



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF  
**Natural Resources**

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**Peter Goldmark** - Commissioner of Public Lands

# Department of Natural Resources

## Natural Areas Program

### Morning Star Natural Resources Conservation Area Proposed Boundary Expansion

Wednesday, January 21, 2015  
Everett

#### Natural Areas Staff

- Olympia: Curt Pavola
- NW Region: Paul McFarland



# AGENDA

- 6:30** Presentation of proposed Morning Star NRCA boundary expansion  
Audience Q&A
- 7:00** Presentation of the proposed Morning Star Trust Land Transfer and associated Inter-Trust Exchange  
Audience Q&A, followed by five minute break
- 7:30** Public Hearing on proposed boundary expansion
- 8:00** Public Hearing on proposed TLT and associated Inter-Trust exchange
- 8:30** Adjourn (upon conclusion of testimony)

# Washington State Department of Natural Resources

- **Fire Prevention and Suppression**
  - On over 12 million acres of forest lands
- **Protecting Resources**
  - Regulating forest harvest
  - Surface mining reclamation – permitting and enforcement

# Washington State Department of Natural Resources

- **Public Land Manager**
  - **2.9 Million Acres of Uplands**
    - **Forest, Agricultural, Grazing, Urban Lands**
  - **2.4 Million Acres of Aquatic Lands**
    - **Navigable Bedlands, Tidelands, Shorelands**
  - **Over 152,000 Acres of Conservation Lands**



# Natural Areas Program Overview

- **Natural Area Preserves Act 79.70 RCW (1972)**
  - **Legislature established protection for... Areas of land and water that have retained their natural character, important to preserving rare or vanishing flora, fauna, geological, natural historical or similar features of scientific or educational value**  
RCW 79.70.020
- **Natural Heritage Program (1977)**
- **Natural Resources Conservation Areas Act 79.71 RCW (1987)**

# Mission

Conserving Washington's native species and ecosystems, today and for future generations



Photo by Janice Friebaum

High-Quality Ecosystems



Photo by Jim Barrett

Rare Plant Species



Rare Animal Species



# Conservation Lands

- 91 sites currently total more than 152,000 acres, which is about 2.5 percent of DNR-managed lands
- Two Conservation Categories
  - Natural Area Preserves
  - Natural Resources Conservation Areas



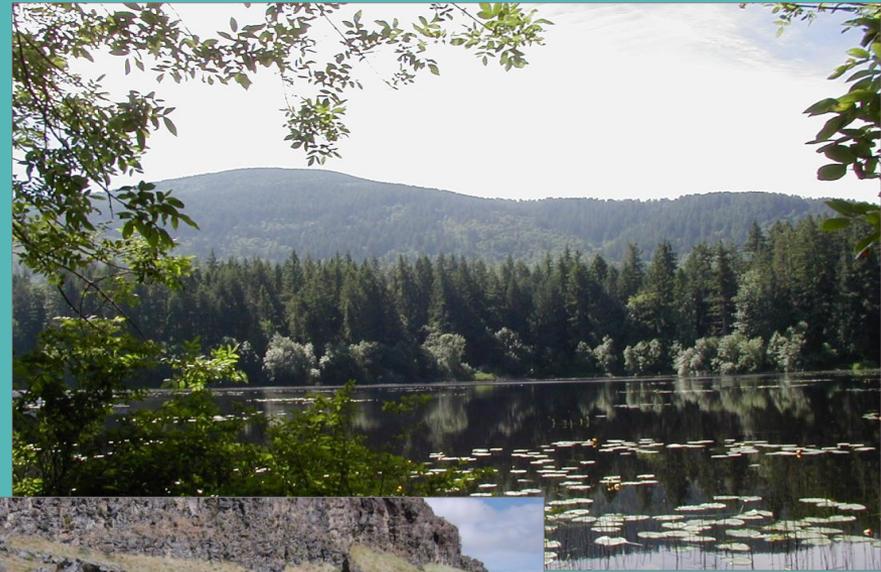
# Natural Area Preserves

- Scientific research
- Genetic resource of native plants and animals
- Education
- Baseline/reference areas
- Habitats for vanishing species
- Limited public access



# Natural Resources Conservation Areas

- Protect habitat for plant and animal species
- Offer opportunities for environmental education
- Include low-impact uses, such as hiking, primitive camping, wildlife viewing, etc.





