cedars in unit 1). The trees in this area are modeled by DNR to be between 86-101 years old. Every part of this sale that we saw has a complex canopy and healthy forest floor.



Units 1 and 2 contain the Lost Valley trail, a popular trail for hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians in cap forest. A clearcut would ruin this trail's recreational value.



Cedar bark is still carefully harvested by indigenous people every year in capitol forest and across the northwest. Based on our survey, there are 30+ harvested trees of varying size:

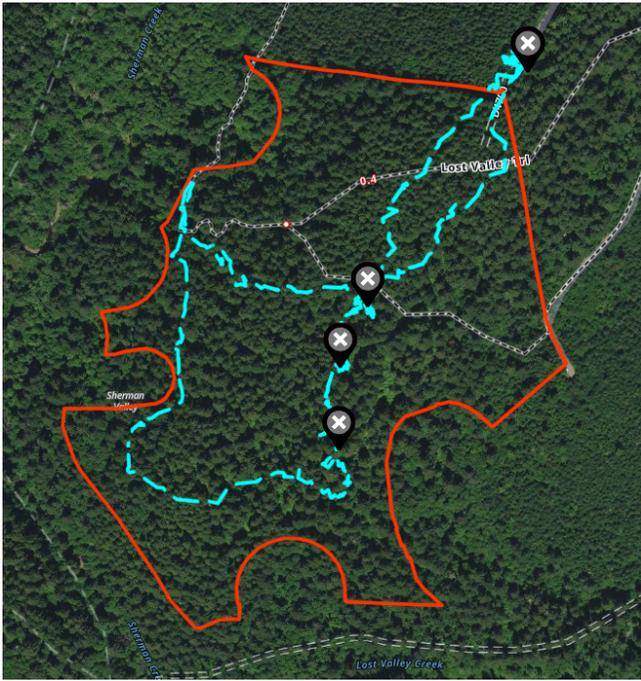


We came across a patch of phantom orchids (*Cephalanthera austiniiae*), a rare mycoheterotrophic plant that has been listed as Endangered by the province of BC and is expected to be extinct by 2100, mostly due to habitat loss from logging of mature forests.

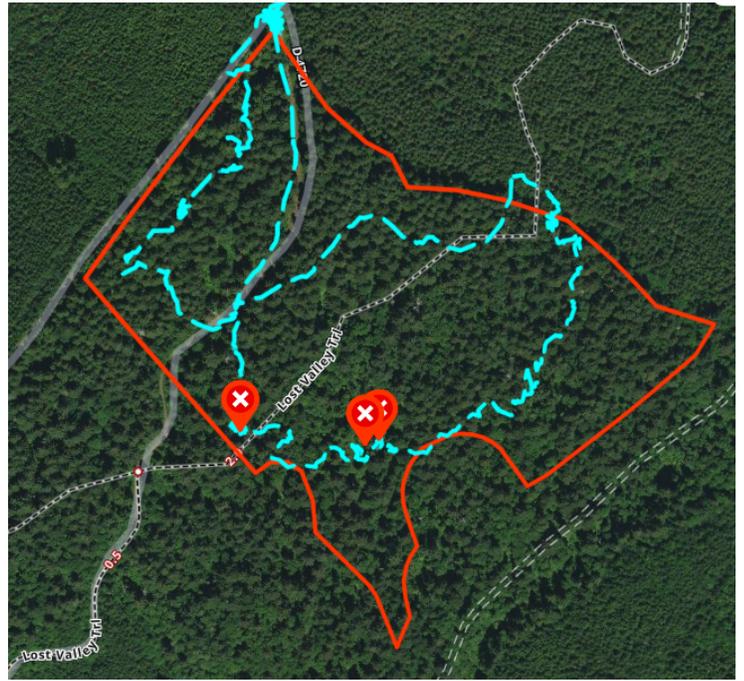


Maps of Evergreen Gold showing notable large trees and riparian areas:

Unit 1



Unit 2



Unit 3:



All three units:



