



Whatcom County

COUNTY COURTHOUSE
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Agenda Bill Report

File Number: AB2023-640

File ID:	AB2023-640	Version:	1	Status:	Revised Substitute Adopted as Amended
File Created:	09/21/2023	Entered by:	CHalka@co.whatcom.wa.us		
Department:	Council Office	File Type:	Ordinance		
Assigned to:	Council Climate Action and Natural Resources Committee			Final Action:	10/10/2023
Agenda Date:	10/10/2023	Enactment #:	ORD 2023-058		
Related Files:					

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TITLE FOR AGENDA ITEM:

Ordinance establishing a task force to develop a Whatcom County Forest Resilience Plan

SUMMARY STATEMENT OR LEGAL NOTICE LANGUAGE:

Ordinance establishing a task force to develop a Whatcom County Forest Resilience Plan

HISTORY OF LEGISLATIVE FILE

Date:	Acting Body:	Action:	Sent To:
09/26/2023	Council	SUBSTITUTE INTRODUCED	Council Climate Action and Natural Resources Committee
		Aye: 4 Buchanan, Donovan, Frazey, and Galloway	
		Nay: 3 Byrd, Elenbaas, and Kershner	
10/10/2023	Council Climate Action and Natural Resources Committee	RECOMMENDED FOR ADOPTION WITH PROPOSED AMENDMENT(S)	
		Aye: 2 Donovan, and Galloway	
		Nay: 1 Elenbaas	
10/10/2023	Council	REVISED SUBSTITUTE ADOPTED AS AMENDED	
		Aye: 4 Buchanan, Donovan, Frazey, and Galloway	
		Nay: 3 Byrd, Elenbaas, and Kershner	

Attachments: Draft Ordinance Discussed in Committee 9.12.2023, Substitute Ordinance for 9.26.2023, Substitute Ordinance for 10.10.2023, Revised Substitute Following Committee 10.10.2023, Agenda Revision Notice for 9.26.2023, Revised Council Agenda 10.10.2023, Staff Comments for AB2023-640, Letter from American Forest Resource Council, Memo from Executive

4
5 **ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO DEVELOP A WHATCOM COUNTY FOREST**
6 **RESILIENCE PLAN**
7

8 **WHEREAS**, active forest management combined with the strategic
9 conservation of mature and old-growth forests can ensure both a thriving timber
10 economy and healthy forest ecosystems for fish and wildlife, carbon sequestration
11 and storage, recreation, watershed health, wildfire, pest, and disease resistance,
12 and climate resilience; and
13

14 **WHEREAS**, healthy, intact forests provide improved water quality, augment
15 summer low flows, stabilize steep slopes, and attenuate downstream flood impacts;
16 and
17

18 **WHEREAS**, forestry issues are multidisciplinary, requiring diverse expertise
19 in science, industry, climate, and natural resource management; and
20

21 **WHEREAS**, Whatcom County Council seeks experts from diverse
22 backgrounds, including educational and professional experience, to help advise the
23 County on issues relating to forest management and resilience; and
24

25 **WHEREAS**, three departments within Whatcom County government have
26 some jurisdiction around forestry issues and forest land management, including
27 Parks & Recreation, Planning & Development Services, and Public Works; and
28

29 **WHEREAS**, Whatcom County has several advisory committees and
30 commissions comprised of community members with expertise relevant to forestry
31 issues and managing forest lands in Whatcom County, including the Forestry
32 Advisory Committee, Climate Impact Advisory Committee, Wildlife Advisory
33 Committee, Planning Commission, and Parks & Recreation Commission; and
34

35 **WHEREAS**, Whatcom County has several local planning and regulatory
36 documents with a nexus to forestry, including but not limited to, the
37 Comprehensive Plan, Climate Action Plan, WRIA 1 Salmonid Recovery Plan,
38 Shoreline Management Plan, Critical Areas Ordinance, and Lake Whatcom
39 Management Program Work Plan; and
40

41 **WHEREAS**, the 2021 Whatcom County Climate Action Plan, adopted on
42 November 9, 2021, includes a chapter on Forestry outlining three key strategies:

- 43 1. Protect and enhance carbon storage and sequestration in forest
44 ecosystems.
45 2. Increase forest health, survival and climate resilience through forest
46 management practices that reduce wildfire risk, increase soil moisture,
47 and stream flows, and preserve wildlife habitat.

