

# Clallam County

## Mature Forests on State Land

Natural Climate Solutions Recommendations for the Board of Commissioners

Compiled by the Center for Responsible Forestry, October 2023



*Mature forests in Western Washington are rapidly disappearing, as the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) auctions them off on a monthly basis to the highest bidding timber company. The Center for Responsible Forestry (CRF) advocates for the creation of a new mature forest conservation policy on lands managed by DNR and works with counties to participate in current conservation programs. This report is a work in progress. Our goal is to provide the most up to date information on planned DNR timber sales and current management practices, but this is subject to change as DNR frequently modifies future harvest plans.*

For more information, contact [olympic@c4rf.org](mailto:olympic@c4rf.org)

*Photo by forest2sea.com*

## **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) within a Natural Climate Solutions (NCS) account to protect 2,000 acres of "structurally complex, carbon dense" forestland managed by the state. However, the legislature did not provide 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 1" 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:  $\geq 20$ " DBH.
  - Some dominant trees  $\geq 30$ " 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

CRF uses DNR's stand age data and LiDAR imagery to model where there is mature forest in Western Washington. CRF and Olympic Forest Coalition have conducted site visits and surveys of the timber sales that contain modeled mature forest, including all of the sales within this report. We have concluded that all of these sales contain mature forest acreage that meet the above criteria.

The NCS program works by buying replacement land of equivalent fair-market value. Because replacement lands will likely be younger plantation forests, they may not be at the right age for harvest in the short term. However, because the land purchased will be of equivalent value, and the timber value of the older forests is substantially greater than it is in younger plantations, it will almost certainly be the case that the replacement land will constitute a larger acreage than the area set aside, and participating counties see this as an attractive long term investment.

### **Prioritization for this report**

Our top two parcel recommendations contain some mature forest acreage outside of planned sales, which would increase connectivity to other protected areas like Marbled Murrelet habitat. Connectivity to other protected areas is something that DNR has expressed as an important factor for NCS parcel selection.

Since first learning about this opportunity, the Clallam County Board of Commissioners have expressed concern over the lack of up-front funding for junior taxing districts. Junior taxing districts are the beneficiaries of the majority of the state trust lands in the county (i.e., the trust beneficiary labeled as "State Forest Transfer"). We took that concern into account in identifying the featured parcels and recommendations for the NCS program in this report. Our featured recommendations look to maximize areas where the junior taxing districts are not the beneficiaries (e.g., the "Common School" and "Capitol Grant" Trusts which are highlighted pink).

Here is a [spreadsheet](#) for a quick reference to all timber sales with mature forest in the report.

## Dungeness Proposal

Multiple parcels that add up to 571 acres and include the Power Station Timber Sale.

### Power Station Timber Sale

Auction date: April 24, 2024.

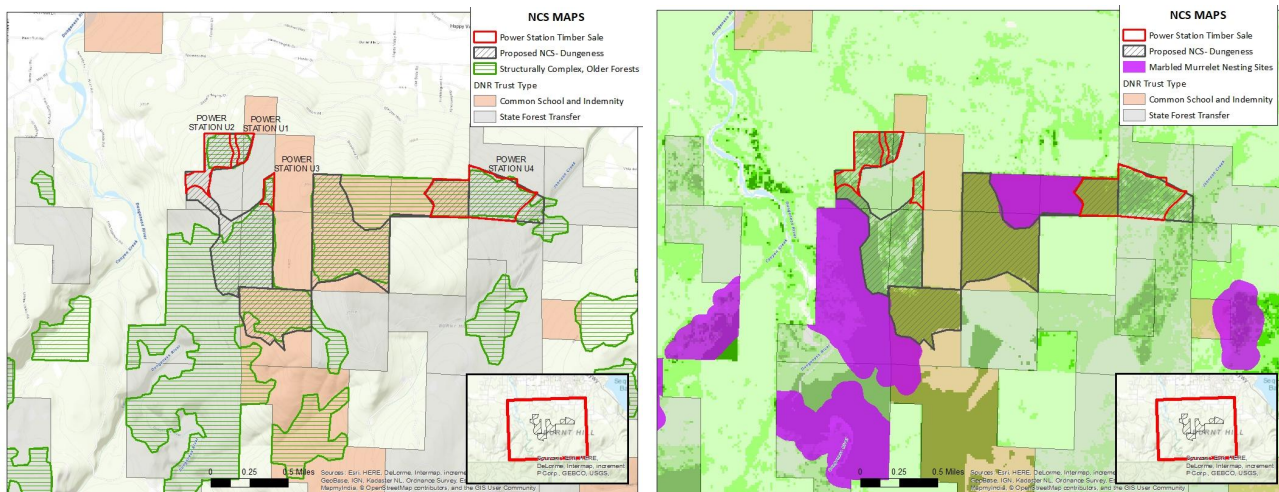
Trust Beneficiaries: 121.06 acres State Forest Transfer, 38.67 acres Common School

