

Timber sales of concern in King 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. King 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 King 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 sale on this list ("Chinwag") contains old-growth trees and is our highest priority for conservation. We strongly recommend a thorough old-growth assessment from DNR for this sale. All sales listed after this contain large areas of mature forest and are ordered by estimated decision date. The final page of this document contains sales with varying amounts of mature forest that have yet to be surveyed, because they are behind the secure perimeter of Hanson Reservoir.

Here is a [spreadsheet](#) for a quick reference of our priorities.

Chinwag

Decision date: 10/28/2025

Trust beneficiaries: **State Forest Transfer**

Size: 115.39 acres of mature forest with residual old-growth

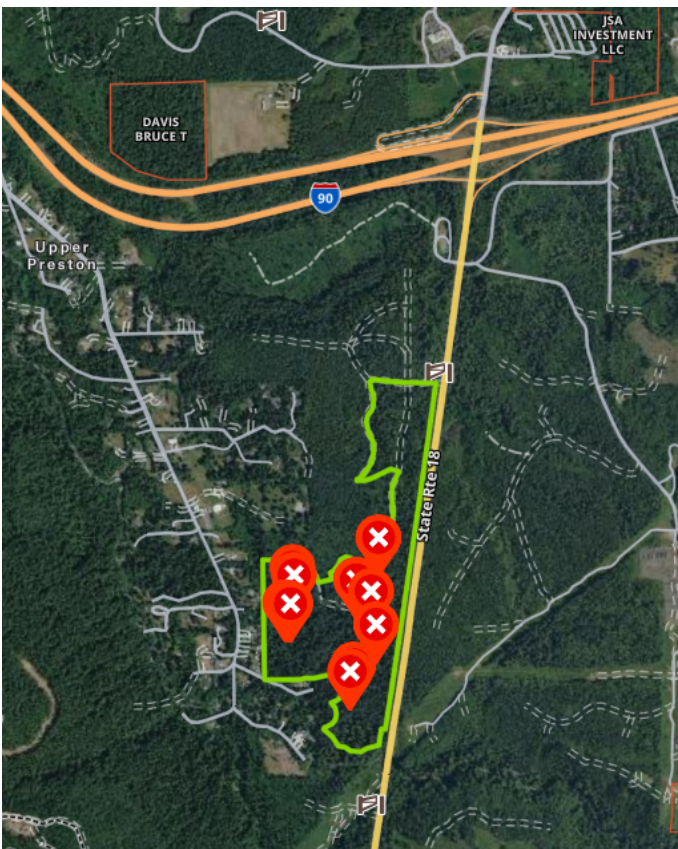
A stand of enormous, beautiful trees. On the banks of the Raging River where it crosses Highway 18, and just South of I-90. Right next to ongoing road construction on Highway 18. The trees in this area are modeled by DNR to be between 50-82 years old, but we believe this information is inaccurate. We found many trees in this area over 40", including Sitka Spruce trees of 75, 85, and 96" diameter.



The largest Douglas Fir we found in this unit was 56", the largest Western Red Cedar was 64", and the largest western hemlock was 44", so large trees of all species are abundant here.



Map showing the largest trees in Chinwag:



Wishbone

Decision date: **6/6/2023** (not approved, due to public pressure)

Trust beneficiaries: 95.26 acres Capitol Grant, **16.14 acres State Forest Transfer**

Size: 111.4 acres, all mature forest

This is a great example of a mature forest, with trees over 30" diameter present in almost every corner of the sale. The trees in this area are modeled by DNR to be between 58-94 years old. Units 2 and 3 each have several cedars and several firs over 45" diameter which are not marked as "leave trees". The "leave tree" areas are not remarkable at all because they contain trees of similar size to those throughout the rest of the sale. There are also some mature and quite healthy bigleaf maples in toward the top of the hill of unit 1 that are already great wildlife habitat, have little to no timber value, but for some reason are not currently marked as "leave trees." Many of the older cedars are marked as "leave trees" but most of the biggest firs are not.



Unit 1 of the Wishbone sale is a well-used recreation area, with an actively maintained trail running west from Stossel Creek Road along the south side of the unit, connecting with the main trail running north to the top of Platts' Lookout. Directly bordering the north side of the unit is the Spirit Ridge disc golf course, which has operated for over a decade as one of the premier disc golf courses in eastern King County. One of the disc golf "holes" is actually within the timber sale area and is made of wood, so it might get destroyed by logging. This would make the course incomplete. We observed signs of traditional bark harvesting of mature cedar trees in unit 1.