# Cypress Island NRCA

View from Cypress  
Highlands NAP



Skagit  
County

# Shipwreck Point NRCA



Clallam  
County



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[www.dnr.wa.gov](http://www.dnr.wa.gov)

# Loomis NRCA

Snowshoe Mt.



Okanogan  
County



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# NRCA Designation Process

- Candidate sites are identified for special characteristics
- DNR trust land managers and natural areas staff review proposals and make a recommendations
- Proposal is subject to public review and a boundary hearing prior to being designated as a NRCA



# Designation Process

- DNR staff submit the proposal to the Commissioner of Public Lands for final decision
- Funding is sought
- Lands are transferred via TLT, and/or acquired from willing sellers for inclusion in the natural area

## COMMISSIONER'S ORDER

NUMBER **200935**

STATE OF WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Peter Goldmark, Commissioner of Public Lands

COMMISSIONER'S ORDER

WHEREAS, the Washington State Legislature, through Chapter 79.70 RCW, Natural Area Preserves Act, and through Chapter 79.71 RCW, Natural Resources Conservation Areas Act, found that there is a need to conserve certain natural features of the state for the benefit of present and future generations, such areas are worthy of conservation for their outstanding ecological and scenic values; they provide opportunities for scientific research, education, and appropriate low impact public uses; acquisition of property or rights in property is necessary to protect these areas; and there is a need to develop appropriate management strategies to provide for the protection of these natural areas; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to RCW 79.70.040, the Department of Natural Resources is authorized to acquire private lands for the creation of natural area preserves, and

WHEREAS, pursuant to RCW 79.71.040, the Department of Natural Resources is authorized to acquire private lands for the creation of natural resources conservation areas, and

WHEREAS, The Department has determined that the area described below should be designated a combination Natural Area Preserve and Natural Resources Conservation Area; the area is ecologically important and contains resources and characteristics worthy of consideration for conservation purposes, as defined in RCW Chapters 79.70 and 79.71, and

WHEREAS, the Natural Heritage Advisory Council, pursuant to RCW 79.70.080(1)(f), reviewed and approved the proposed Dabob Bay Natural Area Preserve and Natural Resources Conservation Area, and

WHEREAS, as required by RCW 79.70.100 and RCW 79.71.060, the Department held a public hearing on October 23, 2008 in Jefferson County, Washington to receive public comment on designation of the proposed Dabob Bay Natural Area Preserve/Natural Resources Conservation Area.

It is THEREFORE ORDERED AND DIRECTED that the proposed Dabob Bay Natural Area Preserve/Natural Resources Conservation Area be designated to include approximately 6000 acres, including uplands and tidelands, as indicated on the attached map, dated March 27, 2009.

Dated this 21<sup>st</sup> day of April, 2008/9

STATE OF WASHINGTON  
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES



A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to be "Peter Goldmark", is written over a horizontal line.

PETER GOLDMARK  
COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC LANDS

# Investment in Natural Areas

- **Since the program's inception**
  - **The Legislature has invested more than \$450 million in land acquisition for DNR's natural areas**
- **Sites are acquired predominantly in two ways:**
  - **Through the Trust Land Transfer Program**
  - **Through grants from the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, and federal funding programs, to purchase lands from willing sellers at market value**

# Natural Areas Management

- Site-based decision making, guided by science
- Focus on conservation priorities and site-specific natural features
- Identifying public use and facilities needs
- Working with the public and conservation partners through boundary hearings, the management planning process, and management action review opportunities





# Site Overview

- **1991 — Initial “Trust Land Transfer Program” acquisitions for three Upper Sultan Basin NRCAs:**
  - Greider Ridge – Morning Star – Mount Pilchuck**
- **1990s, 2007, 2011 — Additional TLT acquisitions**
- **2007 — The three NRCAs unified under the name “Morning Star NRCA”**

