Key Point about the Report
Evaluation of Blanchard Mountain Social, Ecological and Financial Values

In 2001 the state legislature asked DNR and Northwest Ecosystem Alliance (and Sierra Club) to collaborate on a jointly funded study of the social, ecological, and financial values of Blanchard Mountain. The main focus was on using the latest economic techniques to estimate the values local residents place on both amenity uses and economic uses of Blanchard Mountain, as well as the actual local economic contribution made by recreational uses and timber harvest at Blanchard Mountain.

DNR and Northwest Ecosystem Alliance formed a steering committee, including Bonnie Bunning and Lisa McShane as well as Bob Rose (Skagitonians to Preserve Farmlands) and hired Cedar River Group as consultant. All parties found the collaborative exercise productive and valuable.

The study took from February through August 2002. It used a telephone survey of 200 Whatcom and Skagit County residents, an input-output analysis of economic benefits, an on-site survey of recreational uses of Blanchard Mountain, and a description of Blanchard Mountain’s attributes and recent and projected timber harvesting activities.

The study concluded the following:

- The general public places a greater overall value on amenity uses of Blanchard Mountain, like recreation, than on economic uses like timber harvest.
- The Skagit and Whatcom County general public’s total willingness to make a hypothetical one-time payment to permanently stop all timber harvest for the sake of recreational, economic and ecological values on Blanchard Mountain was about $8.5 million.
- The actual economic contribution of timber harvest on Blanchard Mountain to the Skagit and Whatcom Counties’ economy each year is estimated to range from $1.6 to $3.1 million, and total annual tax revenue is estimated to range from $68,000 to $138,000.
- The actual economic contribution of recreation on Blanchard Mountain to Skagit and Whatcom Counties each year is estimated to range from $0.3 to $0.5 million, and total annual tax revenue is estimated to range from $49,000 to $83,000.

The study did not examine or make conclusions about the degree of mutual compatibility of varying levels of recreational use and timber harvest. However, other surveys have shown that the public expects forest managers to figure out how to manage for both timber harvest and recreation and wildlife values.

The study provides a good point of departure for DNR to work collaboratively with NWEA and others to develop management strategies within current law to accommodate acceptable levels of both timber harvest and recreational use, while also protecting wildlife, scenic views, slope stability, and other natural values of the area.