

January 22, 2023
770 East Holly Street
Bellingham, WA 98225



To: Whatcom County Council -
Kaylee Galloway, Todd Donovan, Tyler Byrd,
Mark Stremler, Ben Elenbaas, Barry Buchanan,
Jon Scanlon

RE: DNR Anderson Creek / NRCA Proposed Designation

Dear Whatcom County Councilmembers:

On behalf of the Whatcom Mountain Bike Coalition and our 1,700 members, I am writing to express our concern about the DNR's proposal to designate their Anderson Creek and Brokedown Palace properties as a Natural Resources Conservation Areas (NRCA) per Commissioner of Public Lands Hilary Franz's December 18th letter to County Council.

The WMBC supports setting aside forests to help mitigate the effects of climate change, protect habitat, and preserve scenic areas. However, the NRCA designation limits two types of recreation that contribute significantly to Whatcom County - mountain biking and horseback riding. The NRCA designation would also prevent recreation events of any kind taking place on this property in the future.

Baker to Bellingham Recreation Plan and Future Connections:

As a member of the DNR's Baker to Bellingham Recreation Planning Committee, our diverse group of stakeholders worked for nearly 3 years to identify the best locations for trail-based recreation on DNR-managed lands throughout Whatcom County. The Mirror Lake property on Park Road, near the southern edge of Lake Whatcom heading East toward Highway 9 is one of the 5 areas identified during that process. Commissioner Franz signed the Baker to Bellingham Non-motorized Recreation Plan into effect in April of 2019.

The Mirror Lake property is the same property identified as the proposed Anderson Creek NRCA. The property connects directly into the County Parks land on Stewart Mountain and will provide future connections to Anderson Mountain in Skagit County via the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail. Designating the Mirror Lake property as an NRCA, which would allow hiking-only recreation, is in direct conflict with the Commissioner's own Baker to Bellingham Non-motorized Recreation Plan.

Whatcom County Parks and Comprehensive Planning:

Additionally, Whatcom County has already planned trails intended for multiple users (including mountain biking and horseback riding) approved by the Council on the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan that will go through the area identified as the Anderson Creek NRCA, aka the Mirror Lake property.

Blanchard Mountain Natural Area Reserve:

As a member of the Blanchard Forest Advisory Committee, I have been involved in the creation of the Harriet A. Spanel Natural Area Reserve (NAR) which permanently protects the 1,600 acre "Core" of the mountain while also continuing to allow multi-use recreation throughout Blanchard Mountain.

The WMBC is requesting the following from the County's discussions with the DNR prior to approving this change of land designation:

1. Designate the Mirror Lake property, aka Anderson Creek property as a NAR (not an NRCA) to:
 - a. Allow multi-use recreation access for hiking, trail running, mountain biking, and equestrian use.
 - b. Allow recreation events to be permitted.

The WMBC is happy to help with any adjustments to this proposed land designation and appreciates the County's diligence on how this process moves forward with conserving these parcels. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or additional information.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric J. Brown". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Eric Brown
Executive Director, WMBC
Phone: (206) 399-8347
Email: eric@wmbcmtb.org
Web: www.wmbcmtb.org