



MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 31, 2026

TO: The Honorable Members of the County Council

FROM: Bennett Knox, Director 

RE: Resolution Renaming an Existing Trail at Canyon Lake Community Forest in Honor of Local Conservationist Rand Jack

Enclosed for your review and consideration is a resolution to rename an existing trail at Canyon Lake Community Forest in honor of local conservationist, Rand Jack.

Background and Purpose

Whatcom County Parks and Recreation has been approached by the Whatcom Land Trust with a request to honor the legacy of Rand Jack given his contributions over the past decades in pursuit of protection of Whatcom County's natural landscapes.

In addition to the referenced proposed Resolution, attached documents more fully describe Mr. Jack's significant contributions to Whatcom County during his decades of community service. This includes a letter of support from Executive Sidhu along with a biography of Mr. Jack. Also provided is a letter of support from the Whatcom Land Trust.

Recommendation

Whatcom County Parks & Recreation recommends that the County Council approve the resolution authorizing renaming of the existing 3.5-mile "Main Trail" at Canyon Lake Community Forest to the "Rand Jack Forest Trail".

Funding Amount and Source

The Whatcom Land Trust has committed to donating materials associated with necessary signage and kiosk replacement required to facilitate this renaming. Whatcom County Parks Staff will be responsible for associated labor expenses.



Satpal Singh Sidhu
Whatcom County Executive
BSc, BSEE, MBA, Fulbright Scholar



Dear Whatcom County Council Members,

I write to express my hope that you will support the resolution put forth by the Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Department (WCPR) to rename the existing "Main Trail" at Canyon Lake Community Forest in honor of local conservationist and long-time Whatcom Land Trust board member, Rand Jack. WCPR has enthusiastically put forth this resolution at the suggestion of the Whatcom Land Trust and past employees.

Over his nearly 50 years in our community, Rand has contributed greatly to the conservation of properties in Whatcom County. His tireless efforts have resulted in protection of nearly 20,000 acres of conservation lands, including many, such as Teddy Bear Cove, Lilly Point Marine Park, and Stimpson Family Nature Preserve, that are treasures providing passive and non-motorized recreation for residents and visitors alike. His efforts have greatly contributed to Whatcom County's reputation as a premier destination for those seeking to experience the outdoors.

Among his many accomplishments, the acquisition of the 2,200-acre Canyon Lake Community Forest stands out. Rand served as the lead negotiator to secure the \$3.6 million acquisition, a complex undertaking involving Whatcom County, Western Washington University, and private foundations. Canyon Lake contains one of the oldest known forest stands in the Pacific Northwest, with the upper ridge containing a 700-acre contiguous grove of mountain hemlock, Alaska yellow cedars and Pacific silver firs between 800 and 1,000 years old.

It is fitting that the main trail leading to the ridge be named in Rand's honor.

While park facilities are excluded from WCC Chapter 2.180 Naming of County-owned Public Buildings, Properties, and facilities, this proposed resolution aligns with the naming criteria referenced in § 2.180.050 as evidenced by the attached biography describing Rand's many decades long record of outstanding community services.

Thank you for your consideration,

Satpal Sidhu
Whatcom County Executive

Biography of Rand Jack

Bellingham attorney and educator, Rand Jack, is a foundational figure in Pacific Northwest environmental conservation who has lived in Whatcom County for over 50 years since moving to Bellingham in 1971. He is best known as a co-founder and long-time board member of the Whatcom Land Trust, an organization through which he has spent more than four decades orchestrating the protection of critical habitats, ecosystems, and public parklands. His approach merges legal expertise, strategic land negotiation, and a deep-seated ecological ethic to preserve over 20,000 acres of natural landscapes.

The Foundation of the Whatcom Land Trust

Rand Jack's most enduring environmental contribution began in 1984 when he became a founding board member of the Whatcom Land Trust. Driven by a mission to preserve the wild spaces of Whatcom County, Washington, Jack quickly became the organization's master negotiator. Fellow attorneys and conservationists have long lauded his "legal genius" in navigating seemingly impossible hurdles to close complex municipal and private land deals. Believing firmly in leading by example, Jack walked the talk early on by permanently protecting his own 40-acre forested property in the Mt. Baker foothills with a Trust conservation easement.

