



## **SQUAK MOUNTAIN STILL IN DANGER: LOGGER REFILES PERMIT UNDER NEW NAME IN AN APPARENT ATTEMPT TO DODGE ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION.**

**May 20, 2013  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

On May 8th, Kurt Erickson refiled a permit application with the Washington State Department of Natural Resources to clearcut 96 acres of old forest, even though a similar application was recently blocked to protect habitat for threatened wildlife. Mr. Erickson's new application seeks to take advantage of an exception to state law that allows "small forest landowners" to log otherwise protected old forests. While that exception is intended to benefit family foresters who rely on small forest holdings for their livelihood, Mr. Erickson owns hundreds of acres of forests throughout Washington State as well as a major timber harvesting operation. Mr. Erickson previously conceded his status as an industrial forester when he recently applied for a permit to log the very same property as a large forest landowner. Since withdrawing that application, he has transferred ownership of the Squak Mountain property to a new corporate entity with no other timber holdings. Under that new name, Mr. Erickson now seeks to take advantage of the "small forest landowner" exception to log the approximately 100-year old trees on Squak Mountain. The forest at issue provides suitable habitat for the threatened marbled murrelet and is part of a wildlife corridor between the popular Cougar Mountain and Squak Mountain State Parks.

The timing for this maneuver raises further alarms, as also on May 8, King County Executive Dow Constantine held a press conference to announce a preliminary purchase agreement between King County, the Trust for Public Lands and Kurt Erickson for 216 acres of property on Squak Mountain, including the area proposed for clearcut.

If Kurt Erickson's Forest Practice Application for this acreage is granted approval, a precedent would be set that would have statewide significance for the logging industry and environmental protection. Huge corporate forest owners could simply divide their land up into multiple corporations and claim status as small forest landowners to avoid environmental regulation. State law allows small forest landowners to log otherwise protected wildlife habitat, and also requires smaller buffers around fish-bearing streams. Reduced buffers increase water pollution and reduce protections for spawning salmon. Widespread access to small forest landowner exceptions would not only have severe impacts to wildlife, clean water, and fisheries, it would disadvantage legitimate small forest landowners.

The efforts of Issaquah Alps Trails Club and Save Squak have far reaching implications beyond Squak Mountain. We have repeatedly identified weaknesses in forest practice regulations and the permit review process related to logging near residential areas and flood prone creeks. Our work with the Washington Forest Law Center helped to ensure close scrutiny over Mr. Erickson's first attempt to log Squak Mountain. According to WFLC staff attorney Wyatt Golding, "It is now critically important to expose attempts to circumvent environmental regulation, and to encourage DNR to use its permitting discretion to preserve the integrity of the large vs. small landowner distinction."

While King County, the Trust for Public Lands, and Kurt Erickson continue to negotiate a sales price, which they hope to conclude by June 21<sup>st</sup>, our efforts to fight the approval of Erickson's latest permit will continue in earnest. We will formally launch our fundraising plans to ensure the greatest level of support for the King County Park levy on the upcoming August 6<sup>th</sup> ballot.

We encourage everyone to loudly and immediately make their objections to the approval of FPA #241-6123 part of the public record prior to the decision date of June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013. To do so, please email Bruce McDonald, DNR Forest Practices at [Bruce.McDonald@dnr.wa.gov](mailto:Bruce.McDonald@dnr.wa.gov). You should also state your objections to King County Executive Dow Constantine at [Dow.Constantine@kingcounty.gov](mailto:Dow.Constantine@kingcounty.gov) and King County Councilman and our #1 publicly elected supporter, Reagan Dunn, at [Reagan.Dunn@kingcounty.gov](mailto:Reagan.Dunn@kingcounty.gov). We also encourage everyone to question the legality of Erickson's "small forest landowner designation" by contacting the office of Washington State Attorney General Bob Ferguson's office, which you may do by calling (360) 753-6200 or submitting an online contact form which may be found at <https://fortress.wa.gov/atg/formhandler/ago/ContactForm.aspx?subject=Natural%20Resources>.

### **About Issaquah Alps Trails Club**

The Issaquah Alps Trails Club (IATC) formed in 1979, is an Issaquah-based not-for-profit recreation and conservation group devoted to hiking, establishing and improving trails, and advocacy for open space protection in central King County. The original focus of IATC was directed towards Cougar, Squak and Tiger Mountains, also known as the "Issaquah Alps." In 1990, the Issaquah Alps Trails Club organized the first 'Mountains to Sound March', a hike from Snoqualmie Pass to Elliott Bay in Seattle, to publicize the need to preserve a scenic greenbelt connecting Seattle to the Cascade Mountains. Following this march, the [Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust](#) was founded by regional leaders. IATC leads over a hundred hikes a year in the Greenway and works on acquisitions and planning throughout the Greenway. However, the focus of IATC's efforts remains directed towards conservation and the establishment of hiking trails in the "Issaquah Alps." David Kappler is the President of IATC.

<http://issaquahalps.org/>

### **About 'Save Squak'**

Save Squak, a group of concerned neighbors and community supporters in Issaquah, May Valley, and throughout Greater Seattle, was established in November 2012, to find an alternative to the environmental impact of clear cut logging planned for 216 acres on Issaquah's Squak Mountain. With the leadership of David Kappler, the group has focused its efforts on ways to bring this land into public ownership, working with King County and other conservation groups to acquire this pristine forest acreage and add it to King County Parks.

<http://www.savesquak.com>

<http://www.facebook.com/SaveSquak>

<https://twitter.com/SaveSquak>

### **About Washington Forest Law Center**

The Washington Forest Law Center is a non-profit, public interest law firm dedicated to providing legal services to organizations that monitor and protect the Pacific Northwest's private and state-owned forest lands.

<http://wflc.org/>

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