

August 28, 2024

To: White Salmon Planning Commission

From: Bill Weiler, Wildlife Biologist

Subject: White Salmon Tree Protection Ordinance

Good evening:

My name is Bill Weiler from Lyle, Washington. I am a retired Forest Wildlife Biologist and I am testifying on behalf of myself, and my daughter and grandchildren who live in White Salmon. And when you advocate on behalf of one's grandchildren, you advocate with some passion.

My testimony is greatly influenced by a 15-year old memory. When I was with the Washington Dept. of Fish & Wildlife, I received a copy of an application to build a subdivision in White Salmon. I had no issues with the proposal except there was a legacy Oregon white oak on the property, and I urged the landowner to retain as it would not be in the way of the development. Unfortunately, my request was merely a plea, and that noble tree was destroyed.

There are numerous reasons why a Legacy Tree Ordinance should be enacted in White Salmon:

- To continue to encourage and ensure quality development; (1)
- To protect and conserve the attractiveness, aesthetic and scenic beauty, and historic atmosphere of the City; (2)
- To reduce air pollution; (3)
- To decrease wind velocity and reduce potential wind damage; (4)
- To provide shade and reduce the effects of urban heat islands; (5)
- To act as a noise buffer; (6)

To reduce stormwater runoff and improve infiltration into the ground, thereby protecting (7) against potential damages from soil erosion, mudslides and flooding, as well as reducing the cost of handling storm water by artificial means;

To sequester carbon dioxide in woody and foliar biomass;

(8)

To lower the demand for electricity and natural gas.

(9)

And one more pertaining to oaks, they are highly fire resistant. and offer a protein-packed edible nut. Oaks are considered the most important wildlife tree in the United States due to their acorn crop and tendency to self-prune during storms, resulting in holes or cavities utilized by dozens of birds and mammals.

The proposed White Salmon Tree Protection Ordinance is perfect until one reads the last section where identified legacy trees were inexplicably deleted from the initial proposal.

Researching numerous city and county tree ordinances, I found that all of them identified the heritage trees the governments wished to protect. They all had definitions and criteria for which trees to conserve. If the White Salmon doesn't re-designate the white oaks and large diameter trees as Legacy Trees, then there is not a good reason to pass this ordinance.

Legacy Tree protections across the nation have reasonable sideboards. Similar to other cities, Greenville, South Carolina has Legacy Tree exemptions, "Trees that a certified arborist determines to be dead, dying, unhealthy or pose a hazard are exempt."

So I ask, upon behalf of myself, my daughter, my grandchildren, and to you, who will be the beneficiaries of this ordinance, to pass it after designating large trees and oaks as Legacy Trees.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Bill Weiler