Unit 1 is both very wet and very steep. We took plenty of slope measurements between 25-30 degrees in the northwest corner of the unit on the side of Platts' Lookout. The steepest slope measured in this area was 47 degrees, but 25-30 is a better average of the area. Logging steep slopes like this could result in severe erosion damage to the nearby Stossel Creek.

Units 2 and 3 are basically a wetland during the rainy season, and retain some moisture during the summer also. There was frequently 6-8" of mud everywhere in March. This is an area where a stream spreads out into a 400-plus-foot-wide swampy area that runs for almost half a mile, the area covered by units 2 and 3. Pools of standing water and trickles of running water are common features of this landscape. Some of the water between the two units is not part of the sale area, but will undeniably be affected. Unit 2 of the sale is basically an unmarked riparian area. The whole unit is wet enough to possibly be called riparian.



Maps of Wishbone:



South Paw

Decision date: **10/31/2023**

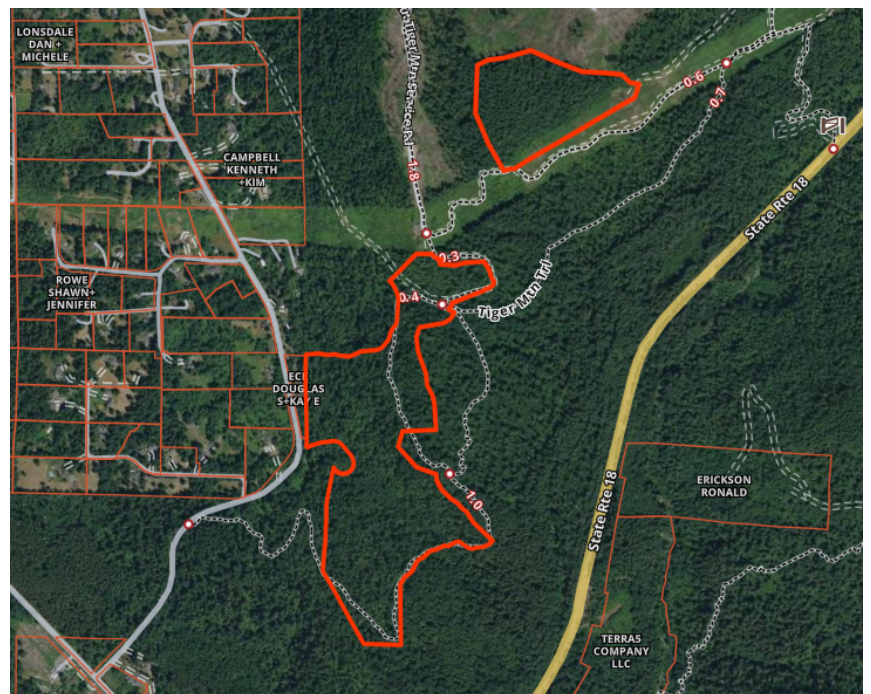
Trust beneficiaries: **State Forest Transfer**

Size: 90 acres, all mature forest

On the south end of Tiger Mountain State Forest, between Highway 18 and a residential neighborhood. This area is crisscrossed with Tiger Mountain bike trails and is also very popular for hiking. The trees in this area are modeled by DNR to be between 50-82 years old. South Paw contains dozens of 40-50" diameter Douglas Firs, as well as several majestic Bigleaf maples over 50".



Map of South Paw units 2 and 3



El Tigre

Decision date: 7/30/2024

Trust beneficiaries: **54.64 acres State Forest Transfer**, 37.84 acres Capitol Grant

Size: 92 acres, all mature forest.

This timber sale is in the south end of Tiger Mountain State Forest, right near the south parking lot close to Highway 18. The trees in this area are modeled by DNR to be between 76-82 years old. This area is always full of mountain bikers from Seattle, and we saw about a dozen people hiking and about three dozen biking on a Thursday morning.