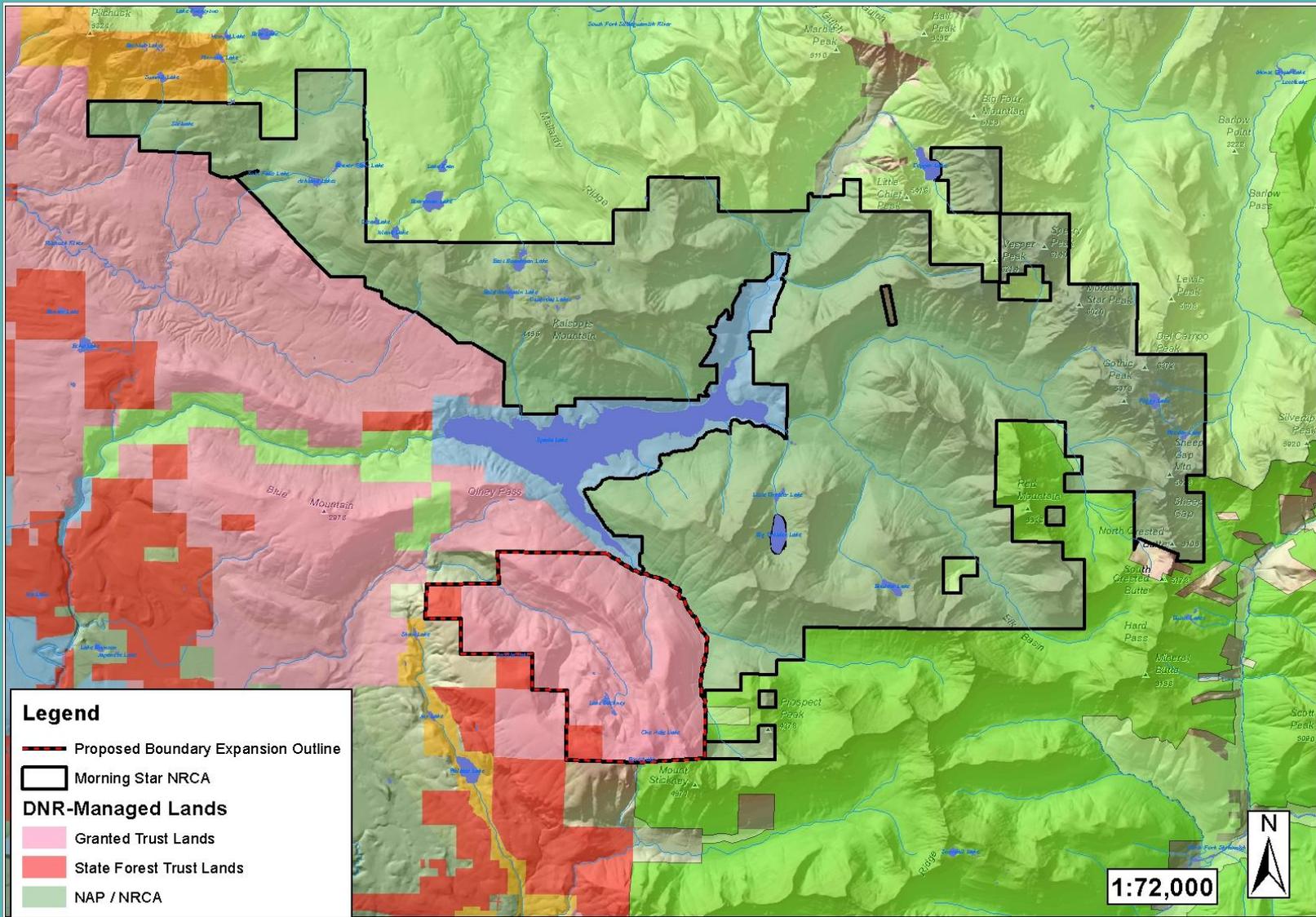
# Site Features

- **Currently 33,592 acres**
  - **The original 10,003 acre Morning Star NRCA**
    - **Steep and rugged terrain**
    - **Small alpine lakes and glaciers**
    - **Elevations from 1,600 feet to the 6,610 foot Del Campo Peak**
    - **Alaska harebell and Cooley's buttercup exist in rock crevices and cliff ledges—both state sensitive plant species**

