

**CLERK OF THE COUNCIL**  
Dana Brown-Davis, C.M.C.

**COUNTY COURTHOUSE**  
311 Grand Avenue, Suite #105  
Bellingham, WA 98225-4038  
(360) 778-5010



**COUNCILMEMBERS**  
Barry Buchanan  
Tyler Byrd  
Todd Donovan  
Ben Elenbaas  
Carol Frazey  
Kaylee Galloway  
Kathy Kershner

## WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL

Commissioner Hilary Franz  
Office of the Commissioner of Public Lands  
MS 47001  
Olympia, WA 98504  
[cpl@dnr.wa.gov](mailto:cpl@dnr.wa.gov)

Washington State Board of Natural Resources  
MS 47000  
Olympia, WA 98504  
[bnr@dnr.wa.gov](mailto:bnr@dnr.wa.gov)

January 25, 2022

Dear Commissioner Franz and Members of the Washington State Board of Natural Resources:

We are writing you today regarding the Department of Natural Resources' proposed Bessie Sorts Timber Sale, logging 166 acres of public forestland in the Lake Whatcom watershed, which includes approximately 46 acres dominated by legacy trees and mature habitat.

Logging this mature site will affect our community's drinking water quality, habitat support, climate resilience, and will create other negative impacts. Clear-cutting inherently loads pollutants into nearby water sources, and increases risk of floods, landslides, erosion, soil degradation, and herbicide runoff. Lake Whatcom is the drinking water source for over 100,000 Whatcom County residents including most of the residents of the City of Bellingham. We believe protecting our drinking water is of the utmost importance and that older forests help contribute to clean, cool, and plentiful water.

Together with our local partners, Whatcom County has made significant investment to help protect thousands of acres in the Lake Whatcom watershed. Harvesting this area could undo much of the progress we have made in the last few years, and we cannot afford to take that risk, financially or environmentally.

In November 2021, Whatcom County adopted an updated Climate Action Plan that outlines goals, strategies, and actions in both the built and natural environment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, address mitigation and adaptation to climate change, and build climate resiliency. Some of these strategies include sustainable forest practices to maximize forest health and resilience, maintaining tree canopies, protecting our water resources, and enhancing ecosystem services. We share a commitment to climate mitigation and adaptation, and acknowledge the value older forests, but worry that proceeding with the Bessie Timber Sale will detract from our local efforts.

We commend Commissioner Franz for issuing a directive that DNR pause all timber sales with forest that originated prior to 1900. We strongly urge you to include the Bessie Unit 2 in your directive and withdraw it from the auction process. We also encourage the BNR to protect legacy forests by implementing a full moratorium on logging in legacy forestlands. We hope this will result in protecting all mature trees (75-years or older) within the Bessie Sorts.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,

Whatcom County Council

DRAFT