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COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC LANDS



Updates to the Evergreen Communities Act to better serve increasing needs of communities to grow and manage healthy, resilient urban trees benefiting all residents, today, and into the future.

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Modernizing the Evergreen Communities Act

ISSUE

Forests in our cities, towns, and communities provide many benefits, including stormwater management, water quality improvements, carbon sequestration, human health benefits, and community beautification. The Evergreen Communities Act, aimed at supporting urban forestry throughout the state, was established in 2008. The economic recession that followed led to lack of funding for the program, leaving many portions unimplemented.

DNR seeks to revitalize this important program, even more critical today with increasing pressures on our landscapes, and modernize it to address great opportunities in environmental justice and salmon recovery.

SOLUTION

- Modernize the Evergreen Communities Act to help communities develop urban forestry plans aligning with other high-priority goals, such as salmon and orca recovery, environmental health disparities, human health, and local air and water quality improvements.
- Include a focus on environmental justice, and ensure at least 50 percent of all program activities benefit highly impacted communities.
- Analyze existing tree canopy data and conduct new assessments to identify priority areas for urban forestry work.
- Based on analyses, incorporate mapping tools and salmon recovery data based on state and regional salmon recovery plans to direct project work.
- Support the development of innovative tools, such as comprehensive toolkits, to increase successful use of urban forestry programs, especially important for underserved areas.
- Bolster DNR's technical assistance to serve the growing needs of cities, towns, communities, tribes, and other entities in planning and managing urban forestry work, benefiting all residents and supporting environmental justice and salmon recovery.
- Recognize excellent urban forestry programs through an Evergreen Communities Designation program.