



## Marbled Murrelet Long Term Conservation Strategy Frequently Asked Questions:

### 1. What is the MMLTCS?

The 1997 State Trust Lands Habitat Conservation plan contains conservation strategies for a variety of species, including species listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act and some non-listed species. These conservation strategies drive the Department of Natural Resources' (DNR's) ecologically-based forest management. Due to limited knowledge about marbled murrelet biology and habitat use, the marbled murrelet conservation strategy implemented in 1997 was intended to be temporary until enough information was known on marbled murrelet species needs to develop a long-term strategy.

The selection of the preferred alternative by the Board of Natural Resources begins the process of turning the temporary conservation strategy from 1997 into a 50 year plan that is referred to as the Marbled Murrelet Long-term Conservation Plan (MMLTCS).

The MMLTCS will identify areas of forested trust lands to be managed for the conservation benefit of the marbled murrelet and will provide guidelines for DNR's management activities including timber harvest, road maintenance and construction, recreation and other day to day management. The MMLTCS will also incorporate conservation strategies to mitigate impacts and address potential uncertainties identified by the USFWS and DNR.

A long-term conservation strategy that complies with the Endangered Species Act will give DNR the legal and management certainty it needs to continue to harvest timber that earns millions of dollars annually for what are typically called "trust land beneficiaries:" public schools, and county operations like emergency services, libraries, hospitals, and other local government functions.

### 2. Why is it being voted on by the Board of Natural Resources now?

The 1997 HCP created an interim marbled murrelet strategy and called for the development of a long-term strategy when we had the science and data to do so. We now have that information, including a marbled murrelet habitat model, better information on where murrelets nest, and more information on populations and trends.

The decision currently in front of the Board of Natural Resources is the selection of a preferred alternative to forward to the federal government. The MMLTCS may not be the same as the preferred alternative, as the alternative may change during future environmental review, consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and public comment processes. The preferred alternative will be analyzed in an environmental impact statement and be submitted as a draft application to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to amend the 1997 HCP. Before implementation of the MMLTCS, the Board will consider all the above factors – USFWS guidance, environmental review and public comment – and vote on a final proposed MMLTCS in the spring of 2019.

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### **3. What does the selection of a preferred alternative by the Board of Natural Resources mean?**

The selection of a preferred alternative by the Board of Natural Resources is the next step in developing a long-term conservation strategy that protects strategically important murrelet nesting habitat on DNR-managed lands. The MMLTCS will also provide long-term certainty for timber harvest and other management activities on forested state trust lands, and contribute to the long-term conservation of the species.

The preferred alternative focuses on 20 identified special habitat areas on the west side of Washington State. These 20 special habitat areas, distributed throughout the known range of the marbled murrelet within Washington state, are designed to increase the nesting productivity of existing, occupied marbled murrelet sites. The preliminary analysis of the preferred alternative suggests that it will add additional acres to DNR's already significant conservation commitment to endangered species

Through these components, it is anticipated that the preferred alternative will offset impacts to marbled murrelet habitat (including those from harvesting and other disturbances) as per the standards set by USFWS and DNR.

### **4. What happens after the selection of the preferred alternative?**

The selection of the preferred alternative is by no means the end of the process. After the selection of the preferred alternative, several actions will happen concurrently. These include analyzing the alternative in a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement and submitting a draft Habitat Conservation Plan Amendment (HCPA) to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Once these documents are drafted, a 60-day comment period open to the public will occur for each. These items are expected to be completed in the summer of 2018. DNR staff has also been instructed to conduct an Economic Impact Analysis of the preferred alternative.

DNR will then respond to public comments and take the opportunity to revisit the preferred alternative as necessary. The BNR will use this new information to consider the HCPA. This will undergo analysis within a Final Environmental Impact Statement and will be submitted to USFWS in a final HCPA.

The Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement and Habitat Conservation Plan Amendment are expected to be submitted to the USFWS in spring of 2019. Pending federal review and approval, the BNR will then adopt a final MMLTCS.

While the technical work of the HCP amendment is ongoing, a separate "Solutions Table" will be convened to find ways to support the economies, communities and ecosystems impacted by this work. The Solutions Table will be made up of a group of community members and elected officials with the intent of finding solutions and programmatic approaches to mitigate economic impacts, support beneficiaries and local economies who have felt the effects of the interim strategy and to find ways to support the marbled murrelet, above and beyond the conservation measures in the HCP.

### **5. What does the preferred alternative mean for the "trust beneficiaries"?**

DNR's HCP is designed to ensure compliance with all federal requirements under the Endangered Species Act. One of the most important components of a successful long-term strategy will be the legal and management certainty it creates for the trust beneficiaries. Trust beneficiaries include schools, hospitals, public libraries, universities, emergency services, hospitals and county governmental functions. These

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beneficiaries receive their funding from state trust management activities, largely timber harvests, per the Washington State constitution.

