

**MEMBERS****City of Lacey**

Carolyn Cox
Robin Vazquez

City of Olympia

Lisa Parshley
Yến Huỳnh

Thurston County

Tye Menser
Carolina Mejia

City of Tumwater

Eileen Swarthout
Charlie Schneider

June 28, 2022

Hilary Franz
Office of the Commissioner of Public Lands
Department of Natural Resources
MS 47001
Olympia, WA 98504-7001

Dear Commissioner Franz:

We, the members of the Thurston Climate Action Steering Committee, are policymakers from the communities of Thurston County, Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater who are working together to address the causes of climate change while building a stronger, healthier, and more resilient region. In 2020, we completed the Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan, which includes a goal to reduce locally generated greenhouse gas emissions 45 percent by 2030 and 85 percent by 2050.

Our climate plan recognizes the important role forests and other ecosystems play in storing carbon, while providing many benefits for our local environment from storing and cleaning water to providing habitat for sensitive species. Our plan sets a target to sequester an additional 375,000 tons carbon through changes to management of forestlands and prairies—this sequestration target accounts for 14 percent of the reductions needed to meet our region’s 2050 emissions goal.

We believe that “Legacy Forests” – forests more than 80 years old that originated prior to the widespread use of clearcutting and plantation forestry practices – have structural complexity and biodiversity elements that younger forests do not. These forests have maximum ecosystem benefits for the entire community, with special ecological, recreational, and cultural characteristics. They are the forests most likely to develop old-growth forest characteristics in the near term, and offer the richest opportunity for carbon sequestration, as well as unique elements of wildlife habitat, recreation quality, and forest resilience.

The Center for Responsible Forestry has estimated that there are about 3,100 acres of Legacy Forest (about 4.5 percent of Thurston lands managed by DNR) remaining on Forest Board lands in Thurston County that are not already protected within riparian management zones or other conservation areas. We are concerned that a majority of these areas are scheduled for cutting by 2026 (see attached map), how those scheduled cuts will allow DNR to meet its older forest targets contained in its policy documents and HCP, and the overall impact of loss of these forests on Thurston County over the long term.

June 28, 2022

As representatives of the Thurston Climate Action Steering Committee, we ask that you give the highest priority to our county's parcels of Legacy Forest in Phase 2 of the new DNR Carbon Project. Additionally, or alternatively, we ask you to consider a temporary moratorium on the proposed Legacy Forest cuts until alternative strategies can be fully evaluated for meeting the needs of junior taxing districts while protecting pre-WWII, pre-chainsaw Legacy Forests. We understand that our Board of County Commissioners has recently made a similar request. We believe this approach would better align DNR practices with goals in our Climate Mitigation Plan, and better serve the overall needs of the residents of Thurston County.

Thank you for receiving our request.