# Site Features

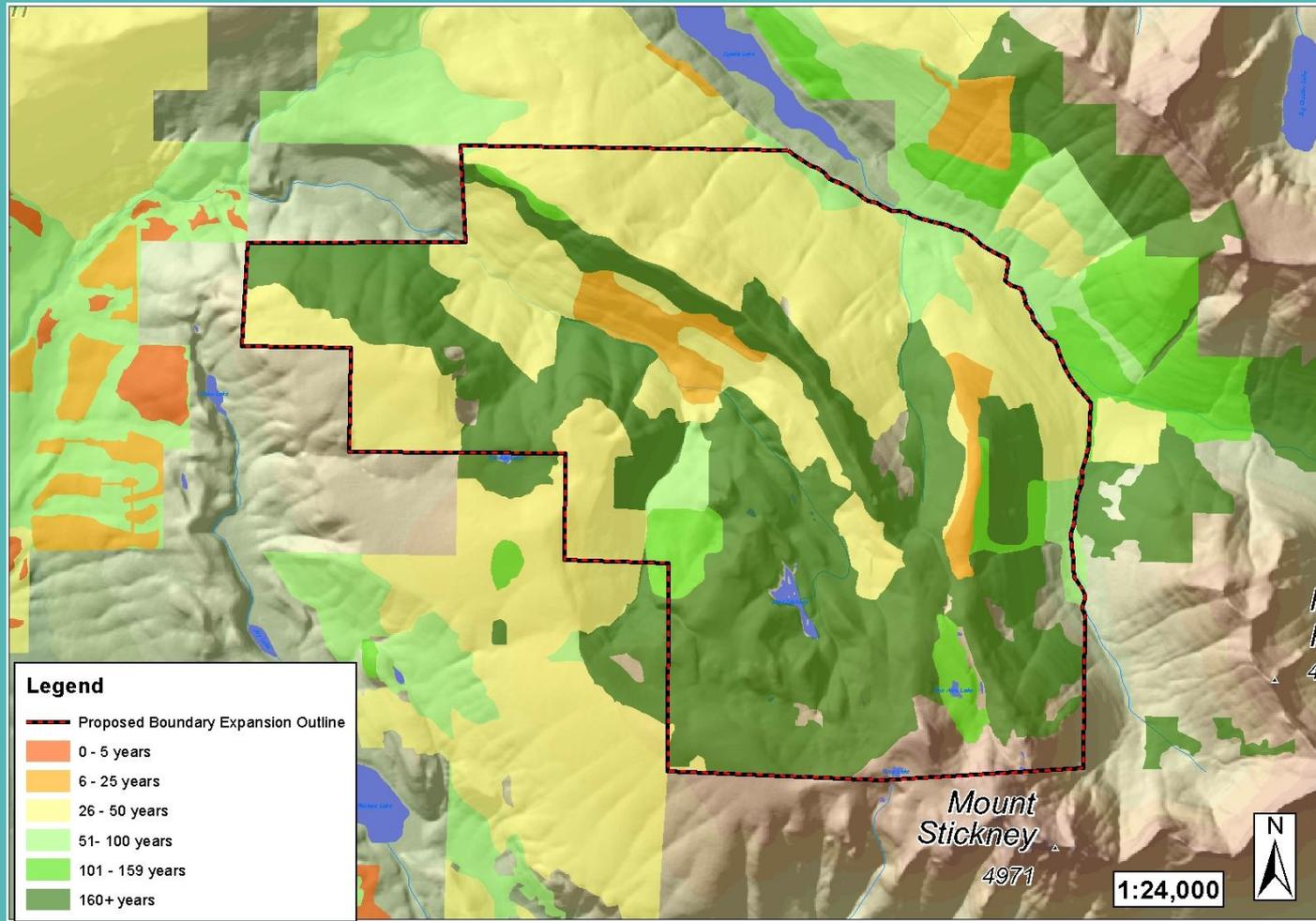
- **The former 9,606 acre Mount Pilchuck NRCA**
  - **Low-elevation forest communities to alpine forests and meadows**
  - **Some forest stands are about 300 years old.**
- **The former 6,700 acre Greider Ridge NRCA**
  - **Mid-to high-elevation subalpine areas with exposed rocks and cliffs**
  - **Silver fir and mountain hemlock forests give way to low growing huckleberry parklands**

