

**JEFFERSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

AGENDA REQUEST

TO: Board of County Commissioners
Mark McCauley, County Administrator

FROM: Greg Brotherton, Chair BOCC

DATE: August 7, 2023

SUBJECT: Discussion and Potential Action RE: Letter of Support of Expansion of
Dabob Bay Natural Area

STATEMENT OF ISSUE:

The Northwest Watershed Institute has asked the BOCC for a letter of support for their request to the Commissioner of Public Lands to expand the Dabob Bay Natural Resource Conservation Area.

ANALYSIS:

Deliberate and if the BoCC chooses send the letter as drafted or modify and send per BoCC decision.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This action is fiscally neutral.

RECOMMENDATION:

Deliberate the language and intent of letter and decide on action.

REVIEWED BY:


Mark McCauley, County Administrator

8/3/23
Date



Board of County Commissioners
1820 Jefferson Street
PO Box 1220
Port Townsend, WA 98368

Kate Dean, District 1 Heidi Eisenhour, District 2 Greg Brotherton, District 3

August 7, 2023

Hilary Franz, Commissioner of Public Lands
Department of Natural Resources
MS 47001
Olympia, WA 98504-7001

Dear Commissioner Franz:

Thank you again for your offer to develop collaborative solutions for state forestland management with Jefferson County and your on-going support for the revitalized Trust Land Transfer (TLT) program and Natural Climate Solutions (NCS) funding for forest conservation.

In our letter to you of June 27, 2023 regarding state forestlands in East Jefferson County, one of our requests was that DNR expand the Dabob Bay Natural Resource Conservation Area. This letter is intended as a follow up to specifically request that DNR initiate the process to expand the Dabob Bay Natural Area boundaries as shown on the attached map. The boundary expansion is necessary for DNR to use the TLT and NCS tools in combination to protect Globally Imperiled forest types as well as older, naturally regenerated forests with high ecological significance (aka Legacy Forests). The process will also improve the economic benefits of Forest Trust lands to the county and its junior taxing districts and support the long-term viability of the forest land base and forestry in East Jefferson County.

The proposal to expand the Dabob Bay Natural Area is broadly supported, as evidenced by letters to you in 2020 from regional and state conservation organizations, shellfish businesses, and Tribes, as well as many citizens and private landowners in the area. Now that the TLT program is revitalized in state statute and significant NCS funding is also available, the Board of County Commissioners are adding our strong support for this proposal. We are confident that DNR now has viable tools at hand to protect these areas while improving the situation for Jefferson County's junior taxing districts through purchase of replacement lands and the "cash for timber" option in the new TLT program.

The proposed boundary includes all of the remaining globally imperiled forest plant associations on state land in the Dabob Bay area, as identified by DNR. According to DNR's Natural Heritage Program, these older forest groves together represent the largest Element Occurrence of a rare type of rhododendron forest remaining in the world. The state is obligated to protect these rare forests under its Sustainable Forestry Initiative certification. The proposed Dabob Bay NA expansion will allow Jefferson County and its junior taxing districts the opportunity to be compensated for the protection of these areas through the TLT and NCS programs.

The proposed boundary also includes additional older, naturally regenerated forests that are priority for conservation in the state. In total, the Dabob Bay expansion will protect about one-half of these mapped Legacy Forests remaining on state lands in East Jefferson County.

To provide replacement lands and long-term revenue to the junior taxing districts, Jefferson County and its conservation partners have identified up to 5,000 acres of Rayonier property in the upper Tarboo watershed that may be available for purchase. Much of this land is at risk of conversion to non-forest uses. We strongly support DNR's efforts to purchase these productive timber lands: parcels that have few constraints to future harvest, that can be combine with adjacent existing DNR lands for greater management efficiency, that can provide increased revenue to the county, and that can strengthen the viability for long-term forestry in this region.

In summary, after years of ground work by DNR, the State Legislature, and many partnering organizations to improve TLT, develop new NCS funding, assess the rare forests of Dabob Bay, and build a broad base of public support, we believe that it is time for DNR to move ahead to expand the Dabob Bay Natural Area without further delay. This effort will protect priority conservation lands while better positioning Forest Board lands in Jefferson County for timber production and to generate revenue for the junior taxing districts. We look forward to supporting you in this important effort.

