

**CLERK OF THE COUNCIL**

Dana Brown-Davis, C.M.C.

**COUNTY COURTHOUSE**

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**WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL**

January 23, 2024

Hilary Franz, Commissioner of Public Lands  
Department of Natural Resources  
111 Washington Street SE  
MS 47001  
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Commissioner Franz,

The Whatcom County Council is supportive of the efforts of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to increase ecological, watershed, and community resilience to future climate impacts through the safeguarding of structurally complex, carbon dense forestland. Furthermore, we appreciate the incorporation of County Council input in the identification of forestland for conservation through the state’s Climate Commitment Act (CCA), as requested in a letter to the Whatcom County Council from Hilary Franz, Commissioner of Public Lands, on December 18, 2023.

DNR selected 650 acres of mature forestlands in Whatcom County for potential inclusion in the 2,000 acres to be set aside statewide with funding from the Natural Climate Solutions proviso.

Whatcom County lands identified as candidates by DNR include:

| <u>Anderson Creek Trusts</u> | <u>Acres</u> | <u>Brokedown Palace Trusts</u> | <u>Acres</u> |
|------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------|--------------|
| State Forest Transfer        | 190          | State Forest Transfer          | 42           |
| Scientific School            | 83           | Common School                  | 33           |
| State Forest Purchase        | 64           |                                |              |
| Common School and Indemnity  | 233          |                                |              |
| Agricultural School          | 4            |                                |              |
| Capitol Grant                | 1            |                                |              |

We understand these parcels were selected by DNR for their structural complexity and proximity to existing protected habitat. The conservation of the Anderson Creek parcels will enable the creation of a large Natural Resource Conservation Area (NRCA) within the Lake Whatcom Watershed, and protection of the Brokedown Palace parcels will help ensure the continued health of adjacent old growth reserves as well as the nearby Middle Fork Special Habitat Area. The strategic conservation of these forestlands will provide benefits to Whatcom County residents for generations to come.

The Whatcom County Council concurs with DNR’s plan to transfer the selected 650 acres of Whatcom County forestland from trust status for conservation purposes once replacement lands have been identified. We support DNR’s efforts to locate and acquire replacement parcels better

~~suited for continued commercial timber production; however, we have concerns about short-term impacts to trust beneficiaries due to delays in revenue from the replacement lands. We ask DNR and the legislature for continued collaboration as we look to offset these negative impacts. We are fully supportive of DNR's efforts to locate and acquire replacement parcels better suited for continued commercial timber production. Our expectation is these acquisitions will fully offset any negative revenue impacts to junior taxing districts. This would include mitigating for negative impacts arising from delays, disruptions or postponement of expected revenue. We request DNR to notify the Whatcom County Council and Whatcom County Executive if this understanding is inaccurate and if the agency forecasts any negative revenue impacts to local trust beneficiaries associated with this mature forest set aside, including delay in forecasted payment. If DNR does anticipate negative impacts, Whatcom County requests further conversation with the agency and legislature to find solutions.~~

Thank you for your work. We look forward to our continued collaboration.

Sincerely,

Barry Buchanan, Council Chair  
Whatcom County Council