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# Petition

## to Enact a **Moratorium** on Logging of Old Legacy Forests in the **Chehalis River Watershed**

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To Chair Franz and the Board of Natural Resources:

We, the undersigned residents of Washington State, call on the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to enact a temporary moratorium on logging of legacy forests in the Chehalis River watershed, while the agency works to explore alternatives to logging them.

Legacy forests are a rare and rapidly disappearing fraction of forest lands managed by DNR in the Chehalis River watershed. These old legacy forests naturally regenerated after they were selectively logged in the early 1900's, and represent the oldest and most biologically diverse forests in the watershed. They are an important part of our natural heritage, and may function as ecological "lifeboats" for sensitive plant and wildlife species, and hundreds of lesser-known species of insects, lichens, bryophytes, mushrooms, and other fungi.

The vast majority of the forests in the Chehalis River watershed are managed as tree plantations, and composed mostly of even-aged stands of Douglas fir. It is therefore important to protect the few legacy forests that remain. Walk through these forests, and you will find they contain multiple canopy layers, composed of a wide variety of trees of different sizes. Gaps in the overstory canopy allow sunlight to reach the forest floor, creating a complex mosaic of different plant communities composed of a diverse array of small trees, shrubs and wildflowers. Standing dead trees and logs provide critical nesting habitat for small mammals, and countless other forms of life.

The decision to specifically target these rare forest ecosystems for commercial logging defies the objectives of the State Trust Lands Habitat Conservation Plan, violates established Board of Natural Resources policies and procedures, and undermines efforts to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires and combat climate change.

**There is no defense for logging these forests.** DNR forest inventory records reveal that there are tens of thousands of acres of plantation forests on state trust lands in the Chehalis River watershed that are currently available for harvest. Plantation forests hold more than enough timber to satisfy overall sustainable harvest targets for the current planning decade, and fulfill DNR's current commitments to Thurston, Grays Harbor, Lewis, and Pacific counties, and other beneficiaries. There is no need to clear-cut these forests. To be clear, the decision to schedule commercial timber sales in legacy forests is a choice that was made by the Commissioner and DNR. DNR is not fulfilling a mandate or following best available science by logging these rare, older lowland legacy forests.

