



MAKAH TRIBAL COUNCIL

P.O. BOX 115 • NEAH BAY, WA 98357 • 360-645-2201

The Makah Tribe is an equal opportunity employer.



August 16, 2025

RE: Chapter 173-446 WAC: Cap-and-Invest US Forest Offsets Protocol Informal Comment Period #1

To Whom It May Concern,

The Makah Tribe appreciates the opportunity to comment on the proposed amendments to the U.S. Forest Protocol, specifically those addressing clearcut size limitations under even-aged harvest prescriptions. We respectfully offer the following comments based on our forestlands' ecological, operational, and cultural realities.

Regional Disturbance Regimes and Silviculture

The current proposal appears to align harvest unit size limitations with basal area retention levels modeled on Douglas-fir forests in the wetter, lowland ecosystems of western Washington. While this may be appropriate for those areas, it does not reflect the natural disturbance regimes or silvicultural standards of coastal or interior tribal forestlands, such as those on the Olympic Peninsula or within the Columbia Basin.

In our region, windthrow is the dominant natural disturbance. Western hemlock, the predominant species in our coastal forests, is a shallow-rooted and highly susceptible to wind. Larger clearcut units in these forests partially mimic natural wind disturbance patterns. Attempting to apply size restrictions derived from Douglas-fir-dominated systems is not ecologically justified here.

Furthermore, relying on basal area retention as a modifier does not provide viable mitigation, as residual hemlock in larger units is often lost to windthrow within just a few years. This results in economic losses and undermines the resilience and intent of our forest management strategies.

Operational and Terrain-Based Constraints

Steep terrain is common across our forestlands, and harvesting in these areas often requires longer yarding distances and fewer landings. Restrictive unit sizes force us to increase road density to meet these thresholds, which is counterproductive from both an environmental and economic perspective. Additional road construction, on steep slopes, increases the risk of mass wasting, compromises water quality, and negatively impacts fish habitat; outcomes that directly conflict with other natural resource protections and tribal stewardship values.

Request for Regional Flexible

We urge Ecology to include a framework within the Forest Protocol amendments that explicitly allows for regions variation in harvest unit size limits. This flexibility is essential for implementing science-based, culturally aligned, and ecologically appropriate forest management. We recommend the following considerations:

- **Expanded Harvest Size Tables** that reflect regional forest types and disturbance regimes, especially in wind-prone, steep-slope coastal systems.
- **A Variance or Justification Process** that allows for site-specific exceptions based on silvicultural, ecological, or cultural rationale.
- **Recognition of Tribal Forest Management Plans** as governing documents for determining appropriate unit sizes and harvest methods in sovereign tribal lands.

Closing

We strongly support the inclusion of flexibility mechanisms in the Forest Protocol to reflect on-the-ground realities and promote adaptive, place-based stewardship. Our forests and the communities who depend on them deserve policies that honor both ecological integrity and cultural autonomy.

We welcome the opportunity for further dialogue. If you have any questions or would like to arrange a meeting with staff regarding this please contact Chief of Staff Christopher Martinez at cos@makah.com, or (360) 645-2080.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Timothy J. Greene, Sr." in a cursive script.

Timothy J. Greene, Sr.
Chairman
Makah Tribal Council