Size: 159.73 acres, 140.6 acres are modeled mature forest

This sale is located in the rain shadow of the Olympics, on the east side of Sequim and south of Hwy 101, with three units draining into the Dungeness River and the fourth draining into Sequim Bay. The stand ages according to DNR records are 107, 97,82 and 106 years old, and the forest is dominated by mature trees, specifically Douglas fir and cedar over 40 inches in diameter.

We want to draw attention to Power Station unit 4 because a portion (38.67 acres) benefits the common school trust. It is also part of a larger contiguous 382.38 acre mature forest stretching west to the Dungeness River, and adjacent to marbled murrelet nesting site protected areas. A large part of this connected area benefits the common school trust.

### Maps of Dungeness Proposal



### Examples of large trees within "Power Station" timber sale



## Sutherland Proposal

Multiple parcels that add up to 424 acres and include the Shore Thing timber sale.

## Shore Thing Timber Sale

Auction date: TBD 2028

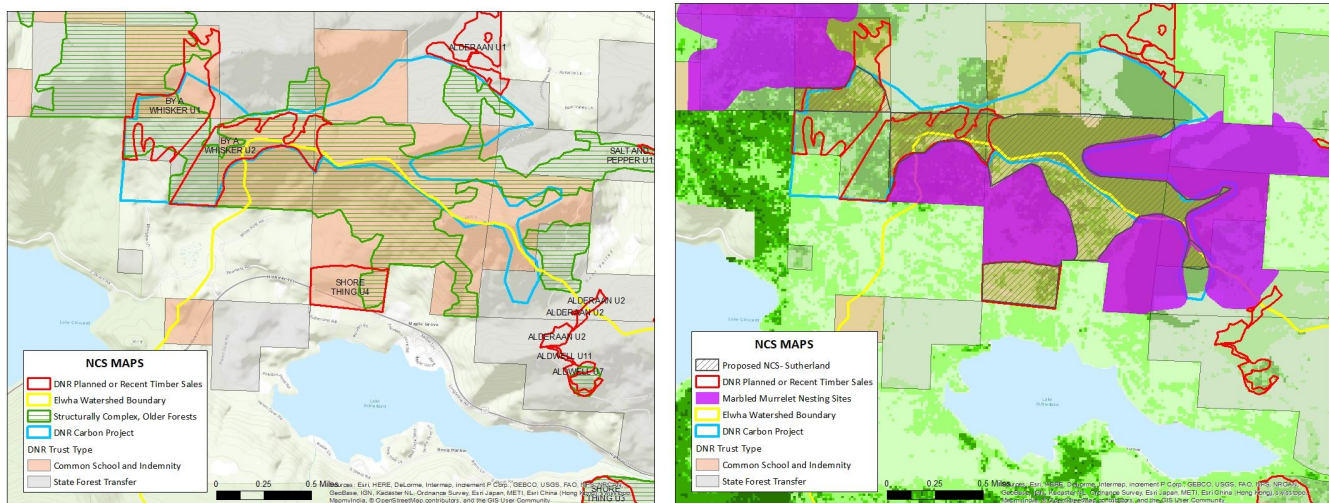
Trust Beneficiaries: 54.63 acres Common School Trust, 45.27 acres State Forest Transfer

