



MASON COUNTY CLIMATE JUSTICE

For Immediate Release - Local Groups Fight DNR Decisions by Filing Lawsuit ###
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Legal Appeal: Local Community Stands Up to WA State Department of Natural Resources

Shelton, WA – Last week, organizations representing local community members challenged the Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) decision to approve two timber sales in Mason County and its failure to comply with the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). These two Mason County sales will result in the destruction of nearly 300 acres of forest that locals have relied on for upwards of a century. For some Mason County residents, the ties to these two forests go back even farther.

The heart of this lawsuit is the Sherwood Forest, in Allyn, WA. The DNR calls the 154-acre planned harvest the "Sure Wood Timber Sale" and anticipates the removal of 99% of the trees near the homes of LakeLand Village and Trails End Lake.

"DNR failed to do the most basic work as the governmental steward of our lands, work mandated by SEPA," said Jennifer Calkins, attorney and PhD biologist who is representing the groups *pro bono* in the lawsuit. "The agency admitted it failed to gather the information sufficient to understand the value of the resource it is supposed to be caretaking. And in the face of this admission, rather than listening to the community who does know this forest, DNR is barreling forward with these aggressive, harmful harvests. DNR's failure to collect information hurts the community and places these workers' safety at risk."

Mason County should not expect the money made off this trust land harvest to return to the county. As Superintendent Chris Reykdahl, a member of the Board of the Natural Resources, [admitted to the Seattle Times](#): "the money from this [common schools] trust is disproportionately going to urban communities even though the revenue and the timber is generated in rural communities."

Beyond the inequitable financial burden, this proposed cut will eliminate innumerable other resources.

"With inflation as high as it is, families are reliant on public forests for food security and health. My family and I grew up harvesting berries, mushrooms, and other foods here," said James Landreth of Mason County Climate Justice. "I used to go to this very forest to escape heatwaves and dangerous home environments. With clearcuts more and more common in this landscape, places like these are all too rare."

Because the DNR chose to ignore community voices, on May 1 the [Port of Allyn Commissioners](#) stepped up in response to public comments by unanimously passing a [resolution](#) opposing the Sure Wood Timber Sale.

As Commissioner Ted Jackson said: "If the Port of Allyn, as the only [local] government agency in this area, doesn't take a stand, we're not representing our neighbors."

Commissioner John A. Sheridan agreed, gesturing to the meeting attendees and stating: "Here's the people we represent, right? Our community. This is a special place that I'd like to see protected."

Commissioner Judy Scott spoke last, summarizing the commissioners' decision as: "You are speaking. We listen."

Mason County Climate Justice (MCCJ) and Legacy Forest Defense Coalition (LFDC) filed this lawsuit "because we live here and care about our shared home. We are of this community, and we are doing this for our community," according to MCCJ co-founder Julianne Gale. "It's time for state government to listen to rural residents."

"My grandfather was a hand logger who organized logging families against the injustices of timber corporations 70-80 years ago," said Zephyr Elise, local resident and MCCJ president. "I'm following in his footsteps, working for a future where life is more important than the profits of state agencies. We must implement healthier forestry practices if we are going to provide livable wages and safer working conditions in our timber communities. We have regenerative forestry solutions that support both workers *and* the environment. We just need DNR to step up."

DNR's failure to comply with SEPA means that the environment is at risk with these timber sales. As Joshua Wright explained, "We have submitted evidence of an S1 critically imperiled plant community in the Sure Wood Timber Sale, but DNR still plans to take it to auction on May 23." Wright, a Union resident, LFDC advocate, and MCCJ board member added, "Only 6.3% of the Sherwood Creek watershed contains forests that originated prior to 1946. This timber sale will log one of the oldest forests left in the watershed."

For Squaxin Island Tribal Members, the connection to this watershed is much older than the State Department of Natural Resources. "Knowing that this forest is one of the last remaining forests around the Squaxin territory, where I can go and harvest from the same trees my ancestors harvested from, is disheartening," said Redwolf Krise from Squaxin Island Tribe and MCCJ's Advisory Council. "Trees can live for hundreds of years, but yet there aren't many left that are over 70 years old. It seems nobody respects the oldest souls on our planet much anymore. Once again money is more important than life." After a family walk in Sherwood Forest, he added, "Seeing the Cedar Trees that were harvested by my ancestors gave me great pride in remembering the stories of the tree people and how they should be respected."

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