



## **World Renowned Elwha River Restoration Threatened by State Logging**

***WA Department of Natural Resources Defies City of Port Angeles' Request to Pause Logging Older Forests in the Elwha River Watershed - Rally set for March 5, 2023***

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Port Angeles, WA (February 28, 2023)—On March 5, 2023 from 12-2pm, a coalition of concerned residents will hold a peaceful rally at the Elwha River Observation Area near an active timber harvest site called "Aldwell." The rally is to raise awareness about the need to protect older forests in and around the Elwha River Watershed and to call on Public Lands Commissioner Hilary Franz to stop logging in the Elwha River Watershed. At least 50% of "Aldwell" could still be saved if Commissioner Franz directed the harvest to stop. All are welcome to join the rally sponsored by Center for Responsible Forestry, Earth Law Center, and the Olympic Forest Coalition. (More information at <https://adventurephotography.forest2sea.com/aldwell-forest/>).

The Elwha River is, to date, home to the largest completed dam removal project in US history. The federal government has spent over \$327 million on restoration in the Elwha River Watershed post dam-removal. Yet, Washington State, in particular Commissioner Franz and the WA Board of Natural Resources (BNR) continues to approve logging in the Elwha River Watershed at the rapid pace of hundreds of acres per year.



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The growing public awareness of DNR's practice of destroying mature forest ecosystems within the Elwha gained momentum with the "Aldwell" timber sale, containing over 90 acres of older, structurally complex forest – with trees 100-150 years old and older. The forest is highly visible on Olympic Highway 101 near the intersection with Olympic Hot Springs Road and the popular tourist destination of Madison Falls.

On September 20, 2022, the Port Angeles City Council voted unanimously to send a letter to Commissioner Franz requesting that she pause plans to harvest "Aldwell" (See the City's letter [HERE](#)). The City now asks for a pause on all timber harvests in the Elwha River Watershed, with particular concern over the loss of mature, structurally complex forest ecosystems, while solutions are developed. Yet, in defiance of the City's request, DNR continues to log.

"The Aldwell legacy forest is a critical part of the tributaries on the Elwha River. Legacy forests, like Aldwell, not only provide biodiversity, recreation opportunities, and aid in reducing climate impacts in our community, but also protect the water supply for every resident and visitor in Port Angeles", said Port Angeles City Councilmember Navarra Carr. "Our city's water supply is solely supplied by the Elwha, and negative impacts to the larger Elwha ecosystem affect our water citywide. We already experience drought conditions each year and logging these important forests will likely worsen the already existing challenges we are facing. Logging the Aldwell legacy forest will lead to the permanent destruction of a valuable forest on the Olympic Peninsula," Carr explained.

The Honorable Paulette Jordan shared: "As Indigenous Peoples - stewards of the lands and rivers here since time immemorial – we know that all life is interconnected. A river needs a healthy forest, and salmon need a healthy river. As *Wy-Kan-Ush-Pum* or "Salmon People", we know that our own well-being is inseparable from healthy ecosystems. This is why you see First Nations in BC creating "salmon parks" to protect critical forests in watersheds. We need visionary leadership who will respect our knowledge and see that protecting our legacy forests is an investment that will sustain present and future generations mentally, physically, spiritually, and economically."

Community resident and professional photographer Scott McGee and his wife Carolita, who live close to another forest slated for harvest called "Salt & Pepper," located very near Lake Crescent, started pulling together photos and videos of these forests at risk and hosting them on their website [adventurephotography.forest2sea.com](http://adventurephotography.forest2sea.com). They made a short [video about "Aldwell"](#) and have even [captured the logging](#) in action.

Earth Law Center has been working on solutions inspired by successful local community forest projects. "As the Elwha River comes back to life post-dam removal, it is a source of hope for many - not only in Washington, but around the world – that dismantling structures of colonization can lead to a more balanced relationship with Nature, rooted in reciprocity rather than resource extraction. People are shocked to learn that extractive logging continues in this beloved river valley", said Elizabeth Dunne, Port Angeles resident and Director of Legal Advocacy at the Earth Law Center. "There are certainly pathways to

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replacing the revenue counties get from harvesting these forests. We need Commissioner Franz to step up and pause this logging while we work toward solutions.”

“What we need for our economy is sustainable resource management, like not risking the City’s summer drinking water supply by reducing the watershed’s resilience. Forests have far more value for our communities when we manage them ecologically,” said Port Angeles City Councilmember Lindsey Schromen-Wawrin. “Plus, ecological forestry can produce a lot more jobs than a guy running a feller buncher. That feller buncher is the job killer, because we all know there are no jobs on a dead planet,” added Councilmember Schromen-Wawrin.

With Clallam County’s growing population and dramatic increases in tourism, recreation areas outside Olympic National Park are in increasing demand. Two other forests, with timber sale names “Power Plant” and “TCB23” (named after the endangered Taylor’s Checkerspot Butterfly), off Highway 112 and adjacent to the old lower Elwha dam site, the Olympic Adventure Trail, and the Colville MTB Trails, are slated for auction in the next few months.

“These popular hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding and rock-climbing spots for residents and tourists alike will dramatically change if we lose these forests,” said Nina Sarmiento, who gives hiking tours through her own small company, Magic Forest Tours. “I take people to the lower dam site on a trail from Colville MTB Trails where the DNR plans to harvest as early as this year. People love walking through the lush forest and learning about the history of the dams and restoration process. It’s hard to imagine walking through a landscape that is supposed to be in recovery, but has been dramatically altered through deforestation, to look for spawning salmon”, Sarmiento said.

“If successful, measures currently before the state legislature would make a big difference for at least some of these forests in the Elwha River Watershed,” added Brel Froebe, Interim Executive Director at the Center for Responsible Forestry. According to Froebe, “a coalition of community organizations and groups across WA are calling on the legislature to use newly available funds from the Climate Commitment Act to protect legacy forests in western WA.” “These older forests are carbon workhorses: just by not logging them we can sequester and store enough carbon to meet over half of WA’s 2030 emissions targets. There are only 77,000 acres left of unprotected legacy forests in western WA, that’s just 3% of all the forestlands managed by DNR,” said Froebe. “We can protect older forests and fund our schools and counties, it’s a win-win, but once they’re clearcut and turned into tree farms, they are gone forever.”

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Earth Law Center ([www.earthlawcenter.org](http://www.earthlawcenter.org)) works to transform the law to recognize and protect nature's inherent rights to exist, thrive and evolve. ELC partners with frontline Indigenous People, communities and organizations to challenge the overarching legal and economic systems that reward environmental harm, and advance governance systems that maximize social and ecological well-being.



## **SAVE OUR LEGACY FORESTS RALLY NEAR ALDWELL TIMBER HARVEST**

Learn about DNR timber sales and take action to protect old forests in the Elwha River watershed.

**March 5th 12pm - 2pm**

@ Elwha River Observation Area on Hwy 101  
239555 Olympic Hwy, Port Angeles 98363

Bring your friends, handmade signs, and please carpool!



Sponsored by



Center For Responsible Forestry ~ Olympic Forest Coalition ~ Earth Law Center

WEBSITE: <https://adventurephotography.forest2sea.com/aldwell-forest/>  
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