Size: 99.9 acres, 54.66 acres are modeled mature forest

This is a timber sale located in the Elwha River watershed, with units 1-3 in the “Elwha Watershed Protection Project” Trust Land Transfer (TLT) that has been proposed by the City of Port Angeles. Unit 4 is a variably steep south facing slope on the north side of Lake Sutherland. It contains an impressive legacy forest, creek, and wetland area in the eastern part of the unit, with a stand age of 75 years old. The dominant cohort of Douglas firs and cedars on the eastern side were over 40” in diameter, and we measured many douglas firs over 50” in diameter.

We want to draw attention to Unit 4 because the trust beneficiary is solely Common School Trust rather than State Forest Transfer. Additionally it is part of a larger contiguous legacy forest that is connected to areas proposed for conservation in the DNR’s carbon program and adjacent to marbled murrelet nesting site protected areas.

## Maps of Sutherland Proposal



## Examples of large trees within “Shore Thing” timber sale Unit 4



We included this timber sale, “Pants on Fyre,” in the report only because it has no benefit to the county. It benefits the Capitol Grant, a fund for building projects in Olympia. Because it is a small parcel and lacks the connectivity to marbled murrelet nesting sites, it is not a priority over the previous two recommendations.

### **Pants on Fyre**

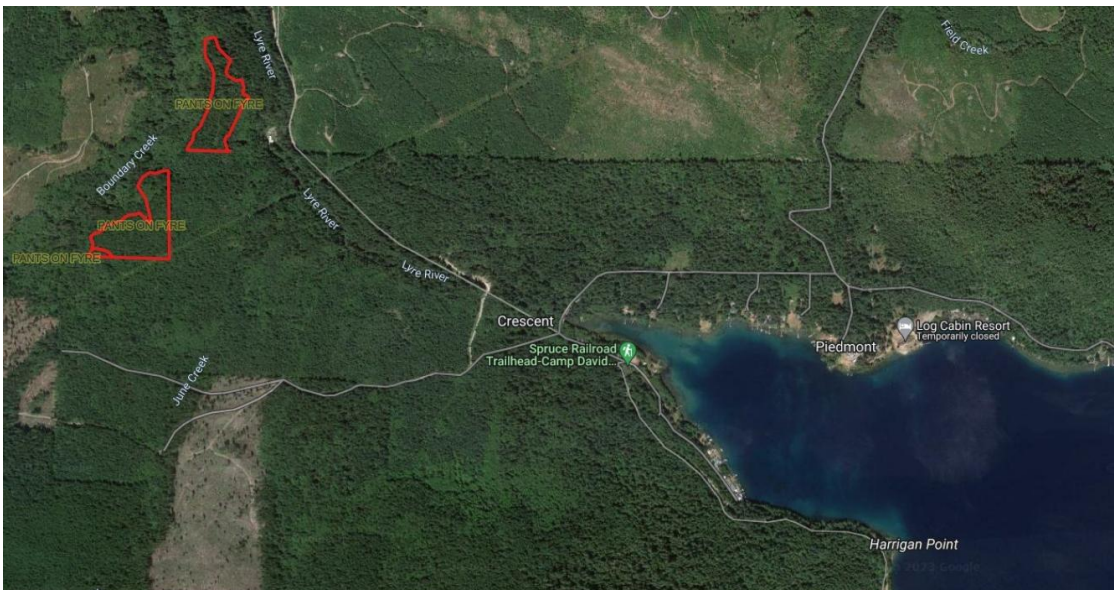
Auction date: January 24th 2024.

