

ORDINANCE NO. _____

ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO DEVELOP A WHATCOM COUNTY FOREST RESILIENCE PLAN

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, Whatcom County has several local planning and regulatory documents with a nexus to forestry, including but not limited to, the [Comprehensive Plan](#), [Climate Action Plan](#), [WRIA 1 Salmonid Recovery Plan](#), and [Lake Whatcom Management Program Work Plan](#); and

WHEREAS, the 2021 Whatcom County [Climate Action Plan](#), adopted on November 9, 2021, includes a chapter on Forestry outlining three key strategies:
1. Protect and enhance carbon storage and sequestration in forest ecosystems.

- 1 2. Increase forest health, survival and climate resilience through forest
- 2 management practices that reduce wildfire risk, increase soil moisture,
- 3 and stream flows, and preserve wildlife habitat.
- 4 3. Promote climate resilient planning and programs to maintain our forest
- 5 economy for recreation and wood products through leadership and
- 6 education.

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

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

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

24
25 **WHEREAS**, on January 10, 2023, the Whatcom County Council sent a [letter](#)
26 to DNR providing feedback on Phase II of the Carbon Project; and

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

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

38
39 **WHEREAS**, Whatcom County also has a number of county owned forest
40 lands that would benefit from more active management including Lake Whatcom
41 Park and Canyon Lake Community Forest; and

42
43 **WHEREAS**, the Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Department is currently
44 working on a Request for Proposals to develop a forest management plan for Lake
45 Whatcom Park, which is land that was reconveyed from DNR in 2014; and

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

7 **WHEREAS**, Whatcom County will benefit from increased coordination and
8 collaboration around all forestry related issues including the management of public
9 forestlands; and
10

11 **WHEREAS**, Whatcom County will benefit from the development of a task
12 force dedicated to fully engaging all levels of government and relevant stakeholders
13 in the development of a unified forest resilience plan for our local forestry
14 resources, including a framework for engagement moving forward.
15

16 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED** by the Whatcom County Council that
17 Whatcom County establish a multi-departmental, multidisciplinary Forest Resilience
18 Task Force as outlined in Exhibit A.
19

20
21 **ADOPTED** this ____ day of _____, 20____.
22

23
24
25 ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

26
27
28
29
30 _____
Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council

Barry Buchanan, Council Chair

31
32
33
34 APPROVED AS TO FORM:

WHATCOM COUNTY EXECUTIVE
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

35
36
37
38 _____
Civil Deputy Prosecutor

Satpal Sidhu, County Executive

() Approved () Denied

Date Signed: _____
44
45
46

1 **EXHIBIT A**

2
3 **2.xxx FOREST RESILIENCE TASK FORCE**

4
5 **Sections:**

6 **2.xxx.010 Established**

7 **2.xxx.015 Sunset**

8 **2.xxx.020 Purpose**

9 **2.xxx.030 Function**

10 **2.xxx.040 Permanent Members**

11 **2.xxx.050 Additional appointed members.**

12 **2.xxx.060 Term of office.**

13 **2.xxx.070 Organization – Meetings**

14 **2.xxx.080 Committee Staffing**

15 **2.xxx.090 Reporting**

16
17
18
19 **2.x.010 Established.**

20 There is hereby established the Forest Resilience Task Force.

21
22 **2.x.015 Sunset.**

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

26
27 **2.x.020 Purpose.**

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

34
35 **2.x.030 Function.**

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

1 community values and desired outcomes to inform forest management
2 plans for publicly owned forest lands.

3
4 **2.x.040 Permanent Members.**

5 The Task Force will include fourteen permanent members. The
6 following representatives will be appointed by their designated
7 department, agency, council, committee or commission:
8

- 9 A. One representative from the Whatcom County Parks & Recreation
10 Department;
- 11 B. One representative from the Whatcom County Planning &
12 Development Services Department;
- 13 C. Two representatives from the Whatcom County Public Works
14 Department;
- 15 D. One representative from Lummi Nation;
- 16 E. One representative from Nooksack Indian Tribe;
- 17 F. One representative from the Washington State Department of
18 Natural Resources;
- 19 G. One representative from the United States Forest Service;
- 20 H. Two representatives from the Forestry Advisory Committee;
- 21 I. One representative from the Climate Impact Advisory Committee;
- 22 J. One representative from the Wildlife Advisory Committee;
- 23 K. One representative from the Planning Commission; and
- 24 L. One representative from the Parks and Recreation Commission.

25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37 **2.x.050 Appointed Members.**

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

- 41 A. One community member with expertise in forest management
42 and/or wood products industry;
- 43 B. One community member with expertise in owning and/or managing
44 forest lands for conservation purposes;
- 45
46
47

- 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 **2.x.060 Term of office.**

12 Permanent and appointed members are eligible to serve the entire
13 duration of the Task Force as established in 2.x.015.

14 **2.x.070 Organization – Meetings.**

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

21 **2.x.080 Committee Staffing and Funding Support.**

22 The Task Force will have full support from the Whatcom County
23 Council, Executive’s office, department staff from Parks & Recreation,
24 Planning & Development Services, and Public Works, and locally
25 delivered paid consultant assistance to conduct and complete its tasks
26 in an efficient and effective manner.

27 **2.x.090 Reporting**

28 The Task Force will submit to the Whatcom County Council and
29 Executive the Whatcom County Forest Resilience Plan no later than
30 September 30, 2025. The Task Force will provide at least two progress
31 reports to the Council before a final presentation and submission of the
32 Plan.