

For Immediate Release – July 5, 2021

EWEB plans to clear-cut urban forest on public land

Save EWEB Forest will hold a press conference on the site of the proposed clear-cut (near 40th & Patterson) on Tuesday, July 6th @ 9 AM.

EUGENE, OR - A group of Eugene-area residents are raising strong objections to a planned clear-cut in a unique forest stand of mature pine and fir on a nearly 11-acre parcel in the city limits owned by Eugene Water & Electric Board (EWEB). The proposed project to build two, 7.5-million gallon water storage reservoirs threatens this valuable urban forest, a critical resource in mitigating the effects of extreme heat events related to the climate crisis. This rush to build is contrary to the principle of public participation in major land-use decisions in one of the largest EWEB project in decades, and will impact aesthetic and economic values.

We propose that EWEB immediately undertake a more open and transparent public process, including public hearings to hear concerns and ideas of both neighbors and others in the community. This must be done before chainsaws begin cutting in early August. Other alternatives must be examined first and given a fair hearing, including emergency use of the Willamette River and an improved city-wide water conservation program. EWEB must also consider the high value of this unique urban forest.

Background

In March 2020 a group of property owners immediately adjacent to this [10.74- acre parcel of undeveloped public land](#) owned by EWEB just south of Patterson and 40th Ave. in Eugene, were told the utility intended to construct one large water storage reservoir in 2021 and construct a second reservoir 10 years later. Two potential building sites were identified; Site # 1, at the eastern edge of the property, and Site # 2, slightly to the west of the first site. EWEB staff subsequently told neighbors the first reservoir would be built on Site #1. The structure's footprint is approximately one acre and would require clear-cutting the dense heart of this mature fir and pine forest habitat, including trees more than 150 years old.

Neighbors requested EWEB build first on Site # 2 so as to preserve the forest. The response on April 6th was that the EWEB Board "endorsed" a decision by its General Manager to build two water reservoirs now, immediately doubling the size and impact of this large infrastructure project.

On August 2nd of this year EWEB is scheduled to log more than 2 acres, eliminating the oldest heritage trees to build two partially-buried, 30 feet high concrete, 7.5-million gallon water reservoirs concurrently on the basalt ridgeline. This project will take at least 3 to 4 years.

"If there is only three months from a decision to double the size of a \$10 million infrastructure project to the time of clear-cutting an irreplaceable city forest; this is an abuse of the public trust. There needs to be an open, public process," says Sandra Bishop, former Eugene Water & Electric Board commissioner.

Since the decision to build TWO water reservoirs on the 40th Avenue site was made, many Eugeneans have stepped forward to voice their concerns about impacts related to the climate crisis, including the risk of losing a valuable natural resource. People are demanding EWEB honor the values of the customer-owners of this public utility. Public hearings must be held before a change of this magnitude in an enormous and disruptive infrastructure project is rushed to construction. Relatively few people in Eugene even know of this hugely impactful project.

A recent NY Times article ("[What Technology Could Reduce Heat Deaths? Trees.](#)" July 2, 2021) **underscores the importance of trees in the urban landscape** to mitigate the extreme heat threats we face in this climate crisis.

PRESS CONTACT:

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<https://www.facebook.com/SaveEwebForest/>**

RESOURCES:

Google map of location:

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?vanity=SaveEwebForest&set=a.104634198554649>

Directions: Take Hilyard St. south to 40th Ave. and turn right, then take the next street (Patterson) left. LIMITED PARKING on Patterson St. south of 40th. Look for an entrance to an open field at the end of the street. A volunteer will be there to greet you with a press packet.

ALSO: [Images of the EWEB forest->>](#)

Higher resolution images available upon request.

[Save EWEB Forest](#) is an all-volunteer group of residents from around the city concerned with climate issues and the value of mature tree ecosystems as natural cooling areas, and sound public planning. The group came together to shed light on EWEB's rushed plans to cut down a natural forest grove of mature trees on public land near 40th and Patterson in Eugene.

Save EWEB Forest PRESS CONFERENCE – Tuesday, July 6, 2021 @ 9 AM

LIST OF SPEAKERS

- **Sandra Bishop**, former Eugene Water & Electric Board (EWEB) Commissioner and neighbor
- **Marco Elliott**, Eugene resident, writer, artist, environmental activist and former educator
- **Dr. Samuel J. Schmieding**, Historian/Archivist, Journalist/Photographer grew up in Eugene. He has served as history faculty at Arizona State University and Oregon State University, and as a reporter/photographer for the *Arizona Republic/Phoenix Gazette*.