

**JEFFERSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

AGENDA REQUEST

TO: Board of County Commissioners
Mark McCauley, County Administrator
FROM: Heidi Eisenhour, Commissioner
DATE: May 31, 2022
SUBJECT: Further discussion Beaver Valley Sorts Timber Sale / DNR Carbon Project

STATEMENT OF ISSUE:

On April 4, 2022 the Jefferson County Commissioners sent a letter to the Board of Natural Resources asking them to defer the Beaver Valley Sorts Timber Sale (BV Sorts) which was on the agenda for consideration at their April 5th meeting. They heard us and delayed the auction of this sale to the July 2022 auction. At that BNR meeting they discussed that reconveyance is an option we have with this sale as these lands are all State Forest Transfer (SFT) trust lands. In our letter, we stated that we “see enormous opportunity for innovation in how state- owned lands are managed. Whether it is variable retention harvest, or the selling of carbon credits...” Ironically, on April 6, DNR Public Lands Commissioner Hilary Franz announced a first-in-the-nation Carbon Project.

BV Sorts is a three unit / 66-acre sale located in District 3, generally just WSW of Teal Lake in Port Ludlow. All acres fall in the SFT and 76+ Years old age class (based on DNR’s “Harvest Unit Adjacency map”). Since the April 5 BNR decision, Commissioner Eisenhour has undertaken initial outreach to DNR staff, junior taxing districts (JTDs) and interested residents to study the implications of this one sale to our JTDs, of requesting reconveyance of some SFT lands and what some options are for generating revenue from these lands. Currently there are almost 15,000 acres of SFT trust lands in Jefferson County. Estimates indicate that ~1,400 acres can be characterized as older forests. Between April 5th and May 23th, we also heard from many interested Jefferson County residents about additional forests / timber sales deserving a second look, including the Pennywise TS and gathered information to share about older forests in Jefferson County.

ANALYSIS:

On May 16 we reviewed information collected about: 1) the fiscal impact of the BV Sorts timber sale to the county and JTDs, 2) what some options other than the harvest plan we had at that time might be – including reconveyance - and 3) if the carbon market might be a viable pathway forward. In debriefing this conversation, we decided to send a letter requesting inclusion of Jefferson County’s older forests in phase two of DNR’s carbon project and time for researching a potential pathway for a reconveyance request for some SFT lands containing older forests.

On May 23rd we heard from JTDs that would be impacted by changes to the Pennywise timber sale as well as diverse stakeholders in forests in Jefferson County. On May 23rd we reviewed a letter drafted as mentioned above and decided not to send the letter to provide time for additional deliberations. Over the past week the letter was redrafted to request inclusion in Phase II of DNR’s Carbon Project and to speak more generally about our support for forest conservation and not about these specific timber sales. That is the letter before us today. Today’s agenda item gives us time to talk with each other which we were not able to do on the 16th or 23rd and also to give additional time for public comment.

FISCAL IMPACT: TBD

RECOMMENDATION: Take additional public comment, discuss further and consider the attached letter and additional next steps.

REVIEWED BY:


Mark McCauley, County Administrator

Date

5/26/22



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

May 31, 2022

Board of Natural Resources
MS 47000
Olympia, WA 98504-7000

Dear DNR policy leaders,

We want to start by saying we stand firmly by our collective beliefs that forestry is an important economic and cultural driver in the state of Washington and especially here at home on the Olympic Peninsula and that Jefferson County highly values the ecosystem functions that our forests serve, especially carbon sequestration as we see the impacts of climate change accelerating. We don't think these beliefs need to conflict and see enormous opportunity for innovation in how state-owned lands are managed. DNR has tools in its toolbox that prove this such as the Trust Land Transfer program – currently under review via a Legislative proviso - and the selling or leasing of carbon credits – via your recently announced Carbon Project.

On April 4th we sent a letter asking you to not approve and defer the Beaver Valley Sorts timber sale that was on your April 5th agenda. Imagine our surprise with the April 6th announcement underscoring the wealth of carbon storage potential represented in older forest stands in Washington. We are very grateful that you deferred Beaver Valley Sorts to the July auction to give us time to respond to concerns we were hearing, understand the implications locally and also now to begin to digest the new carbon program you've introduced. Thank you! In conversations with the Olympic Region we understand that you're currently assessing the best place to focus for Phase II of the carbon project. We're very interested in the outcome of this assessment. We hope that older forests in East Jefferson County can be included in Phase II of the Carbon Project.

We understand your need to move forward with timber harvests you have had in the works – some for years. We also look forward working collaboratively to ensure forests in Jefferson County are able to serve future generations of Jefferson County residents with their wealth of ecosystem functions. To this end we hope you will continue your review and update of the Older Forests policy (Policy on General Silvicultural Strategy, pp.57, Policy of Sustainable Forests, DNR). We feel that if Jefferson County's older forests are going to be prioritized for protection via DNR's Carbon Project or as part of targets under your Habitat Conservation Plan, it would be shortsighted to cut them now.

Finally, we appreciate working with DNR on important projects that will affect the landscapes and issues our constituents hold dear, for generations to come, which currently include three TLT lease projects in partnership with Jefferson Land Trust in the Quimper Wildlife Corridor near Port Townsend and on the Toandos Peninsula, the Trust Land Transfer work group which Commissioner Eisenhour has participated in for over a year, and the boundary expansion of the Dabob Bay Natural Area first proposed by a coalition of shellfish growers, Tribes, and conservation groups in 2020.

Thank you for your attention to our input.

Sincerely,

Heidi Eisenhour, Chair
District 2

Greg Brotherton
District 3

Kate Dean
District 1