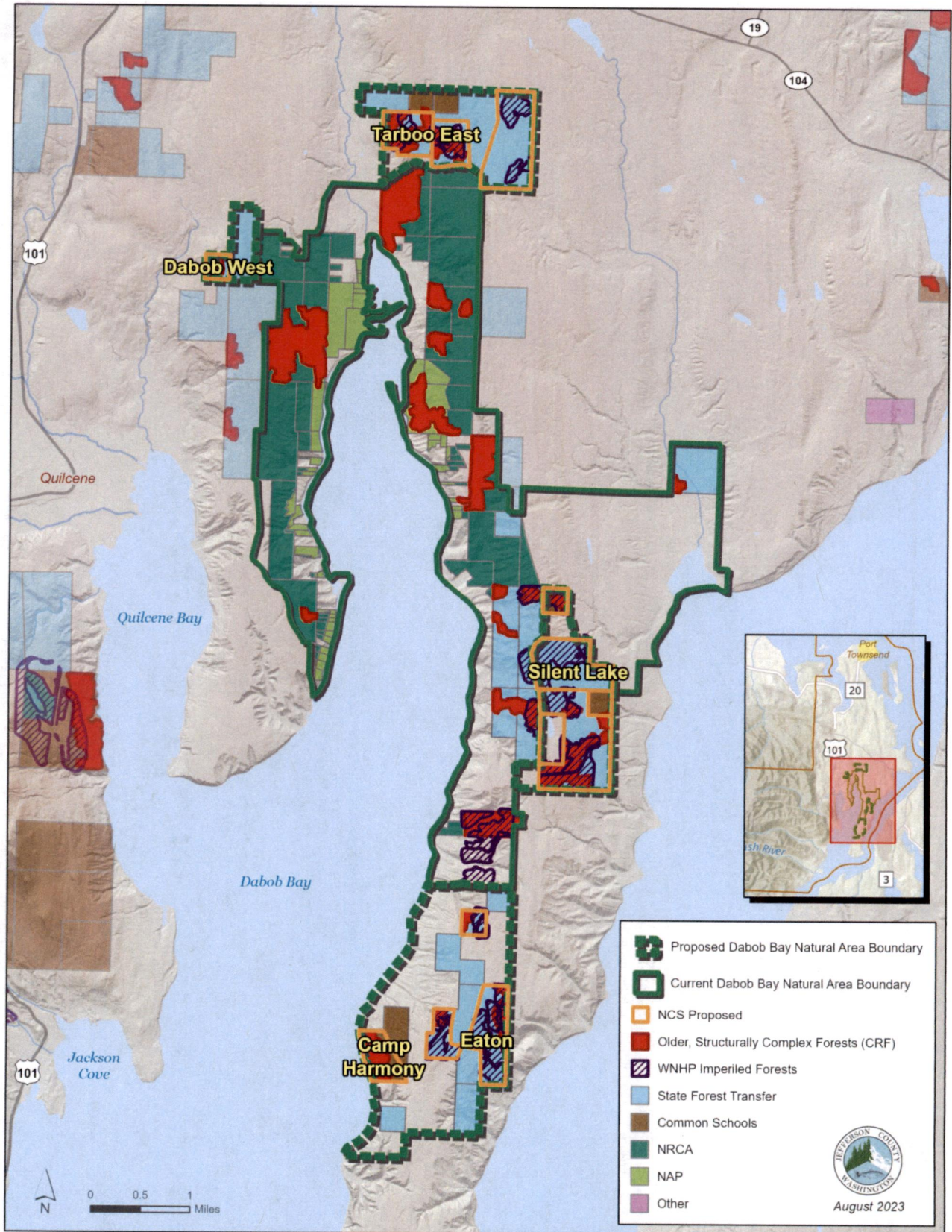
Sincerely,

Greg Brotherton, Commissioner and Chair

Kate Dean, Commissioner

Heidi Eisenhour, Commissioner

Cc: Todd Welker, DNR State Uplands
Mona Griswold, DNR Olympic Region
Drew Rosenbalm, DNR Olympic Region
Tim Stapleton, DNR Natural Areas and Natural Heritage Program
Brian Turner, DNR Olympic Region
Robin Hammill, TLT Program Manager



Dabob Bay Natural Area (existing boundary in green, proposed in dashed green).