



May 2026

**Dear Governor Ferguson:**

On April 18<sup>th</sup> you spoke briefly at the event supporting the Roadless Rule that Trump is attempting to rescind. You said, “This is something I feel very very strongly about personally,” speaking about times you have spent hiking and climbing in WA. We are extremely glad to know your personal feelings about forests, because legacy forests (up to 140+ years old) *under State control* are being decimated as you read this letter. Indivisible Tacoma and the undersigned organizations are writing to ask you to take immediate actions to save the rapidly disappearing legacy forests that are left in Washington State. According to the Legacy Forest Defense Coalition, there are 92,000 acres of legacy forests that remain unprotected in Western Washington, and DNR currently has plans to clearcut log 20,800 of them, which would almost eliminate natural forests from the Willapa, Chehalis, and North River watersheds.

Indivisible Tacoma supported you because you do not take corporate donations and said you would not be beholden to corporate demands. Further, when you were Attorney General, you asked all AG departments to reorient themselves to include “the people” as their clients and promised to do the same with State agencies when you became Governor. We urge you to keep these significant promises!

The Legislature has entrusted the Board of Natural Resources with overseeing the management of our state forest lands, and your designee serves as a member of that Board. While some members have voted against the clear cut logging of legacy forests, your designee has consistently supported them. Further, some DNR/BNR problems are embedded in the State’s economy, and the solutions, which go beyond the structural purview of the Commissioner of Public Lands, can only come from your office.

**The organizations signing this letter are asking you, Governor Ferguson, to take action for these reasons:**

**1. Public Interest:** As you can see from the wide-spread support for the federal roadless rule, the public has a strong interest in saving forests. Over the past five years, thousands of people in Washington have signed petitions, attended rallies, spoken out at county council meetings, and attended the Board of Natural Resources meetings to express their support for the protection of publicly owned forests managed by the DNR. In a recent example, the Elwa Legacy Forests Coalition raised money to pay a logging company NOT to log a campground in the Olympic Peninsula. <https://washingtonstatestandard.com/briefs/fundraising-effort-saves-patch-of-state-managed-forest-in-western-wa-from-logging/>

**2. Structural Conflicts of Interest:** The Board of Natural Resources (BNR) which makes the final decisions on whether to log these forests, consists of representatives from constituencies that benefit directly from timber sales. The Policy for Sustainable Forests requires DNR to manage our state forest lands to achieve multiple objectives, including:

- A) public access and recreation;
- B) protecting historic and archaeological sites;
- C) protecting wildlife species and habitats;
- D) compliance with DNR’s trust lands Habitat Conservation;
- E) protecting water quality, watershed systems, and aquatic habitat;
- F) conserving old growth;
- G) climate resilience; and
- H) public health.

No one on the Board or Staff directly represents these interests so they are ignored.

In addition to the Board being represented by individuals who are incentivized by the entities they represent to log for revenue, DNR's staff is also paid by timber sale revenue, which adds additional pressure to log, and disincentivizes stewardship. In short, if DNR does not log timber, DNR Staff do not get paid. **This creates an alarmingly problematic, structurally misaligned incentive**—an unjust, systemic bias toward extraction—that undermines DNR's core mission to steward public lands and runs counter to public interest objectives, particularly in the context of the climate crisis and the unparalleled role older forests play in climate resilience.

**3. Your BNR Appointee Always Votes to Sell:** Whether because of the State's conflict of interest in this situation, described above, or for some other motivation, your appointee always votes FOR the sale of a forest, no matter how compelling the scientific arguments, how much public support a forest has, or the failure to address the other goals listed in #2. The recent Chai forest in the Capitol State Forest, is a case in point. Thurston County Commissioners have sent three *unanimous* letters each year between 2023 and 2025 asking the DNR/BNR to protect this forest. In spite of this unusual display of public support, the Board recently voted (4 to 2) to clearcut the Chai forest. Your Board representative was one of the deciding votes. If he had joined the two other Board members in voting to deny approval of this timber sale, this 140-year-old forest would have been conserved.

**4. Legacy Forests Do Not Have to be Logged to Meet DNR's Near-Term Harvest Targets.** There is more than enough timber inventory, according to DNR forest inventory records, in most counties to meet these targets for at least 10 years without logging any remaining legacy forests, yet they continue to be brought to the BNR for sale. Thus, legacy forests do not have to be logged in order to maintain jobs.

