



Kitsap Environmental Coalition – Annual Report 2022

2022 has been another busy year for the Kitsap Environmental Coalition (KEC). KEC advocates for safe water, air, and soil. We have worked hard throughout the year to carry out this mission, from our backyards to the greater world around us. Here are a few highlights:

- **No Clear Cutting of the Eglon Trust Lands:** Our focus on wetlands and forests began by educating the community about the possibility of protecting Eglon forest through the Trust Land Transfer program of the state's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and working with Stillwaters Environmental Center on protection of wetlands in North Kitsap. KEC cosponsored three tours of Eglon forest, two in cooperation with County Commissioner Rob Gelder and one with the WA chapter of the Sierra Club. They were attended by community members, our state legislators (Senator Rolfes and Representative Simmons), Commissioner Gelder, staff of both the Kitsap County Parks Department and the state DNR, representatives from the Suquamish and S'Klallam nations, and other environmental groups. Eglon forest is on the top of the list for funding through the TLT program if funded by the legislature this coming year. This could enable these 707 acres to be transferred over to the county. More to come...
- **Arborwood Silt Fence Removal:** When amphibians at North Kitsap Heritage Park and Arborwood were stopped from migrating by a silt fence built by the developer, KEC helped spread the word to the community. Residents helped the amphibians one by one get past the fence. KEC and the park stewards actively advocated for removal of this barrier along Norman Road, and finally the silt fence was removed.
- **Community Engagement and Legal Expertise Regarding Parks:** In February 2022, we learned of the call for community comments on the draft master plan for the Port Gamble Forest Heritage Park (PGFHP). It didn't take long for a number of KEC members to bring up major concerns about the plan. In April we shared

highlights of concerns that members had raised and called on the community to get involved to ensure that the park was being handled in a way that protected the rights of the forests and wetlands to be healthy as well as the extensive wildlife whose home is those forests and wetlands.

To ensure that appropriate laws are followed to protect the environment of the PGFHP, we twice enlisted the help of an environmental lawyer to ensure that volunteers as well as county leaders and staff who are working on the PGFHP Master Plan/Framework understand and respect legal requirements under the State Environmental Protection Act (SEPA) and the Growth Management Act (GMA). While much excellent work has been done on the PGFHP Master Plan, the size (3500 acres) of the park and the complexity of its environmental conditions are such that many more voices and perspectives are needed before decisions are made. Bringing in legal advice has been costly for KEC but very crucial in helping to ensure that decisions are made that protect the whole of the ecosystems on which our lives depend as well as incorporate the wide range of perspectives that are needed to represent all the people. KEC plans to continue to enlist legal help to protect our county's environment as it is affected by other issues, such as economic development, population growth, housing and justice for all the people of the county.

- **Protect State Forests:** In July 2022, the Washington State Supreme Court issued a unanimous ruling in *Conservation Northwest v. Commissioner of Public Lands* that found that DNR is under no obligation to maximize revenue from logging and has multiple ways it can create benefits for beneficiaries of the trust lands and the broader public. Given this ruling, the Washington State Lands Working Group (of which KEC is a part), put out a call for action. The call to action includes supporting rural communities and conserving all remaining legacy forests. It emphasizes forest health, biodiversity, and climate protection.
- **Eco-literacy for us all:** Those involved this year in KEC's working teams related to the above issues have been humbled by how much we all need to know about the ecosystems of our county and our every-day roles in protecting life for now and generations to come. Many past assumptions about how we treat our forests, wetlands, streams, and creatures small and large are dangerously

inaccurate. So much has been learned by scientists in recent years about how we sustain life on the planet and in these times of a rapidly changing climate that the general populace doesn't understand. We have been learning and acting at a rapid pace, but that knowledge has not yet been adequately shared with the general public. We hope to undertake major action in this regard in the coming year. With gratitude and humility, we seek your engagement with KEC activities and your financial donations to further KEC's ability to educate and advocate for safe water, air, and soil to support a sustainable environment where we live.