

# TRUST LAND TRANSFER 2.0

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# Our interest in trust land transfer



March 4, 2021

Steve Tharinger, Chair  
House Capital Budget Committee  
314 John L. O'Brien Building  
Olympia, WA 98504

David Frockt, Vice Chair, Capital  
Senate Ways and Means Committee  
224 John A. Cherberg Building  
Olympia, WA 98504

Mike Steele  
Ranking Member  
House Capital Budget Committee  
122F Legislative Building  
Olympia, WA 98504

Jim Honeyford  
Assistant Ranking Member, Capital  
Senate Ways and Means Committee  
112 Irv Newhouse Building  
Olympia, WA 98504

Mark Schoelser  
Assistant Ranking Member, Capital  
Senate Ways and Means Committee  
204 Irv Newhouse Building  
Olympia, WA 98504

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

Dear Committee Leadership:

The 54 undersigned conservation, recreation, and wildlife organizations strongly urge you to include funding for the Trust Land Transfer (TLT) program in the Capitol budget in order to complete four high priority projects – Devils Lake, Morning Star, Eglon and Blakely 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 shellfish 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, capitol 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





# 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)

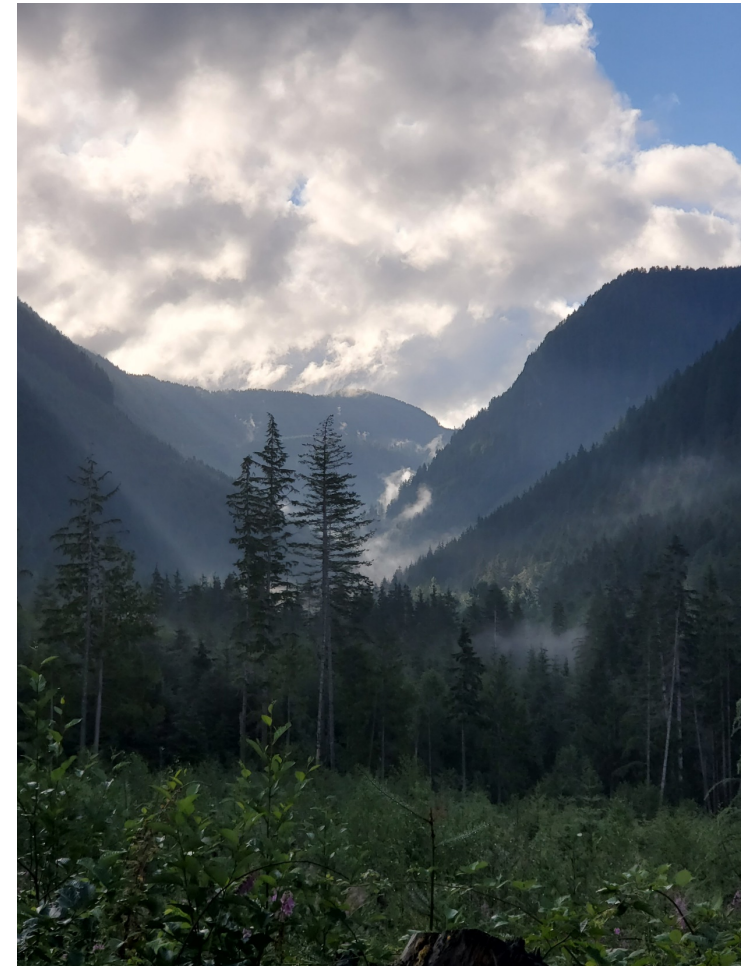
Recognition of TLT on signage at TLT projects

# 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

