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Mark Personius, AICP
Director

Memorandum

TO: The Honorable Satpal Sidhu, Whatcom County Executive
The Honorable Whatcom County Council

FROM: Joshua Fleischmann, Planner

THROUGH: Mark Personius, Director

DATE: July 14, 2021

SUBJECT: PLN2020-00004 - Rural Forestry Designation and Text Amendment -
Nooksack Falls

This memo is intended to provide background on a docketed amendment for a Comprehensive Plan Map amendment and zoning code amendment for the Nooksack Falls Exclave within the Mount Baker Snoqualmie National Forest.

The subject properties totaling approximately 66 acres exist as privately held lands surrounded by the Mount Baker -Snoqualmie National Forest. These lands were part of an Interim Zoning Ordinance from 1972 which was extended repeatedly until Ordinance 99-013 established Comprehensive Plan Designations and Title 20 Zoning for these (and other) fee lands within the National Forest, Wilderness and Recreation areas. The subject exclave received a Comprehensive Plan Designation of Mineral Resource Lands (MRL) and the Rural Forestry zoning designation.

In the early 1900's, mining related activities and hydroelectric power were the primary uses of the subject property. However, mining activities in this area ceased over 50 years ago and there is no mining on or near the property, as the applicant states that mining is no longer feasible at the site due to economic, environmental, topographic and other factors. Meanwhile, Nooksack Falls has attracted increasing numbers of visitors given its proximity to other recreational destinations. The proposed Comprehensive Plan Map and zoning code text amendments are in response to these changed circumstances.

The Planning Commission held a public hearing on the proposal on July 8th. Upon conclusion of the public hearing, the Planning Commission moved to recommend this amendment to the County Council for approval along with the findings of fact. The motion carried by a vote of 7-0-1.

Final approval of Comprehensive Plan Map amendment would occur as part of concurrent review of comprehensive plan amendments from 2021.

I look forward to discussing the merits of this recommendation with you.