

MEMORANDUM

TO: Whatcom County Council
311 Grand Avenue, Suite 105
Bellingham, WA 98225

FROM: Whatcom County Forest Advisory Committee (FAC)
5280 Northwest Drive
Bellingham, WA 98226

DATE: October 6, 2025

RE: Forest Resilience Task Force Forest Resilience Plan, 2025

Overview: The Forest Advisory Committee (FAC) acknowledges the work of the Forest Resilience Task Force; however, the FAC has specific recommendations based on the concerns as outlined below:

- It is not clear what ownerships fall under the Plan's recommendations.
- Much of the data regarding the Whatcom County "description of forest assets" is decades old and either not cited at all or is done so with errors (i.e., many of the citations do not include the information purported in the section which it states to support). For instance, see (i) WADNR n.d., (ii), Haddad et al. 2015, and (iii) Raymond et al. 2014 (pp 4-5).
- Inaccuracies and incorrect language throughout the Plan (e.g., timber excise tax, p. 4) are likely to reinforce or increase public misperceptions.

Goals, Objectives, Actions: The FAC finds the Goals and the Objectives generally acceptable. The Actions, however, are too broad to be effective. Further, many of the action items lack economic, environmental, or social cost benefit analysis and require costly resources to implement.

- Action items are not applicable across all ownerships.
- Actions should state the intended outcome, assess the likelihood of achieving that outcome, and propose implementation strategies at various scales (i.e., county, small forest landowner, etc.)

Role of the FAC: Ordinance 2025-011 amended Whatcom County Code Chapter 2.123 to expand the scope and membership of the FAC to add expand the stakeholder input through 6 ex-officio positions representing the USFS, Whatcom Conservation District, Whatcom Land Trust, the Lummi and Nooksack Tribes, and Whatcom County Council. The Draft Plan fails to fully recognize the expanded multi-stakeholder representation of the FAC. Relatedly, the Draft Plan recommends the formation of several new committees (i.e., a "Forest Resilience Working Group" (p. 37), and a "new committee for implementation" (p. 31)). However, the tasks and membership recommendations for such new committees are already within the scope and updated membership of the FAC. Forming new committees would be redundant and wasteful.

The FAC supports the overarching concept of a County framework for a robust dialogue with multiple stakeholders to address issues related to forestlands and forestry in Whatcom County. The FAC, especially following ordinance 2025-011, is the ideal place for this to occur. A plan of this scope and ambition cannot be rushed.

Therefore, the FAC recommends:

1. The Council does not support the Draft Forest Resilience Plan in its entirety, and instead receive the plan and accept the Goals and Objectives. The draft plan will serve as a starting point for development of an accurate and robust tool for management of forestlands in Whatcom County.
2. The FAC, with additional clerical support from county staff, is formally tasked to re-draft the

Forest Resilience Plan with annual updates by section. Modifications include but are not limited to the following sections:

Executive Summary (p.3)

1.0 Background (starting on p. 3)

2.1 Description of Forest Assets/Forests of Whatcom County (starting on p. 8)

5.3 Whatcom County Programs and Resources (starting on p. 33)

Actions, as listed under each Goal/Objective (starting on p. 22)

3. The FAC is formally tasked with ongoing oversight and serves as the multi-stakeholder committee for implementation guidance of the final Plan when, and as directed by, the Council. The FAC will review the final Plan at least once every five years.

Respectfully,

David Janicki

Chair, Forest Advisory Committee

October 6, 2025

Acting on resolution of the Whatcom County FAC, October 6, 2025: approved unanimously.