Cabbage Patch

Decision date: 2/27/2024

Trust beneficiaries in Thurston County units: 133.96 acres State Forest Transfer

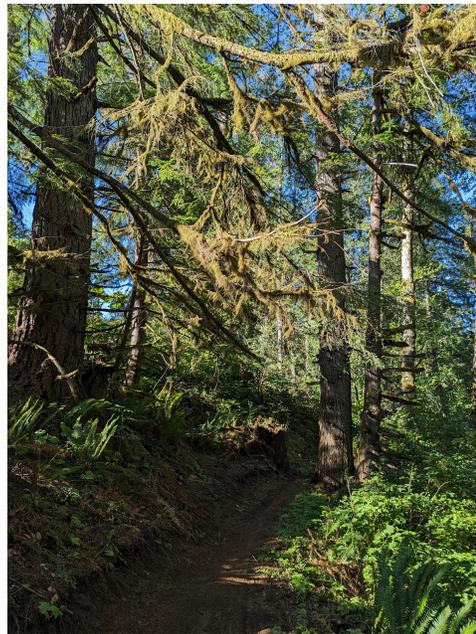
Size: 220 acres, ~73 acres of mature forest in Thurston County

Units 4 and 5 of this sale are in Thurston County, and units 1 and 2 are in Grays Harbor County. Units 4 and 5 are surrounded by clearcuts including the “Capra” timber sale, recently logged in 2023. These units contain some of the only intact mature forest remaining in the immediate vicinity. Unit 5 contains the popular and very steep “Mr. Bones” mountain bike trail, one of the most challenging trails in Capitol Forest. The trees in this area are modeled by DNR to be between 64 and 69 years old, but plenty of trees seem to be older than that, particularly the Douglas fir and Sitka Spruce trees.

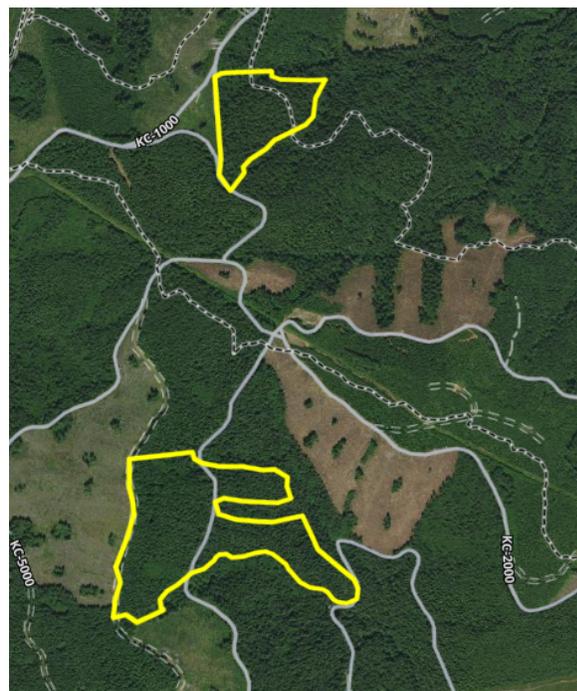
“Mr Bones” mountain bike trail in Cabbage Patch Unit 5



Mature Sitka Spruce in Cabbage Patch



Map of Cabbage Patch U4 and U5



Rad Aghast (see [BoCC Carbon Project phase 2 letter](#))

Decision date: 1/2/2025

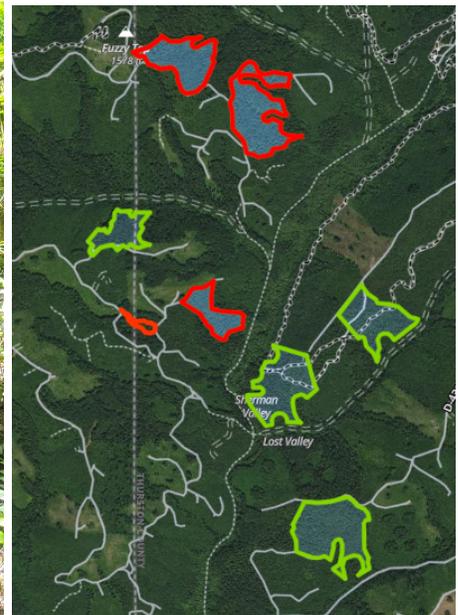
Trust beneficiaries: Forest Board Repayment

Size: 118 acres, all mature forest

Excellent examples of mature forest, across Sherman Creek from the “Evergreen Gold” sale and very close to the irresponsibly recently clearcut “Nuggets” sale. The trees in this area are modeled by DNR to be between 76-90 years old. Unit 1 of this sale is mostly impassable due to dense thickets of Devils’ Club (*Oplopanax horridus*). We did find two stands of Phantom Orchid (*Cephalanthera austini*), a rare mycoheterotrophic plant that has been listed as Endangered by the province of BC and is expected to be extinct by 2100, mostly due to habitat loss from logging of mature forests.



