TRUST LAND TRANSFER 2.0
Our interest in trust land transfer

March 4, 2021

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RE: Project Funding for Trust Land Transfer (TLT) Program in Upcoming Capital Budget

Dear Committee Leadership:

The S4 underwritten-conservation, recreation, and wildlife organizations strongly urge you to include funding for the Trust Land Transfer (TLT) program in the Capital budget in order to complete four high priority projects – Devil Lake, Manning Rd, Sisson and Bailey Island – detailed below. Funding for these Trust Land Transfers addresses many priority issues of this legislative session, including carbon sequestration, outdoor recreation, job creation, revenue for public schools, salmon and orca recovery environmental justice, and a strong seafood industry and is consistent with the Washington Department of Natural Resources’ (DNR) constitutional mandate for trust land management.

The DNR manages more than 3 million acres of state trust forest, agricultural, range, and commercial properties that earn income to fund schools, universities, capital buildings, and other state institutions which help fund services in many counties. We understand that DNR strives to improve returns from state trust lands; however, not all trust lands are best suited for income production from forestry. Some trust lands also provide important habitat for fish and wildlife, recreation and educational opportunities for the general public, and older forests on Trust Lands are increasingly recognized for their important role in carbon...

David Herbst, Vice Chair, Capital
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My TLT musings

- Public support for TLT is very high
- TLT is very moderate politically
- TLT is an essential tool, both for conservation and keeping the trust whole
- TLT is a win-win-win
- We must evolve TLT to meet today’s challenges
- Stakeholders need to come together
Key challenges to address

- Must meet the interests of the legislature
- Must keep the corpus of the trust whole
- Must protect the interests of beneficiaries: schools, counties and junior taxing districts
- Must protect timber harvest opportunities and timber jobs
My vision for TLT 2.0

Real transparency and a public image
Integration into Natural Areas and Recreation
Policy fixes
New funding solutions
Transparency and public image

New name (Ecological Preserves?)
Public website on TLT (past transactions, process, etc)
Recognition of TLT on signage at TLT projects
Connection to Natural Areas and Recreation

- Natural Areas and Recreation staff involved in identifying TLT projects
- Recognition of Natural Area Program and Recreation needs
- Funding and staffing for ongoing maintenance of NAPs, NRCAs
Policy fixes

Nix the 80/20 ratio

• Doesn’t meet the needs of many projects
• DNR funds only a small fraction of school construction

Transparent project selection process, with public input

• WWRP could serve as a model, with prescribed unbiased criteria

New land replacement valuation process

• Focus on replacement land acquisition cost, not appraised value
Funding

- Need to cover administrative overhead
- Seek matching funds like county open space, Forest Legacy, and Navy $$
- Legislative support is achievable with an updated TLT
- Conservation is popular, climate mitigation is necessary
- Request funding for the 2022 session to address backlog, regular funding level thereafter
Call to action

- DNR commits to the program
- Stakeholders move forward with common agreement:
  - Beneficiaries need improved trust management tools
  - High ecological value lands need protection
- Legislature fulfills a robust funding request