# Proposed Boundary Expansion



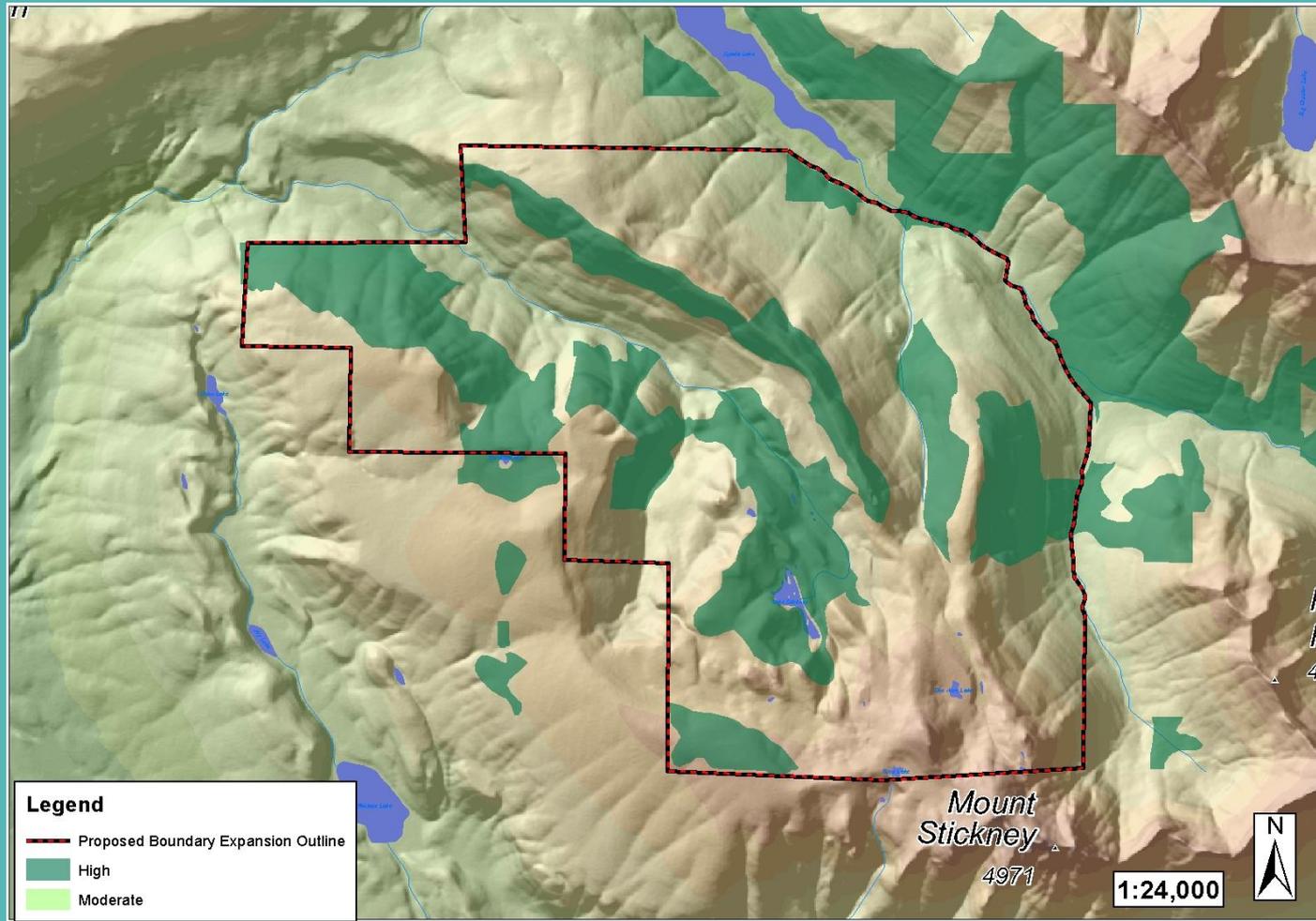
# Features of Addition

## Age Class Distribution



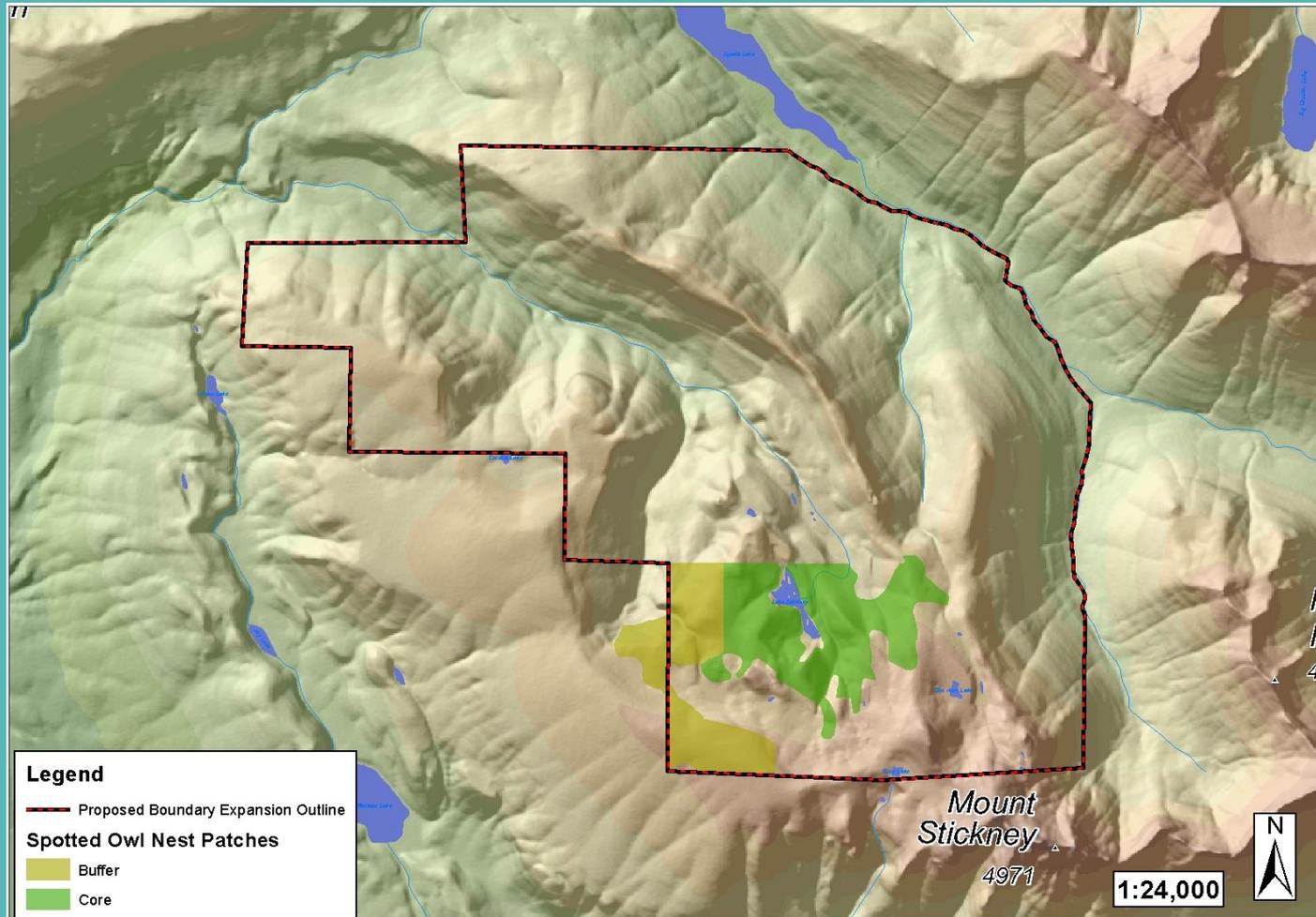
# Features of Addition

## Old Growth Potential



# Features of Addition

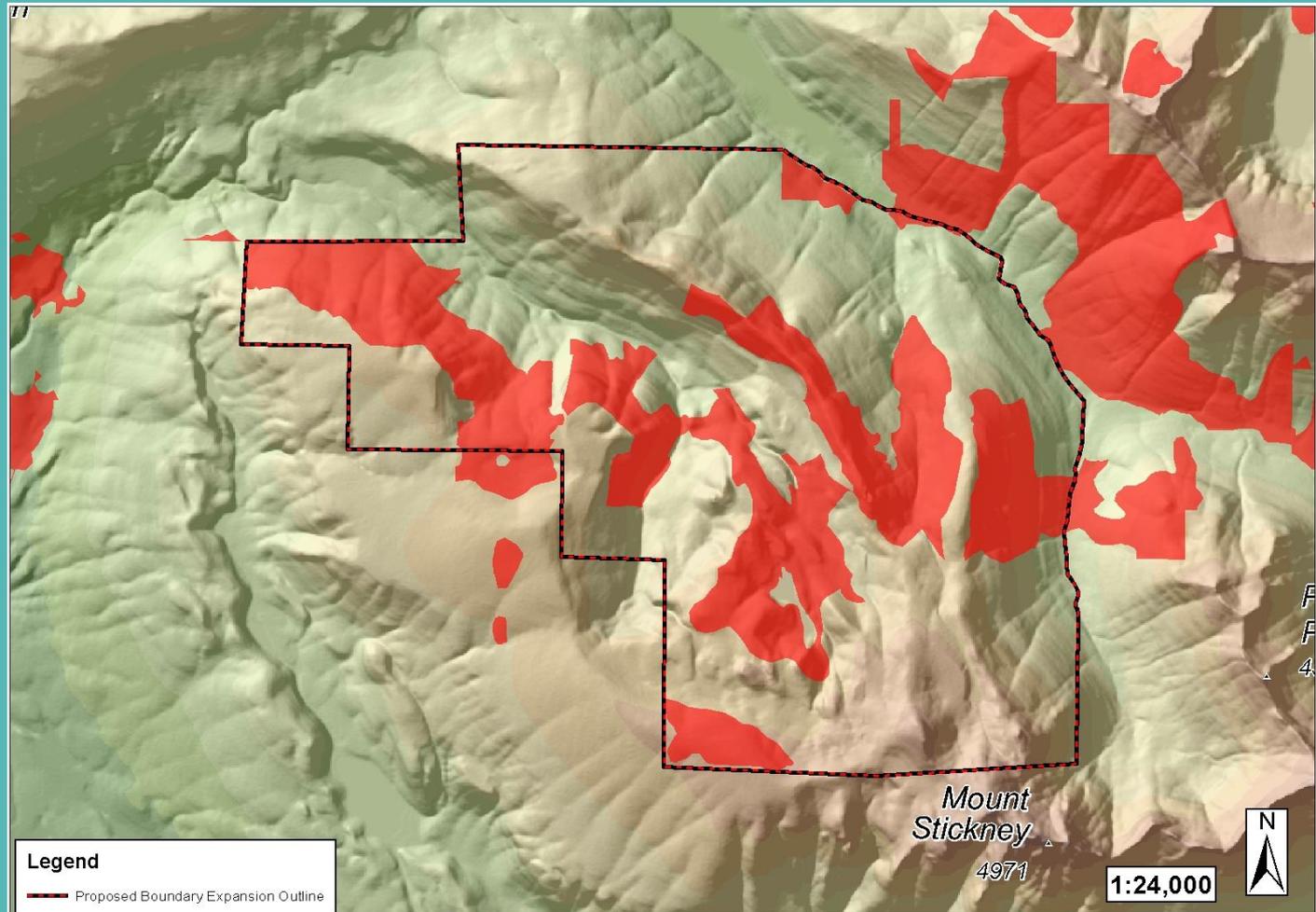