The largest Douglas firs we found in here so far were 50-55”. There are only a few Hemlocks over 40” (these are typically uncommon in second-growth forests) but plenty between 30-40”. Fewer cedars were present here than in nearby areas, but most of them were mature (>30”). In the map below, “Rad Aghast” is in red while “Evergreen Gold” and “Nuggets” are in green.



Ghost (see BoCC Carbon Project phase 2 letter)

Decision date: 1/18/2025

Trust beneficiaries: 90.16 acres Forest Board Repayment, 50.78 acres State Forest Purchase

Size: 140.92 acres, all mature forest

Located in the heart of Capitol Forest, this area is surrounded by recent clearcuts and is some of the only mature forest remaining in the immediate vicinity, as seen on the map below. The trees in this sale are modeled by DNR to be between 77 and 109 years old. The area is thick with Devils' club and very steep, putting it at risk of severe erosion if the clearcuts are allowed to happen. We found three stands of Phantom Orchid (*Cephalanthera austini*), a rare mycoheterotrophic plant that has been listed as Endangered by the province of BC and is expected to be extinct by 2100, mostly due to habitat loss from logging of mature forests.

Mature Douglas Fir in Ghost unit 7, with epicormic branching and reiteration making it ideal habitat



Phantom Orchid

Map of Ghost timber sale



Matador (see BoCC Carbon Project phase 2 letter)

Decision date: 2/11/2025

Trust beneficiaries: 195.04 acres State Forest Transfer, 67.31 acres Forest Board Repayment, 9.32 acres State Forest Purchase

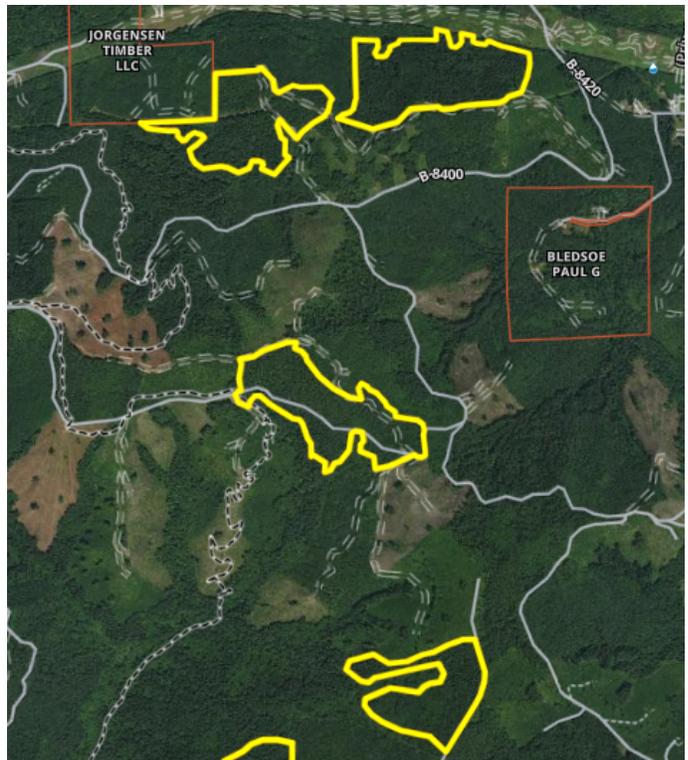
Size: 271.67 acres, ~172 acres of mature forest

This area regenerated from logging in the early 1900s and the forest is now around 100 years old. The trees in here are estimated by DNR to be 61 and 93 years old, with some of them likely older than that. This area contains many slopes over 30 degrees and is at risk of erosion if the trees are clearcut.

Notable trees in the Matador timber sale



Map of Matador timber sale and surrounding area



Battlestar

Decision date: 3/1/2026

Trust beneficiaries: 50.38 acres State Forest Transfer, 17.72 acres Forest Board Repayment, 63.72 acres State Forest Purchase

Size: 142.59 acres in units 1 and 2, all mature forest

This timber sale is very spread out, with portions of two units in Thurston County and two entirely in Grays Harbor County. Three of the four units contain impressive mature forest, with plenty of Douglas Fir and Sitka Spruce trees over 40" in diameter. The trees in this area are modeled by DNR to be between 79 and 83 years old. This area contains many slopes over 30 degrees and is at risk of erosion if the trees are clearcut.