By choosing a preferred alternative, DNR will move towards a final long-term conservation strategy that permits revenue-generating activities on specified lands throughout the life of the HCP. This certainty will allow trust beneficiaries to receive revenue from DNR forestlands while also ensuring that those revenue-generating activities are meeting ESA requirements.

Because certain geographic areas are more valuable as conservation to the marbled murrelet, not all trusts are impacted equally. DNR identified the most heavily impacted trusts, including Pacific, Wahkiakum and Clallam Counties and designed the preferred alternative to meet ESA and minimize those impacts. By providing certainty through the long-term conservation strategy, the preferred alternative was designed to serve the best interest of each of the individual trusts.

### **a. What about schools?**

Preliminary analyses suggest that the preferred alternative does not reduce the approximately \$28 million dollars of western Washington timber harvest revenue that DNR annually provides to K-12 schools (this number is based on a five year average). The preferred alternative was designed with special attention toward schools to ensure that they do not suffer adverse impacts from this important conservation work and will be further analyzed in the SEIS to make certain of this.

### **b. What about the counties and junior taxing districts affected?**

DNR manages specific parcels of forestland for individual counties. Revenue generated by DNR on those parcels is then distributed to the counties.

Preliminary analyses indicate that the preferred alternative will have an expected neutral or positive revenue impact on all counties at the county level compared to the current five year average, with the exception of Pacific County. Pacific County contains geographically important forestland for the marbled murrelet, and is therefore bearing a disproportionate conservation burden under the Endangered Species Act. The preferred alternative will address this by providing certainty around the remaining forestland in Pacific County and allowing management activities to continue. The Solutions Table will also work to develop strategies to address its impacts.

## **6. What about the bird? Is this enough to save this species from extinction?**

The breeding range of the marbled murrelet extends from the Aleutian Islands (north of Alaska) through Central California. However, this species is designated as federally threatened in Washington, Oregon, and California, and at the state level, considered to be endangered in Washington. In these three states, DNR-managed lands comprise a small portion (5%) of the total land within the range of the murrelet. Of the DNR lands within the range of the murrelet, they contain only 14% of the murrelet habitat identified in Washington State. Therefore, DNR can only do so much to positively impact murrelet populations.

The USFWS will evaluate DNR's proposed long-term conservation strategy to ensure it complies with the ESA and supports its 1997 recovery plan for the marbled murrelet, a plan that covers Washington, Oregon, and California.

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To achieve this, DNR staff designed the preferred alternative to mitigate impacts to marbled murrelet habitat, including those from harvesting, roads and disturbance. In addition to 583,000 acres of conservation already protected through the HCP and DNR policies, the preferred alternative will add conservation specifically for marbled murrelets.

### **7. Why do timber harvest activities need to happen in these areas at all?**

Since 1889 the state of Washington has been managing forestlands to support public schools, universities as well as other institutions, and to fund vital services for many counties, including public safety and emergency services. These trust beneficiaries are dependent on forest activities as a sustainable source of revenue.

As the trust manager responsible for these lands, DNR must follow the common law duties of a trustee. These have been tested in the Washington State Supreme Court, and require DNR to provide a perpetual source of revenue to its trust beneficiaries through activities such as timber management. In the complex world of policy and environmental management, DNR must ensure these trust responsibilities are met while simultaneously managing healthy, resilient forests capable of supporting native species and valuable ecosystem functions.

### **8. For 20 years, a small number of communities have felt significant economic impacts from the “interim strategy” which left large quantities of land “out of bounds.” Will these communities be left to struggle under the burden of even more “out of bounds” land?**

The intent of the preferred alternative is to create clarity about where conservation for the marbled murrelet should happen. It is also intended to provide certainty around timber supply and an ESA-compliant pathway to guide timber harvest activities adjacent to these conserved areas. The preferred alternative is designed to release operable acres that are currently protected under the interim murrelet strategy, reducing the amount of land that is currently “out of bounds.” It is the BNR’s intention that this will create relief for communities, and will bring timber value back to rural areas.

The Solutions Table, a group to be comprised of community members and elected leaders, will be convened separate from, but parallel to, the operational work that DNR will undertake to advance the preferred alternative. Where lands must remain “out of bounds” due to the Endangered Species Act, the Solutions Table will look for ways to support these local economies and beneficiaries. The Solutions Table is tasked with producing a set of workable proposals to address hardships that may occur as a result of compliance with the ESA. By bringing different perspectives together in collaborative dialogue, the Solutions Table will work on finding solutions beyond the scope of the Board’s HCP amendment, both for local communities and the conservation of the marbled murrelet.