

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Standing for Nature to Appeal Ruling Striking Down Everett's
Snohomish River Rights Law**

Grassroots organization says the fight is just beginning as it mounts a strong appeal on core legal issues.

EVERETT, Washington —

Standing for Nature announced today that it will appeal Snohomish County Superior Court Judge Jennifer Langbehn's decision granting summary judgment against Everett Initiative 24-03, the voter-approved law recognizing legal rights and standing for the Snohomish River Watershed. In a written order, the court held that the initiative exceeds the scope of local initiative power and is therefore invalid.

Standing for Nature, a small environmental nonprofit which intervened to defend the law on behalf of Everett voters, remains confident that Initiative 24-03 is both legally sound and firmly within the people's authority to protect their watershed.

"We strongly disagree with the court's decision to overturn what Everett voters so clearly chose," said Rachel Kurtz-McAlaine, attorney for Standing for Nature. "Today, if the river is harmed, the community cannot take action unless they can prove personal injury. That's not justice. This measure changed that – finally allowing residents to defend the river itself. We're disappointed that the court did not engage with the core legal issues at stake, but this story is far from over. Everett voters did something visionary for the Snohomish River, and we welcome the opportunity on appeal to fully test and clarify these legal questions."

Everett voters passed Initiative 24-03 in November 2024 to recognize the Snohomish River Watershed as a rights-bearing entity and to give community members legal standing to go to court on the watershed's behalf. Shortly after, the Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties and other developer interests sued the City of Everett to strike down the law.

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“Everett voters spoke clearly when they chose to recognize the Snohomish River as a living system worthy of protection, not just a resource to be exploited,” said Holly James, Standing for Nature board member and Everett resident. “Powerful special interests may prefer business as usual, but Everett residents have already shown they’re ready for something better. This ruling is not the final word. Our community is organized, determined, and committed to seeing this law, and this river, defended all the way through the courts.”

“This decision is one moment in a longer legal journey,” Kurtz-McAlaine added. “Rights of nature is an emerging area of law, and it’s expected that early cases will be hard-fought. We are prepared for that fight. The Snohomish River, the salmon, the orcas, and the people who depend on this watershed deserve full and rigorous legal consideration, and we are committed to ensuring that happens.”

Standing for Nature is calling on supporters in Everett and across Washington to help power the next phase of this work.

Community members can learn more about the case and support the appeal by donating to Standing for Nature’s legal fund at www.StandingforNature.org.

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Standing for Nature is a grassroots nonprofit dedicated to advancing legal protections for ecosystems and the communities that depend on them. Through public education, impact litigation, and support for rights-of-nature laws, Standing for Nature works to recognize watersheds and other natural systems as rights-bearing entities and to defend those rights in court.

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