



King County
Rural Forest Commission
Water and Land Resources Division
Department of Natural Resources and Parks

*King County Rural Forest
 Commission Members*

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Wyatt Golding
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Steve Horton
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Large Forest Landowner

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US Forest Service

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King Conservation District

Brendan Whyte, ex officio
WSU Forestry Extension

December 17, 2020

The Honorable Claudia Balducci
 Chair, King County Council
 516 Third Ave, Room 1200
 Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Councilmember Balducci:

The King County Rural Forest Commission (“Rural Forest Commission”) respectfully submits the following comments in support of the 2020 Strategic Climate Action Plan Update (SCAP). The Rural Forest Commission views the SCAP favorably and appreciates King County’s progressive, proactive, actionable approach to climate change.

Section 1: Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions. The RFC supports the strategies focused on forest protection and management. Accelerating the pace of forestland acquisition and increasing enrollment of priority forestland in current use taxation programs are both critical to achieving the goals outlined in the Land Conservation Initiative. Forestland protection is important, and so is management of our forests. The RFC supports the County’s efforts to increase County-owned forestland management and to provide forestry technical assistance and incentives to private forestland owners to develop and implement forest stewardship plans that specifically address the challenges of climate change. Those actions will result in forests more resilient to climate change and potentially increases in carbon sequestration, which is a key strategy to mitigate for greenhouse gas emissions.

Section 2: Sustainable & Resilient Frontline Communities. The RFC appreciates that work on climate actions were viewed through an equity lens and that there is a section dedicated to addressing the needs and challenges of traditionally underserved communities. However, it is important to recognize that forest-related inequities are not limited to urbanized portions of the County. King County recognizes the government-

government relationship with Tribal communities. Tribal interests must be paramount whenever we address large-scale forest management issues in King County. Although Tribal issues are not explicitly stated in the SCAP, many of the strategies address Tribal concerns. We are aware that there are some Tribal contributions to the 30-Year Forest Plan that is currently in development, however, there needs to be continued consultation.

Section 3: Preparing for Climate Change. the RFC strongly supports the collaborative, partnership driven approach that is included in the many strategies presented to prepare for and respond to climate change. The RFC recognizes a strong need for a Countywide Wildfire Risk Reduction Strategy that includes attention to preparedness, response and recovery, and specifically acknowledges the technical and financial needs of private forest landowners to meet the challenges of managing lands in an increasingly fire prone landscape. We see what our neighbors on the other side of the Cascades and in nearby states have to deal with each year and acknowledge that we are not immune to potentially catastrophic wildfire. Our best approach is to be prepared and to work together at a landscape scale.

Forests are an integral part of our County’s economy and quality of life and The King County Rural Forest Commission is concerned about how climate change will challenge our ability to maintain and enhance a resilient, productive forested landscape. Many of the strategies identified in the 2020 Strategic Climate Action Plan will better position us to take on those challenges. We stand ready to provide support and advice to King County Council and staff in Executive Office departments as those strategies are developed and implemented.

Sincerely,

The Rural Forest Commission Executive Team:



Monica Paulson Priebe, Chair



Amy LaBarge, vice-Chair



Steven Mullen-Moses, Executive Committee



Wendy Davis, Executive Committee

- cc: Dow Constantine, County Executive, King County
King County Councilmembers
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