Legacy trees in Battlestar unit 1



Map of Battlestar timber sale:



Galactica

Decision date: 4/1/2026

Trust beneficiaries: 96.34 acres State Forest Transfer, 13.66 acres State Forest Purchase, 4.71 acres Forest Board Repayment

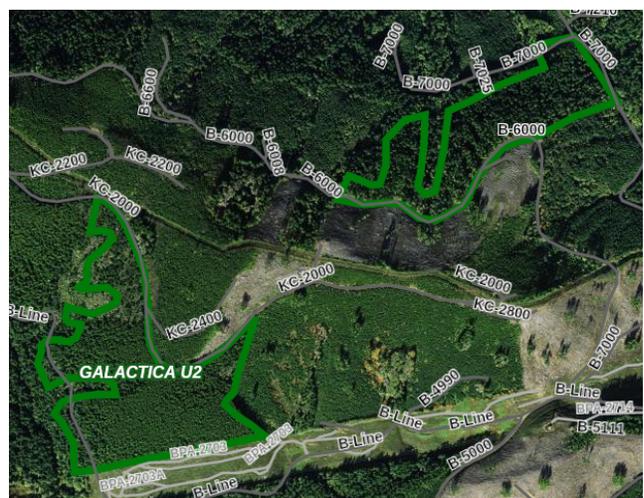
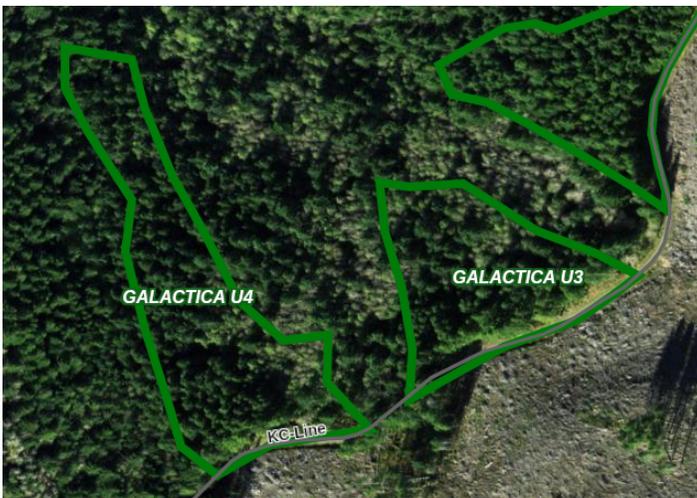
Size: 114 acres

This timber sale is spread out throughout the northeastern portion of Capitol Forest. Units 3 and 4 are two small stands on the edge of a massive recent clearcut. Unit 1 is all mature forest, and is a very steep north-facing hill running down from the B-6000 road, with another huge clearcut on the south side of the ridge, as is common in this area. The erosion risk to the north side of the hill is evident from looking at what has happened to the south side of the hill. The trees in this area are modeled by DNR to be between 67 and 82 years old.

Mature forest in Galactica timber sale



Maps of Galactica timber sale



Other timber sales in Thurston County with modeled mature forest include:

Class Dismissed

Decision date: 5/28/2024

Trust beneficiaries: 42.1 acres Common School Fund, 39 acres Forest Board Repayment

Size: ~56 acres

Marshmallow Unit 2

Decision date: 11/14/2023

Trust beneficiaries: Common School Fund

Size: 61 acres, ~15 acres of mature forest

Unit 2 of this timber sale contains mature forest and is worthy of protection, containing Douglas Firs up to 43” in diameter. This area is also surrounded by clearcuts and is some of the only mature forest remaining in the immediate vicinity.

Sunny

Decision date: 1/1/2026

Trust beneficiaries: Forest Board Repayment, State Forest Purchase

Size: 92 acres

Beets

Decision date: 2/1/2026

Trust beneficiaries: State Forest Transfer

Size: 193 acres

Caramel

Decision date: 2027

Trust beneficiaries: State Forest Transfer, Forest Board Repayment, State Forest Purchase, Charitable/Educational/Penal & Reformatory Instit.

Size: 212 acres

Lions Main

Decision date: 2027

Trust beneficiaries: Forest Board Repayment, State Forest Transfer

Size: 219 acres

Astro

Decision date: 2028

Trust beneficiaries: Capitol Grant/Common School

Size: 93 acres

Oracle (Currently in a nominated Carbon Project phase 2 parcel)

Decision date: 2030

Trust beneficiaries: Common School, Forest Board Repayment, State Forest Transfer

Size: 191 acres, all mature forest

Shake and Bake

Decision date: 2040

Trust beneficiaries: State Forest Transfer

Size: 133 acres