



WASHINGTON FOREST PROTECTION ASSOCIATION

*Working Forests are a Natural Solution*

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**One Voice for Working Forests** seeks to unite those who recognize the many benefits that working forests provide.



### [Billy Frank Jr. worked for cooperation and environmental protection](#)

2014-05-06 Ashley Bach

**Billy Frank Jr.'s public life** may have started with the "Fish Wars" of the 1960s and '70s, when he and other Native Americans asserted their fish treaty rights on rivers around Puget Sound. But Frank soon became much more than that: one of the country's most prominent civil rights leaders, a state and national environmental advocate and the head of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission for more than 30 years.

When Frank died this week at age of 83, **President Obama** was among the [many public leaders to eulogize him](#).

*Today, thanks to (Frank's) courage and determined effort, our resources are better protected, and more tribes are able to enjoy the rights preserved for them more than a century ago. Billy never stopped fighting to make sure future generations would be able to enjoy the outdoors as he did, and his passion on the issue of climate change should serve as an inspiration to us all.*

The North Kitsap Herald has [a nice compilation of all the reactions from dignitaries](#) in the wake of Frank's passing.

**Just last fall**, the [Washington Forest Protection Association honored Frank](#) with the its Community Service Award for his work in managing natural resources and establishing successful working relationships. Frank was successful in his decades of public service because he had a [rare combination of warmth and vigor](#).

*(Suquamish Tribe Chairman Leonard Forsman) said Frank had an engaging leadership style that helped him build bridges between opposing groups. "He was always kind. Every time you saw him he was so happy to see you. He respected everybody. He loved the kids, the elders, the leaders, even his adversaries. Whether in a classroom or in the White House, he was always comfortable ... He could communicate the issues and the reasons the Tribes' rights were so important to us, and do that in a way that the non-Indian world could better understand."*

Frank used these same skills to help stakeholders from disparate groups reach two landmark agreements on how timber, fish, wildlife and water were going to be managed in Washington: the Timber Fish Wildlife (TFW) Agreement in 1987 and its successor, the Forests & Fish Law in 1999.

Here's Frank himself [explaining last year](#) how he was able to make both agreements happen:

*Timber companies, environmental groups, tribes, state and federal agencies, and others were battling each other in court over the effects of timber harvests on fish and wildlife. (In 1986), I asked **Stu Bledsoe, executive director of the Washington Forest Protection Association**, a forest products industry trade group, to see if his members would*

*be willing to join a cooperative effort to develop a solution for everyone involved.*

*He agreed to try. After many months of negotiations by all of the parties involved, the result was the Timber/Fish/Wildlife Agreement – now called the Forests and Fish Law – which put an end to the war in the woods with a cooperative science-based management approach that ensures a healthy timber industry while also protecting fish and wildlife.*

Stu Bledsoe, writing in the WFPA 1988 annual report, recalled that [Frank's suggestion had monumental impacts](#):

*"(The WFPA has) been fighting forest practices legislation for decades. We've also been jousting with Indian tribes for decades. An edgy peace is developed with some difficulty, for several years. One day at a not terribly significant meeting, a tribal leader proposes negotiations to resolve major forest practices issues. The result is revolutionary."*

**Bill Wilkerson**, who served as WFPA Executive Director from 1996-2006, elaborated on Billy Frank's involvement in [a column in Indian Country Today in 2004](#):

*The TFW Agreement (in 1987) marked an historic shift in the way we manage natural resources in Washington state, resolve problems and make changes in our future management. All stakeholder groups acknowledged they have compatible interests in maintaining a viable timber industry and the importance of responsibly managing our natural resources...*

*Cooperation, listening, trust, team-work and commitment is the "spirit" of TFW. Once disparate and warring factions found common ground in which to allow some of the best thinking and information to set a*

*new direction for cooperative management of natural resources in Washington state. **Developing our own lasting solutions to multi-faceted natural resource issues has given us pride in Washington state, as Billy stated, "we have to make it happen."***

*...(In 1996), in anticipation of future listings of salmon stocks under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) and water bodies listed as impaired under the Clean Water Act (CWA), **Billy rose to the occasion and began discussions with timber, state and federal government leaders to develop a state-based solution for federally ESA listed salmon and CWA issues.***

*...**Billy has worked consistently for fairness and balanced use of our natural resources, defended tribal cultural values and has been a friend to many of us. We know that sustaining natural resources and ourselves over the long-run, can only be achieved through wise use of our natural resources.***

***I have a deep respect for Billy Frank Jr. as a courageous leader, willing partner and a personal friend. With the common understanding that everything is connected, and common respect for the natural resources of our state, Billy has truly helped to set the stage for cooperative, sustainable and abundant natural resources in Washington state.***

A few years ago, **current WFPA Executive Director Mark Doumit** [sat down for a video](#) in a local forest with Billy Frank and Gene Duvernoy, the CEO of the conservation group Forterra, to talk about how tribal, timber and environmental interests learned to work

together for the common good.

Duvernoy [said in the video](#) that Doumit's and Frank's goals were similar - environmental protection and sustainable forestry - and neither man is "stuck in yesterday's battle."

*Doumit: We don't want to leave (the state) worse for our kids and grandkids.*

*Duvernoy: We want to leave it better.*

*Frank: And working together will make that happen...Everybody's asking, how did you guys do it in the Northwest? Well, we did it by sitting down like this and talking. Don't leave anybody out and bring them to the table and make things happen.*

...

*Doumit: I think the best way to keep working forests in forestry is to make sure that we keep them profitable and keep them economically viable so that people will be willing to invest in forestry. Because to plant a seedling, especially when you're our age, you're not going to see that harvest in my lifetime. So it's an act of faith...*

*Frank: To me, working together and coming together like this afternoon is hope for our younger people...We have to hand this (environmental) management off to them at some point in time. They have to understand what management is all about and what sustainability is all about. Sustainability is about us and our life and our hope.*

