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Board of Clallam County Commissioners

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TODD MIELKE, County Administrator

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December 5, 2023

Hilary Franz
Commissioner of Public Lands
Olympia, WA 98504-7001

Dear Commissioner Franz,

The Clallam County Commissioners greatly value the exchange of information your department provided on November 6th. Our discussions with Duane Emmons and Sarah Ogden on your staff communicated the desire of the DNR to create a collaborative relationship between the Department of Natural Resources and Clallam County and the discussions were very useful. The fact that Clallam County has a total of 161,144 acres managed by the DNR, 66% in a deferred status, and 93,063 of state forest transfer acres with 60% also deferred, means that the County and all interested parties need to have a comprehensive approach that provide outcomes that benefit most of our citizens. Our discussions also have helped us to focus on the fact that there are many constituents that depend on and benefit from the management of these forests in many ways.

We have become very aware of the many alternatives for the 161,144 acres in Clallam County and we request continued close collaboration with the DNR on matters related to this timberland. As an example of the close collaboration we appreciate being involved in the DNR purchase of the Wahkiakum timberland property to help mitigate for the marbled murrelet financial "hit" to this County. This in turn will now require a sharing agreement with the receivers of revenue from these new properties at both the county level in the case of the Wahkiakum property and the junior taxing districts.

As a result of the timberland acquisition in Wahkiakum County for the benefit of the impacted counties and the discussion on candidate parcels under the Natural Climate Solutions Carbon Sequestration Forest Proviso, we are commencing to formulate a working group of constituents to include our junior taxing districts including the local school districts, fire districts, hospital districts, library districts, tribes and other interested parties. Our next meeting with the DNR will also include these other constituencies.

It is also critically important that State forestlands that may transfer as a result of programs associated with the Natural Climate Solutions Proviso include logical criteria for their inclusion in the program. Close collaboration and input between the beneficiaries and government-to-government communication with regional Tribal governments is vital. In addition, it is important that the replacement lands under the Natural Climate Solutions Proviso have a realistic estimate of the revenue to be received from any replacement timberland.

Other criteria for potential timberland exchange should ideally include the avoidance of short-term financial impacts to Junior Taxing Districts, forest health, logging methods, carbon sequestration potential and a host of other decisionmaking metrics. We look forward to continued close collaboration with our regional DNR team to further refine these criteria.

We understand that interest in the Natural Climate Solutions Proviso – including interest in the funding made available to preserve 2,000 acres of “legacy forest” across Western Washington – has been significant across the state. While advocates in our community have encouraged consideration of inclusion of a variety of timber units, we have been working to identify the very best match in our county and believe we have a candidate in the “Shore Thing” sale (scheduled for 2028) south of Lake Sutherland as these are older forest, interspersed with Marbled Murrelet habitat, and that will require a significant amount of cable logging on steep slopes. Importantly, and additionally, these units have minimal nexus with any local Junior Taxing Districts. We feel confident requesting these units be considered for inclusion in the Natural Climate Solutions program.

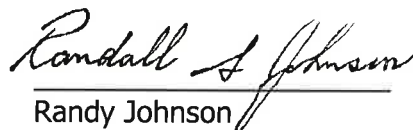
The Commissioners would appreciate being able to communicate with the DNR, the Junior Taxing Districts, Tribal partners and others as candidate timberland continue to be considered under the Natural Climate Solutions Proviso. This letter of support requests that Clallam County be considered in the Natural Climate Solutions Proviso with the understanding that our beneficiaries will not continue to be negatively impacted financially, and that we maintain a viable forest products industry.

We look forward to scheduling a follow-up meeting early in the coming year to discuss this topic further.

Sincerely,

BOARD OF CLALLAM COUNTY COMMISSIONERS


Mark Ozias, Chair


Randy Johnson


Mike French