1 3. Promote climate resilient planning and programs to maintain our forest
2 economy for recreation and wood products through leadership and
3 education.
4

5 **WHEREAS**, on August 9, 2022, Whatcom County Council passed Resolution
6 2022-036 establishing priorities for Whatcom County’s 2025 Comprehensive Plan
7 update, which included several strategies and actions to support climate resilient
8 forests and a thriving timber economy; and
9

10 **WHEREAS**, over the last couple years, the Whatcom County Council has
11 actively engaged Commissioner Hilary Franz, the Washington State Board of
12 Natural Resources (BNR), and Washington State Department of Natural Resources
13 (DNR) staff on several timber sales, state legislation, and the pilot carbon project;
14 and
15

16 **WHEREAS**, on January 25, 2022, the Whatcom County Council sent a letter
17 to DNR requesting a pause on Bessie Unit 2 to allow for County staff to engage DNR
18 staff and representatives from the local forestry community to review the proposed
19 harvest and recommend possible actions to more fully address climate resilience
20 concerns; and
21

22 **WHEREAS**, on January 10, 2023, the Whatcom County Council sent a letter
23 to DNR providing feedback on Phase II of the Carbon Project; and
24

25 **WHEREAS**, on May 9, 2023, the Whatcom County Council sent a letter to
26 DNR including requests to explore co-management opportunities, take advantage of
27 new state programs and funding, and temporarily pause the Brokedown Palace
28 timber sale for further evaluation; and
29

30 **WHEREAS**, on June 7, 2023, Whatcom County received a letter from
31 Commissioner Hilary Franz outlining DNR’s efforts to conserve ecologically valuable
32 forests, an overview of state forest policies, new funding sources, and invited the
33 County to engage with DNR to develop a strategy for how DNR manages county
34 forest trust lands in Whatcom County; and
35

36 **WHEREAS**, forest management on state public lands is guided by the 1974
37 Washington State Forest Practices Act and associated forest practices rules, the
38 1997 State Trust Lands Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), the Policy for Sustainable
39 Forests, and other policies—none of which address the causes or impacts of climate
40 change; and
41

42 **WHEREAS**, Whatcom County also has a number of county owned forest
43 lands that would benefit from more active management including Lake Whatcom
44 Park and Canyon Lake Community Forest; and
45

1 **WHEREAS**, the Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Department is currently
2 working on a Request for Proposals to develop a forest management plan for Lake
3 Whatcom Park, which is land that was reconveyed from DNR in 2014; and
4

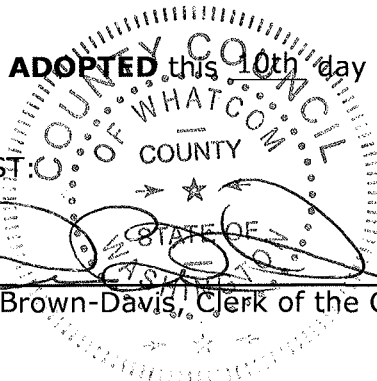
5 **WHEREAS**, the Whatcom County Public Works Department is actively
6 working with the Whatcom Land Trust, Nooksack Indian Tribe, and other key
7 partners on the Stewart Mountain Community Forest Initiative, which includes
8 additional forest land acquisition, a forest management plan, and potential
9 opportunity for more County owned forestland; and
10

11 **WHEREAS**, Whatcom County will benefit from increased coordination and
12 collaboration around all forestry related issues including the management of public
13 forestlands; and
14

15 **WHEREAS**, Whatcom County will benefit from the development of a task
16 force dedicated to reviewing relevant County policies, programs, organizational
17 structure, and staff capacity, in addition to fully engaging all levels of government
18 and relevant stakeholders in the development of a unified forest resilience plan for
19 our local forestry resources, including a framework for engagement moving
20 forward.
21

22 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED** by the Whatcom County Council that
23 Whatcom County establish a multi-departmental, multidisciplinary Forest Resilience
24 Task Force as outlined in Exhibit A.
25

26
27 **ADOPTED** this 10th day of October, 2023.
28

29
30 ATTEST: 
31 Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council
32
33

34 WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
35 WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

36 
37 Barry Buchanan, Council Chair

38 APPROVED AS TO FORM:
39

40 WHATCOM COUNTY EXECUTIVE
41 WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

42 
43 Satpal Sidhu, County Executive

44 /s/Karen Frakes approved on 10/10/2023/MR
45 Civil Deputy Prosecutor
46

47 Approved () Denied

 Date Signed: 10/13/23

1
2 **EXHIBIT A**

3
4 **2.170 FOREST RESILIENCE TASK FORCE**

5
6 **Sections:**

7 **2.170.010 Established**

8 **2.170.015 Sunset**

9 **2.170.020 Purpose**

10 **2.170.030 Function**

11 **2.170.040 Permanent Members**

12 **2.170.050 Additional appointed members.**

13 **2.170.060 Term of office.**

14 **2.170.070 Organization – Meetings**

15 **2.170.080 Committee Staffing**

16 **2.170.090 Reporting**

17
18
19
20 **2.170.010 Established.**

21 There is hereby established the Forest Resilience Task Force.

22
23 **2.170.015 Sunset.**

24 This Task Force will sunset on December 31, 2025 unless otherwise
25 extended by the Whatcom County Council. All members’ terms will end
26 when the Task Force sunsets.