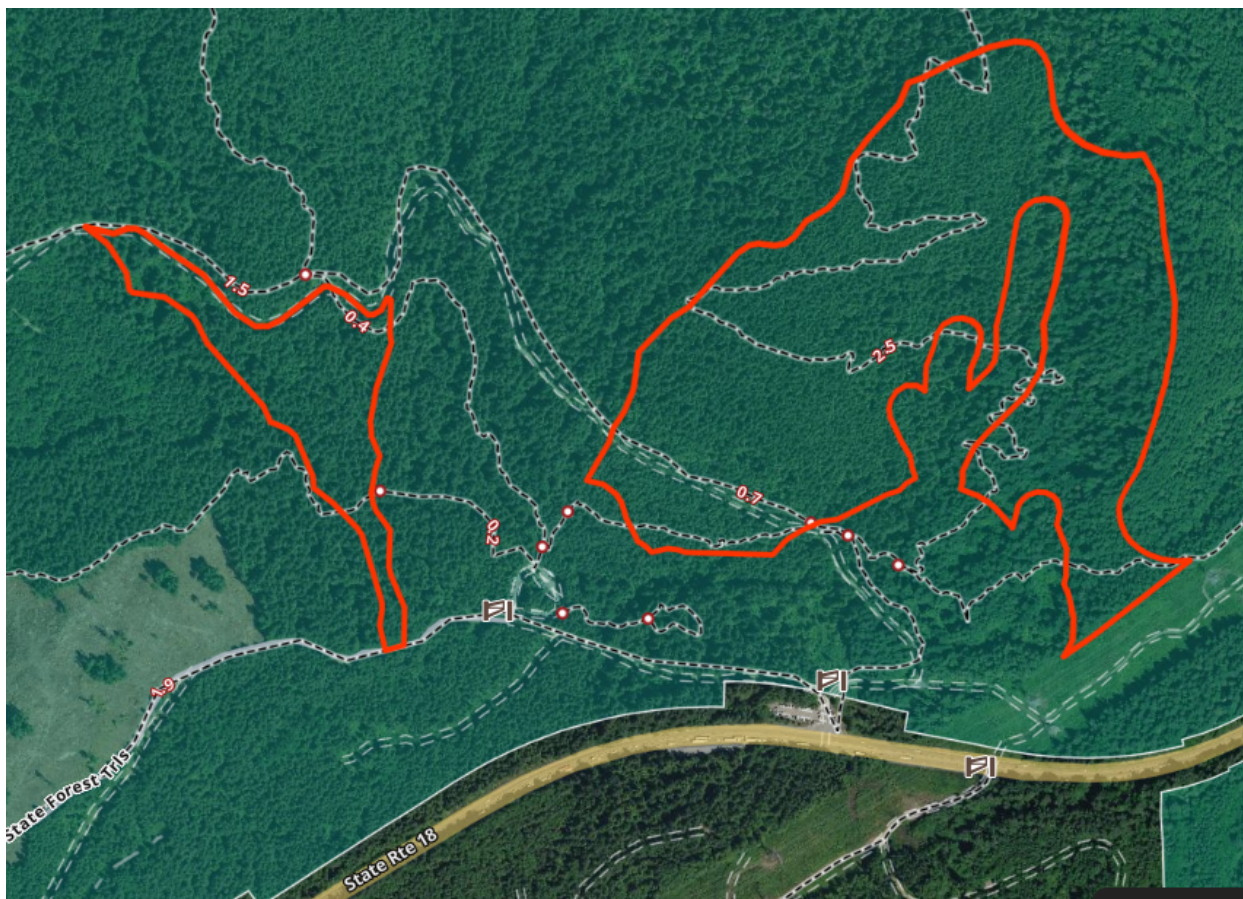
There's plenty of water flowing South through this area:



El Tigre contains dozens of 40-50" diameter Douglas Firs and Western Red Cedar, with cedars up to 60":



Map of El Tigre:



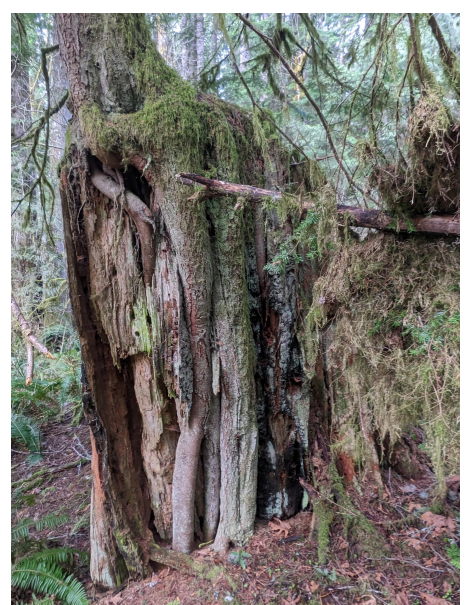
Echo System

Decision date: 7/30/2024. Note: This sale is located within a 397 acre parcel for DNR's Carbon Pilot Project. The fate of the Carbon Project is uncertain due to litigation. If the Carbon Project is canceled the sale will likely move forward.

Trust beneficiaries: **State Forest Transfer**

Size: 142 acres, all mature forest.

