

Bill Would Establish the Community Forest Trust

Local News

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OLYMPIA — Commissioner of Public Lands Peter Goldmark, Senator Karen Fraser (D-22nd), and Representative Christine Rolfes (D-23rd) today announced agency-requested legislation that would help prevent conversion of working forests to development—supporting clean air, sustainable working landscapes, and quality of life for communities. In just over 20 years, one sixth of Washington’s commercial forests have been converted to other uses. As Washington’s population grows and these forests vanish, so do the multiple benefits they provide to our communities—like local timber jobs, clean air and water, fish and wildlife habitat, and recreation. “When we protect working forests, we protect the forest industry and the local timber jobs that depend on it,” said Commissioner of Public Lands Peter Goldmark. “In addition, the ecological and conservation value these lands provide are protected when they are not converted to a more intensive land use category.”

This proposed legislation would expand the state’s tool box to protect working forestlands. Using the existing Trust Land Transfer Program and other tools, state lands at risk of conversion would be transferred into the *Community Forest Trust*. “A lot of people are looking for more options at the local level to protect community character and recreation opportunities,” said Senator Karen Fraser. “The *Community Forest Trust* provides another option for local communities.” A forest in the *Community Forest Trust* would be managed to generate just enough revenue to pay for itself and the community activities that take place on those lands. A management plan would be developed for the new *Community Forest Trust* lands with the participation of the local community. “Any time we can achieve two goals with one action it is good for Washington State,” said Representative Rolfes. “We can provide income to build schools and protect valuable community assets on state trust lands.” Once enacted, the Legislation would authorize the transfer of appropriate state trust lands or willing sellers into the *Community Forest Trust*. The Common School Construction Account would be reimbursed for the value of the timber not harvested on the land. A portion of the funds would be used to buy replacement lands that would be managed to provide future income to the Common School account. **Hearings on bills** Senate Bill 5272 was heard in the Senate Natural Resources and Marine Waters Committee at 1:30 p.m. on Monday, January 31, 2011. House Bill 1421 will be heard in the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee at 8:00 a.m. on Friday, February 4, 2011, in Hearing Room A of the John L O’Brien Building. **DNR manages state trust lands** Administered by Commissioner of Public Lands Peter Goldmark, DNR manages more than 5.6 million acres of state-owned forest, range, commercial, agricultural, conservation, and aquatic lands. Of these, more than half are held in trust to produce income to support public schools, universities, prisons, and other state institutions. About 2.1 million acres of these are forested state trust lands, managed sustainably by DNR to provide—in addition to income for the trusts—other public benefits, including outdoor recreation, habitat for native fish and wildlife, and watersheds for clean water.