

February, 2023



NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL

The North Cascades Conservation Council (NCCC) was founded in 1957, and our mission is to protect and preserve the scenic, scientific, recreational, educational, and wilderness values of the North Cascades.

The forests on the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest (MBSNF) have an impressive capacity to sequester atmospheric carbon dioxide, supply clean and abundant water, provide secure habitat to vulnerable fish and wildlife species, and offer opportunities for compatible recreation. There is no controversy in asserting that industrialization of these lands and waters with an era of intensive logging for profit would directly undermine all of these clear priorities.

In the North Cascades, and particularly in the MBSNF, the last seventy years saw the gouging out of logging roads and shipping as many of our trees to the mill as the industry could muster, until it was finally arrested by its own excesses on public lands as the twentieth century drew to a close. Since then, industry has worked tirelessly to restart the engine of exploitation, and it is now on the cusp of regaining dominion over our public lands, even as climate becomes a central concern. A cut tree cannot continue to sequester atmospheric CO₂.

Three huge logging projects -- in the Stillaguamish and Nooksack River basins -- are poised to become reality, wrapped in PR euphemisms that try to imply that only new logging can solve the problems caused by previous logging. These must not move forward, for the sake of the climate and for our source of clean water, imperiled salmon and the recreational paradise we consider our birthright. And it is simply not remotely congruent with the Biden Administration's executive order to save 30% of nature intact by 2030. Less than half the 30% goal is protected now, so protecting the MBSNF would be a significant step toward demonstrating serious commitment to achieving the 30% goal within just the next 7 years.

Thus we are compelled to make our position clear regarding our public lands at risk. Please read our Carbon-Watershed Reserve position statement attached carefully and consider its implications for the future. We ask that you reply and tell us how this can be implemented quickly to prevent the foreseen damage.

Philip Fenner, President
North Cascades Conservation Council
www.northcascades.org

CC: The White House CEQ, US Forest Service, UN Environment Programme, Center for Biological Diversity, Campaign for Nature, Science and Innovation



A Carbon-Watershed Reserve for the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest

Position Statement by the North Cascades Conservation Council

Adopted by the board and published in *The Wild Cascades* journal, Spring-Summer 2022

www.northcascades.org

Since 1957, the North Cascades Conservation Council (NCCC) has been among the foremost advocates for and defenders of the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest (MBSNF)'s ecological integrity and wild character. We view the MBSNF and its 1.7 million acres as a unique unit within our National Forest System. Along with being immediately adjacent to a major metropolitan corridor, the MBSNF is the source of numerous watersheds of significance flowing to Puget Sound and the larger Salish Sea, and thus it is indispensable to regional salmon recovery. Current peer-reviewed research concludes that the biomass-rich forest of the MBSNF is also an important contributor to carbon sequestration, and despite previous decades of Forest Service mismanagement it continues to provide irreplaceable refugia for rare and endangered species. And it goes without saying that the MBSNF is a prime destination for human recreation.

In consideration of these priceless attributes, which are key to the well-being and longevity of our society in the throes of the extinction crisis, global climate change, and declining sources of freshwater, NCCC takes the following position regarding future management across the entirety of the MBSNF:

In order to fulfill fundamental human needs and priorities from this public forest—clean and abundant water, sequestration of atmospheric CO₂, conservation of sensitive wildlife habitat, and compatible recreation—both short- and long-range management emphases must change immediately. All commercial logging and mining activities on the MBSNF must be discontinued in perpetuity. Moreover, aggressive decommissioning of the antiquated road system beyond those trunk roads needed for basic access must be pursued for watershed restoration and unhindered wildlife migration.

The MBSNF must be designated and managed as a Carbon-Watershed Reserve — a model of enlightened and genuinely sustainable interaction between diverse human communities and the natural world. These goals should be pursued administratively at the earliest opportunity, as well as statutorily to ensure their permanence and enforceability.