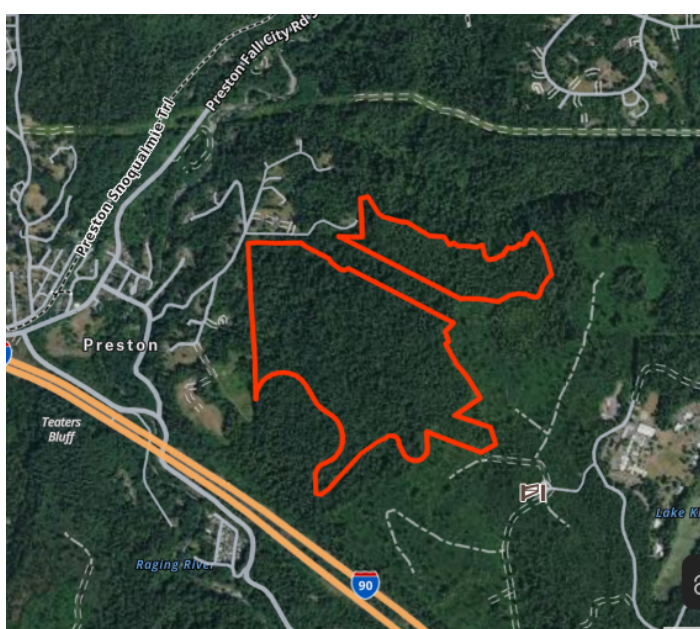
Just north of I-90, between the city of Preston and the Echo Glen juvenile facility. This is a healthy legacy forest that is doing well in a residential area. This timber sale borders at least 5 private backyards, with many more nearby. Downhill from this sale is Icy Creek, which flows through Preston. The south point of the sale is 150 meters from I-90. The trees in this area are modeled by DNR to be between 80-129 years old. It's a diverse mixed forest with western hemlocks up to 42", Bigleaf maples up to 46", doug firs up to 57", and cedars up to 63". There are dozens of notable trees over 50" throughout this unit. Most of the trees in here look very healthy and recovering well from previous logging 80+ years ago.



This area is very flat and very wet. Some water is flowing, but a lot of it is stagnant and deep enough that it may be there year-round. It's like a primeval swamp.



Maps of Echo System



Alpine Start

Decision date: 4/25/2026

Trust beneficiaries: 162.65 acres Scientific School, 36.15 acres Capitol Grant

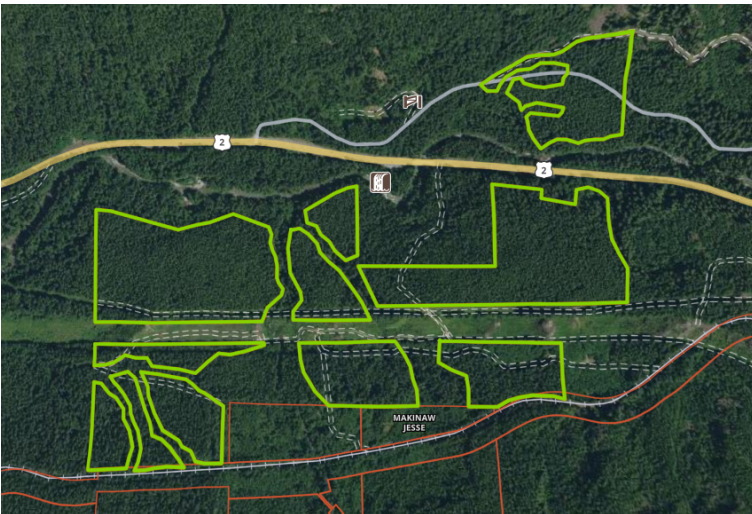
Size: 199 acres, all mature forest. Surrounds Tye River.

This sale is in the foothills of the Cascades, much further East than any of DNR's other planned timber sales. Eleven of the twelve units are located along the Tye River between the BNSF railroad and the Old Olympic Highway. US Highway 2 also runs through this sale, as does a wide easement of high-tension power lines. DNR estimates the trees in this area to be between 108 and 165 years old. Every part of this sale is intact mature forest, with plenty of nurse logs and stumps, a healthy understory, and a diversity of trees and forbs. Our surveys revealed Douglas Firs up to 52" and Western Red Cedars up to 60" in diameter. This sale is in a popular area for recreation, and is very close to Alpine Falls, the multi-use Iron Goat interpretive trail, the historic town of Wellington, the Scenic Hot Springs, and it's right downhill from Stevens Pass ski area.

Mature Western Red Cedar and Douglas Fir in Alpine Start timber sale



Map of Alpine Start timber sale



Other Fiscal Year 2024 and 2025 timber sales in King County with modeled mature forest are located behind a secure perimeter in the Howard Hanson Reservoir area, and CRF surveyors have not been able to access those.

Sylvan Pearl

Decision date: 10/24/2023

Trust beneficiaries: Common school

Size: 351 acres. **Above Hanson Reservoir.**

Wild Rover

Decision date: 10/29/2024

Trust beneficiaries: Common School

Size: 112 acres. **Above Hanson Reservoir.**