Major Conservation Accomplishments and Protected Sites

Through Jack's direct legal work, negotiations, and stewardship, the Trust secured protection for many of the region's most beloved ecological and recreational landmarks. Among these is the Canyon Lake Community Forest, a massive 2,200-acre reserve featuring ancient old-growth trees. He also facilitated complex, multi-party agreements to protect recreational access and ecosystem integrity on Galbraith Mountain, a world-class mountain biking destination. Furthermore, Jack played a critical role in preserving vital marine and shoreline reserves from disruptive development, including the Point Whitehorn Marine Reserve, Lily Point Marine Park, Teddy Bear Cove, and Clark's Point. He was also instrumental in coordinating the land protections for the pristine, forested sanctuary of the Stimpson Family Nature Reserve, where he proudly participated in the official ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Environmental Law and International Stewardship

Jack's conservation impact extends far beyond land trusts and into courtroom and international arenas. In his legal practice, he successfully represented environmental interests before the Washington State Supreme Court, upholding a landmark ban on jet skis in the San Juan Islands to protect vulnerable marine wildlife. Internationally, he served as an independent land steward in Tierra del Fuego, Chile, from 1993 to 1995. There, he authored the foundational "Stewardship Principles" used to hold a major proposed logging project, the Rio Condor Project, to rigorous scientific and environmental impact standards. Additionally, Jack spent a year in Nepal's Upper Arun Valley, where he designed and funded a 10-year project that helped indigenous communities transition to cultivating sustainable medicinal plants, successfully reducing the ecological strain on marginal local ecosystems.

Major Awards and Honors

His decades of dedication have earned him significant public acclaim. In 2018, the [Bellingham Regional Chamber of Commerce](#) presented Jack with its Lifetime Achievement Award to honor his transformative footprint on local land conservation, education, and community advocacy. His impact was celebrated again in 2024 when the Whatcom Museum hosted a dedicated exhibition titled *Carving Birds & Conserving Land*, which honored his double legacy as a local conservation titan and an accomplished wildlife wood sculptor.

References

- [The Northern Light: Rand Jack Honored with Lifetime Achievement Award](#) — Outlines his 35-year land trust leadership, specific protected landmarks, and the 2018 Chamber award.
- [Bellingham Alive: Shaping Whatcom County's Future](#) — Profiles his philosophy on land conservation and his milestone of brokering over 20,000 acres of protected land.
- [Bellingham Insider: Conservationist and Carver Rand Jack Debuts Exhibition](#) — Verifies his 1971 relocation to Bellingham, his environmental litigation records, and his museum exhibition timelines.
- [Preview Art Magazine: Rand Jack and the Whatcom Land Trust](#) — Documents his concurrent work across academia at Fairhaven College, art, and the foundational history of the land trust.
- [Bellingham Regional Chamber of Commerce: Lifetime Achievement Award Winners](#) — Verifies the historical roster of local lifetime honor recipients, confirming Jack's 2018 award.

Note: this biography was generated with assistance from ChatGPT.



WHATCOM
LAND TRUST
EST. 1984

July 29th, 2026

Whatcom County Council
311 Grand Avenue, Suite 105
Bellingham, WA 98225

RE: Support for Renaming the "Main Trail" at Canyon Lake Community Forest in Honor of Rand Jack

Dear Council Members,

On behalf of the Whatcom Land Trust, I am writing to express our enthusiastic support for the resolution proposed by the Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Department (WCPR) to rename the "Main Trail" at Canyon Lake Community Forest in honor of local conservationist Rand Jack.

For nearly 50 years, Rand Jack has been a pillar of our community's environmental stewardship. As a founder of the Whatcom Land Trust and a dedicated board member since its inception in 1984, Rand has been instrumental in the permanent protection of nearly 20,000 acres of conservation lands. His tireless advocacy has secured treasures such as Teddy Bear Cove, Larrabee State Park additions, Lilly Point Marine Park, Stimpson Family Nature Preserve, and Point Whitehorn Park. These spaces serve as vital recreational hubs and have cemented Whatcom County's reputation as a premier destination for those seeking to experience the Pacific Northwest's natural beauty.

Among his many achievements, the acquisition of the 2,200-acre Canyon Lake Community Forest remains a crowning jewel. Rand served as the lead negotiator for this \$3.6 million acquisition—a complex and delicate multi-year undertaking involving Whatcom County, Western Washington University, and various private foundations.

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EST. 1984

Canyon Lake is a place of profound ecological significance, containing some of the oldest forest stands in the region. The upper ridge features a 700-acre contiguous grove of mountain hemlock, Alaska yellow cedar, and Pacific silver fir, with many trees aged between 800 and 1,000 years. Of the hundreds of projects Rand has championed, this ancient forest holds a uniquely special place in his heart. It is only fitting that the main artery leading visitors to this majestic ridge bear his name.

While we recognize that park facilities are generally excluded from the strict requirements of WCC Chapter 2.180 (Naming of County-owned Public Buildings, Properties, and Facilities), this proposal adheres perfectly to the spirit and criteria established in § 2.180.050. Rand's decades-long record of outstanding community service, as detailed in his biography, makes him an exemplary candidate for this honor.

We urge the Council to approve this resolution as a lasting tribute to a man who has given so much to ensure that our county's natural heritage remains intact for generations to come. Pending Council approval, the Whatcom Land Trust is committed to covering the cost of updating signage.

Thank you for your time and your service to our community.

Sincerely,



Rachel Vogel
Rachel Vogel
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PS: We are hoping to surprise him with this news in mid-late September and appreciate any discretion as is possible.

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