## Spotted Owl Habitat



# Features of Addition

## Marbled Murrelet Habitat

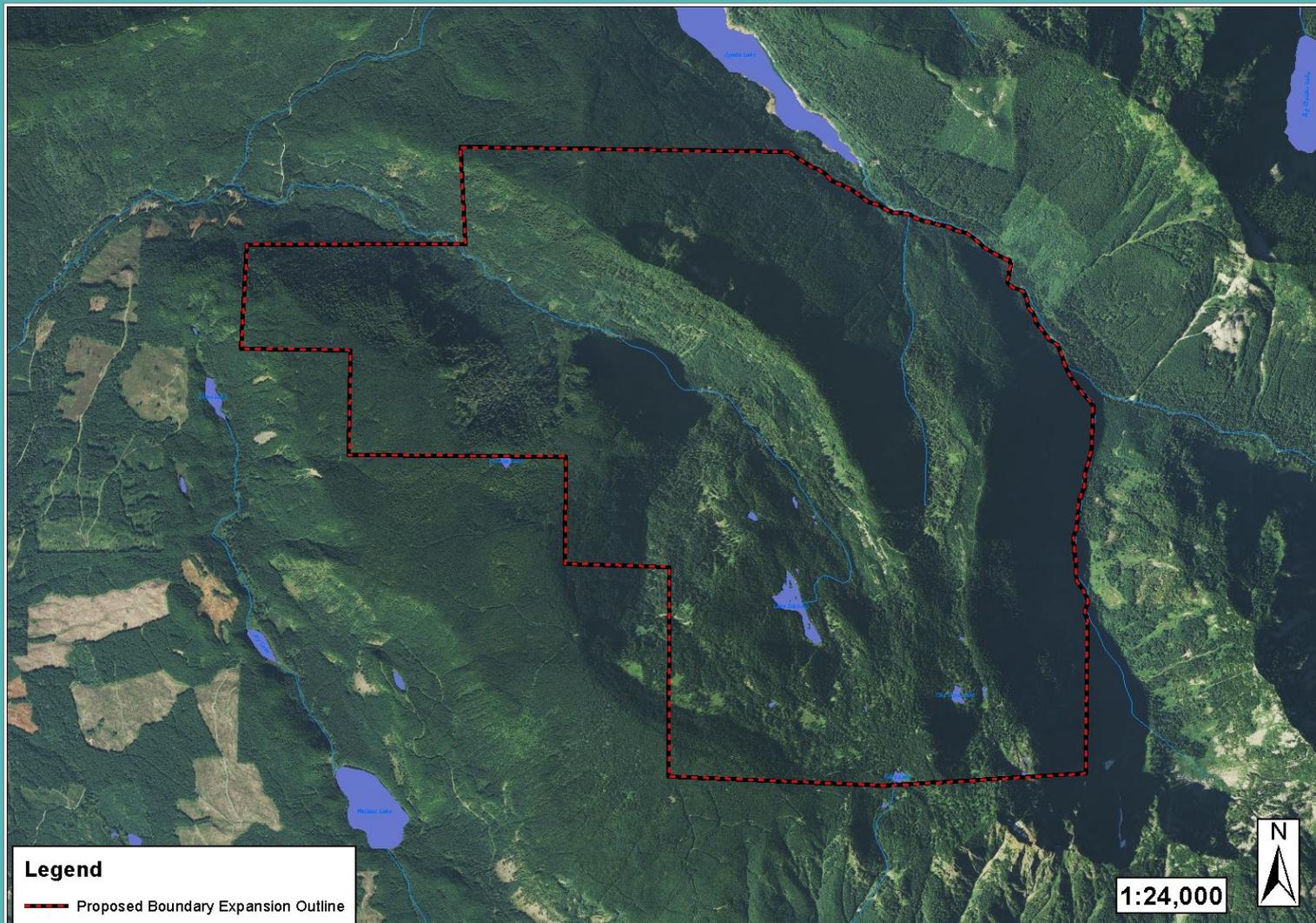
Portions of expansion area meet various criteria for protection as actual or potential marbled murrelet habitat under DNR's Habitat Conservation Plan



# Features of Addition

- **Proposed boundary expansion:**
  - Adds 4,999 acres, including remnant older and higher elevation forests immediately adjacent to the Morning Star NRCA
  - Adds to the conservation values, including old growth forest, which provides habitat for the northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet, northern goshawks, and Pacific fishers.
  - Provides additional protection to South Fork Sultan River, a main tributary to Spada Lake, and to the upper reaches of Olney Creek, and Lake Stickney
  - Provides connectivity via the South Fork Sultan River to unroaded, high elevation “parklands” that connect with similar (grizzly bear) habitat on Wilderness lands.

# Questions?



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