Trust Beneficiaries: 22.65 acres Capitol Grant

Size: 22.65 acres, 14 acres are modeled mature forest

This sale is a small but unique forest near Lake Crescent, adjacent to Boundary Creek, a tributary to the Lyre river. Mature forest makes up more than half the sale and the stand age is modeled by the DNR to be 88 years old. We measured red cedars up to 45”, Douglas firs up to 36”, hemlock up to 36” and sitka spruce up to 49” in diameter. In addition to observing the diversity of trees, many hemlocks had large burls, and we found multiple species of mushrooms including chanterelles. The sale is mostly flat, but the western border of unit 2 was at the edge of a cliff measuring over 45 degrees. Logging raises concerns about slope stability and impact to the creek, an estimated 150 feet below.

Map of “Pants on Fyre” timber sale



Examples of large trees within the “Pants on Fyre” timber sale



Below are other timber sales in Clallam County that we have surveyed and confirmed to contain mature forest. The sales with the most acreage not benefiting junior taxing districts are listed first, followed by sales that only benefit State Forest Transfer (junior taxing districts), from largest to smallest. More information and photos can be supplied if needed for consideration for the NCS program.

### **Birds Eye View**

Auction Date: 6/19/2028

Trust beneficiaries: 135.04 State Forest Transfer, 100.18 acres Common School

Size: 237.44 acres, 153.7 acres are modeled mature forest

### **\*Parched**

Auction Date: 1/24/ 2024

Trust beneficiaries: 167.73 acres State Forest Transfer, 45.22 acres Common School

Size: 213.69 acres, 118.8 acres are modeled mature forest

### **\*TCB23**

Auction Date: 7/26/2023

Trust beneficiaries: State Forest Transfer 34.36 acres, Common School 10.29 acres

Size: 45.70, 15.9 acres are modeled mature forest

### **Doc Holiday**

Auction date: 2024

Trust Beneficiaries: 79.59 State Forest Transfer and 9.95 Common School

Size: 88.54 acres, 21.06 acres are modeled mature forest

### **Pistol Pete**

Auction date: 3/24/2024

Trust beneficiaries: 153.67 State Forest Transfer, 4.33 Common School

Size: 158 acres, 42.4 acres are modeled mature forest

### **Tree Well**

Auction date: 2024

Trust Beneficiaries: 268 State Forest Transfer

Size: 268 acres, 156.5 acres are modeled mature forest

### **Dungeness and Dragons**

Auction date: June 19, 2024.

Trust Beneficiaries: 150 acres State Forest Transfer

Size: 150 acres, 98.1 acres are modeled mature forest

### **Bread and Butter**

Auction date: 2025

Trust Beneficiaries: 141 State Forest Transfer

Size: 141 acres, 38.16 acres are modeled mature forest

### **Tiger Stripes**

Auction Date: 3/24/2025

Trust beneficiaries: 131.53 acres State Forest Transfer

Size: 131.53 acres, 31 acres are modeled mature forest

### **\*Power Plant**

Auction Date: 7/26/2023

Trust beneficiaries: 87.73 acres State Forest Transfer

Size: 126.53 acres, 8.9 acres are modeled mature forest

**Chicken Sticks**

Auction Date: 6/11/2025

Trust beneficiaries: 113.63 acres State Forest Transfer

Size: 113.63 acres, 31 acres are modeled mature forest

**\*Alley Cat**

Auction Date: 5/29/2024

Trust beneficiaries: 94.87 acres State Forest Transfer

Size: 94.87 acres, 27.8 acres are modeled mature forest

**Salt and Pepper**

Auction Date: 1/24/2024

Trust beneficiaries: 74 acres State Forest Transfer

Size: 74 acres, 59.9 acres are modeled mature forest

\*Sales Included in the City of Port Angeles 2023 TLT application.