

## EXECUTIVE

Satpal Sidhu

## COUNTY COURTHOUSE

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## COUNCILMEMBERS

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## WHATCOM COUNTY

January 10, 2023

Hilary Franz, Commissioner of Public Lands  
Csenka Favorini-Csorba, Senior Policy Advisor, DNR  
Jay Guthrie, NW Region Manager, DNR  
Laurie Bergvall, Assistant Region Manager, DNR  
Bevin McLeod, Director of External Affairs & Community Engagement, DNR  
Chris Hankey, Baker District Manager, DNR  
Cory McDonald, Proprietary Forester, NW Region, DNR

Dear Commissioner Franz and Staff:

Thank you for providing Whatcom County the opportunity to weigh in on Phase II of the Carbon Project. We appreciate DNR's commitment to engaging local governments, tribes, beneficiaries, and stakeholders throughout this process.

Whatcom County has received a significant community response regarding timber sales in mature forests on DNR land. We are grateful DNR included about 1,400 acres of previously unprotected forestland in Phase I of the Carbon Project, most of which is located in Bellingham's drinking watershed. Whatcom County Council and the Administration continue to engage with various stakeholders, including our County's Forest Advisory Committee and Climate Impact Advisory Committee on forestry related issues.

The Climate Impact Advisory Committee recognized the High Conservation Values of the four parcels, including their contributions to carbon storage and sequestration, and appreciated the diversity of age class being included in the proposed parcels to help inform local understanding of how forests of different ages and different species can sequester and store carbon at different rates.

The Forestry Advisory Committee provided significant additional questions regarding how the Carbon Project interacts with other state programs, what management activities are permitted under a carbon lease, what are the quantifiable carbon sequestration benefits of leasing these parcels, how will this impact to trust land beneficiaries, and what are the potential secondary social and economic impacts of leasing these lands?

Based on the input received from these two advisory committees and considering the future of forest management in Whatcom County, **we recommend including all four candidate parcels proposed in Phase II that are located in Whatcom County, and further request that the DNR increase engagement with Whatcom County to better understand the benefits and impacts of the Carbon Project on the resilience of the forests and the impacts to the forestry economy.**

Whatcom County supports actively managing forestlands for multiple additional co-benefits including restoring forest ecosystems, increasing climate resilience, supporting fish and wildlife populations, and improving watershed health all while continuing to support the jobs and infrastructure necessary for a sustainable forestry economy. Through innovative, ecological forest management practices informed by today's science, we believe DNR can help Whatcom County communities adapt to climate impacts, while improving fish and wildlife

habitat, increasing carbon sequestration and storage, expanding recreational opportunities, and supporting the timber economy.

We are committed to ensuring that the protection of critical forests and the expansion of climate resilient forest management practices does not burden the local timber economy and can in fact enhance our local forestry economy. We believe in order to accomplish these goals, significant stakeholder and community engagement is required and Whatcom County is eager to help continue facilitating community dialogue and working with the DNR on forestry issues.

Thank you for considering our recommendation to include all four candidate parcels in Phase II of the carbon project. We look forward to our continued work together.

Sincerely,

DRAFT