**5. DNR's 2004 Sustainable Harvest FEIS which implemented its Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) was approved based on the assumption that DNR would protect and restore 25-35% Structurally Complex Forests and 10-15% Old Growth Forests in each Region (Planning Unit) of Washington State by 2067.**

According to the DNR's own September 2024 analysis, the state currently averages less than 2% old growth across all five western planning units (excluding the OESF) and less than 1% in the South Coast Planning Unit, which includes the entire Chehalis River watershed and all of the watersheds that drain to Willapa Bay. Where is the accountability for missing these targets? What plans are in place to ensure compliance?

**6. The DNR has no Forest Management Plans. The Policy for Sustainable Forests requires the DNR to prepare forest management (land) plans.** The DNR has completely ignored this requirement, asserting that it does not have to comply with its own policy, because the Sustainable Harvest Calculation functions as a forest management plan. However, the Sustainable Harvest Calculation is exactly what its name suggests - it is a plan to harvest timber. It is not a management plan.

**7. Logging Should Not Continue Until Forest Land Plans are completed.** Forest Land Plans ensure that our publicly owned forests are managed to achieve the multiple objectives (see #2 above) and intended outcomes described in *the Policy for Sustainable Forests*. These objectives have been ignored in the blind pursuit of maximizing timber production.

**8. County and Education Support Should Not Be Dependent upon Logging Our Forests** The trade-off of badly needed public services at the expense of our forests is not sustainable in the near term, much less "in perpetuity!" The legacy forests will be gone while county and educational needs will still exist. Chris Reykdal, WA Superintendent of Public Instruction, is the only member of the BNR who consistently VOTES NO to logging trees and speaks out regularly to say that we need to fund counties and schools another way. It is within the Governor's prerogative to work with agencies and the legislature to create a solution.

**9. The Financial Costs to Mitigate the Climate Consequences of Logging and Aerial Spraying of Carcinogenic Herbicides on Legacy Forests Will be Exponentially Higher than any Short-Term Benefits.** If deforestation continues, our State and counties will bear the expenses resulting from increased floods, landslides, wildfires, water contamination, and more extreme human and ecological disasters.

**PLEASE TAKE IMMEDIATE STEPS TO SAVE THESE RARE IRREPLACEABLE FORESTS BY PERSUADING DECISION-MAKERS, TAKING EXECUTIVE ACTIONS, AND WORKING WITH THE LEGISLATURE ON THE FOLLOWING GOALS:**

**A. LONG TERM: Find alternative ways to fund county and educational needs to remove conflicts of interest held by members of the Board (BNR).**

**B. MEDIUM TERM: Work to change the composition of the BNR** to include an equal number of members representing conservation and recreation interests, scientists from a variety of related fields, indigenous communities, and others who have NO investment in logging forests, NO connections with the timber industry, and who will receive NO monetary or personal benefits for themselves or their constituencies.

**C. MEDIUM TERM: Urge the DNR to revise its stated mission to clarify that meeting multiple goals is required, not optional (with help from the legislature as needed).**

**D. SHORT TERM: Require the DNR to abide by its own governing Policy for Sustainable Forests.** Require a new Forest Land Plan be created for each HCP Planning Unit in Washington that takes into account multiple objectives, as described in the policy.

**E. IMMEDIATE ACTION: Clarify with your appointee that a key part of his duty is to ensure DNR management decisions are consistent with DNR plans and policies which require DNR to protect and restore complex and old growth forests. This begins by protecting our remaining legacy forests – not simply maximizing income from timber sales. If he is not willing to consider or adjust his representation, consider appointing someone new. (\*\*\*)In fact, all BNR members are male, and only one is not white. The Board should reflect the diversity of our state.)**

**F. IMMEDIATE ACTION: Encourage the DNR to ensure that the plan to conserve 77,000 acres of complex forests, announced in August 2025, will permanently protect the 20,800 acres that DNR is currently planning to clearcut in the next 5 years which include some of the oldest and most structurally complex lowland forests that remain in Western Washington!** Encourage work with forest conservation organizations to revise the maps for these 77,000 acres. These timber sales are not necessary to meet harvest targets (see #4 above) and swapping them with non-legacy forests would have the most immediate impact on saving our irreplaceable publicly owned legacy forests.

**WE ASK YOU, GOVERNOR FERGUSON, TO PLEASE TAKE IMMEDIATE AND URGENT ACTIONS TO SAVE OUR LEGACY FORESTS! If your representative joins Superintendent Reykdal in opposing the logging of our legacy forests, then others on the Board will follow. The future of our forests is in your hands. Your leadership and legacy will be greatly celebrated if you take action to save them.**

Sincerely,

**Indivisible Tacoma**

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