27
28 **2.170.020 Purpose.**

29 The Task Force is created to develop a comprehensive Whatcom
30 County Forest Resilience Plan, which will include a framework for
31 engagement with local, state, federal, and tribal governments and
32 relevant stakeholders on issues relating to forest management and
33 resilience. The Task Force will report to the Whatcom County Council
34 and Executive.

35
36 **2.170.030 Function.**

37 The Task Force will consider input from diverse experts, stakeholders,
38 and community members to develop a comprehensive Forest
39 Resilience Plan with science- and evidence-based strategies and
40 actions towards sustaining a thriving timber economy, restoring
41 healthy forest ecosystems for fish and wildlife, addressing stream high
42 and low flow issues, enhancing carbon sequestration and storage,
43 promoting robust recreation opportunities, improving watershed health
44 (including Lake Whatcom), improving wildfire, pest, and disease
45 resistance, and increasing the overall resilience of Whatcom County’s
46 forests to climate impacts. The Plan will include a framework for

1 engagement and coordination with local, state, federal, and tribal
2 governments and relevant stakeholders on forestry issues. The Plan
3 will also include community values and desired outcomes to inform
4 forest management plans for publicly owned forest lands. The Task
5 Force will also review relevant County policies, programs,
6 organizational structure, and staff capacity, and include its findings
7 and recommendations in the Plan.

8
9 **2.170.040 Permanent Members.**

10 The Task Force will include eleven permanent members. The following
11 representatives will be appointed by their designated department,
12 agency, council, committee or commission:

- 13
14 A. One representative from Whatcom County, appointed by the
15 Executive;
- 16
17 B. One representative from Lummi Nation;
- 18
19 C. One representative from Nooksack Indian Tribe;
- 20
21 D. One representative from the Washington State Department of
22 Natural Resources;
- 23
24 E. One representative from the United States Forest Service;
- 25
26 F. Two representatives from the Forestry Advisory Committee;
- 27
28 G. One representative from the Climate Impact Advisory Committee;
- 29
30 H. One representative from the Wildlife Advisory Committee;
- 31
32 I. One representative from the Planning Commission; and
- 33
34 J. One representative from the Parks and Recreation Commission.

35
36 **2.170.050 Appointed Members.**

37 In addition to the permanent members designated above, the Task
38 Force will include eight community members, appointed by the
39 Whatcom County Council:

- 40
41 A. One community member with expertise in forest management
42 and/or wood products industry;
- 43
44 B. One community member with expertise in owning and/or managing
45 forest lands for conservation purposes;
- 46

- 1 C. One community member with expertise in climate, salmon
2 recovery, and natural resources policy;
- 3
- 4 D. One community member with expertise in watershed management
5 (including Lake Whatcom) and/or land use planning;
- 6
- 7 E. Two community members with expertise in relevant science
8 disciplines; and
- 9
- 10 F. Two representatives from trust land beneficiaries.
- 11

12 **2.170.060 Term of office.**

13 Permanent and appointed members are eligible to serve the entire
14 duration of the Task Force as established in 2.170.015. Should the
15 task force duration be extended, members will serve no more than
16 four years, in accordance with the Whatcom County Charter 3.23.

17

18 **2.170.070 Organization – Meetings.**

19 Meetings of the Task Force will be open and accessible to the public
20 and will be subject to the Open Public Meetings Act. The Task Force
21 will determine its own meeting schedule. Written records of meetings,
22 research, findings and recommendations will be kept and made
23 available to the public. The Task Force will adopt its own rules and
24 procedures for the conduct of business.

25

26 **2.170.080 Committee Staffing and Funding Support.**

27 The Task Force will have full support from the Whatcom County
28 Council, and will coordinate with the Executive’s office and relevant
29 department staff. The Council may provide, through the budget
30 process, funding for locally delivered paid consultant assistance to
31 conduct and complete its tasks in an efficient and effective manner.

32

33 **2.170.090 Reporting**

34 The Task Force will submit to the Whatcom County Council and
35 Executive the Whatcom County Forest Resilience Plan no later than
36 September 30, 2025. The Task Force will provide at least two progress
37 reports to the Council before a final presentation and submission of the
38 Plan.