Sincerely,

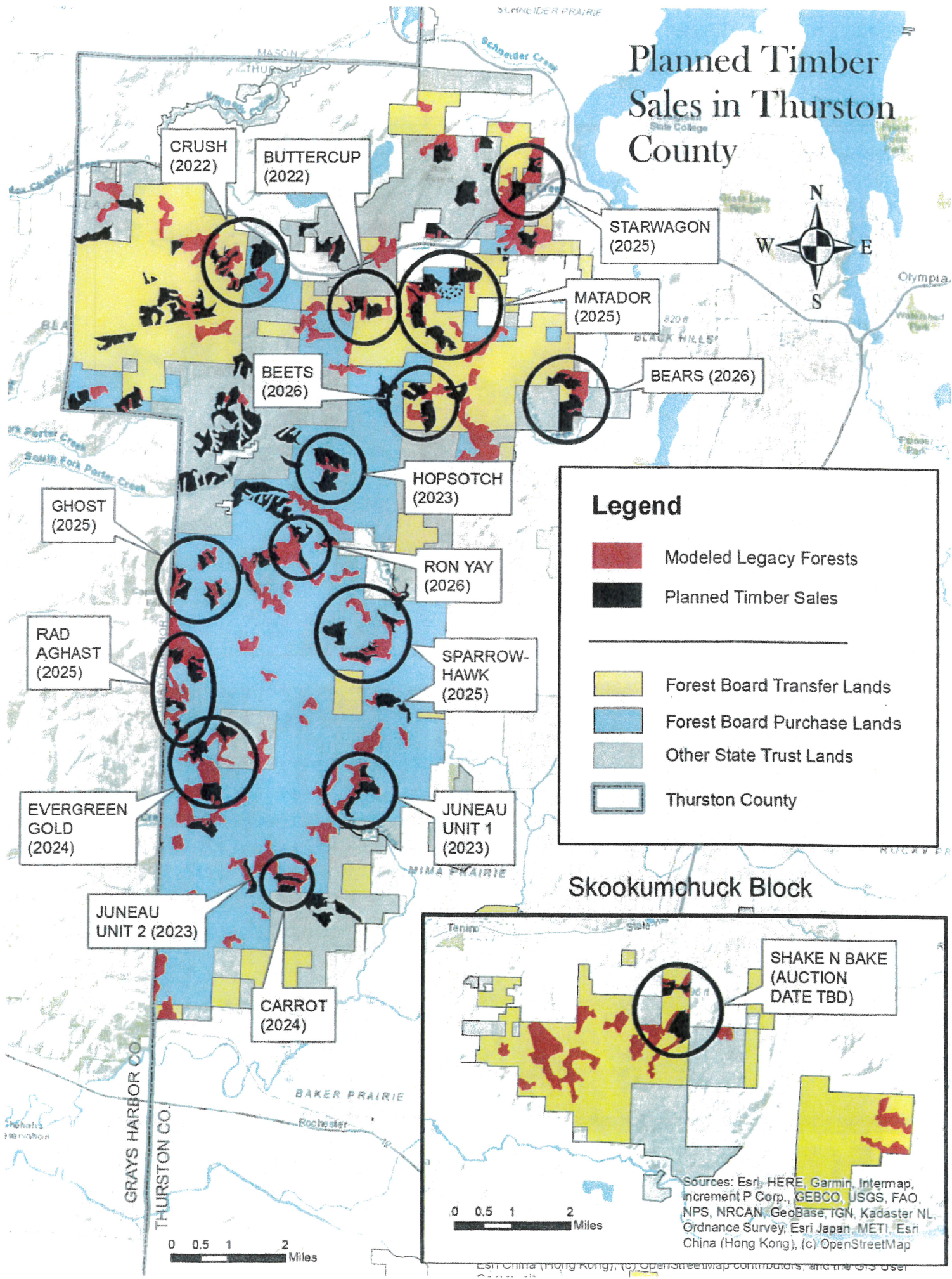
Lisa Parshley, Olympia City
Council
Chair, Thurston Climate Action
Steering Committee

Tye Menser, Thurston County
Board of Commissioners
Vice Chair, Thurston Climate
Action Steering Committee

Carolyn Cox, Lacey City Council
Thurston County Climate Action
Steering Committee

Eileen Swarthout, Tumwater City
Council
Thurston Climate Action Steering
Committee

Planned Timber Sales in Thurston County

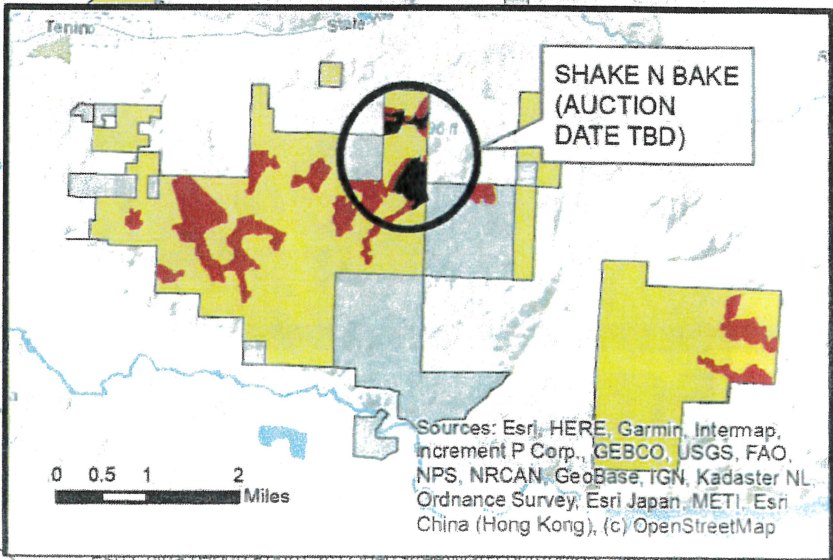


Legend

- Modeled Legacy Forests
- Planned Timber Sales

- Forest Board Transfer Lands
- Forest Board Purchase Lands
- Other State Trust Lands
- Thurston County

Skookumchuck Block



Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeoBase, TGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), (c) OpenStreetMap

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