Board of Natural Resources Approves Transaction in Timber-dependent County

Local News

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OLYMPIA – The state Board of Natural Resources today approved the transfer of 85 acres of State Forest Trust land in Skamania County to conservation status. Legislatively funded, this transaction will replace certain state-owned working forestlands encumbered by federal endangered species restrictions. The program targets small, economically stressed rural counties that depend heavily on timber revenue to support public services.“This land transfer will provide timber-dependent counties like Skamania with needed dollars,” said Peter Goldmark, Commissioner of Public Lands. “It is a rare opportunity to support both valuable rural jobs and protect critical habitat for wildlife.” An appropriation by the 2011 Legislature provides $633,000, based on the value of timber on the 85-acre parcel north of Stevenson. Skamania County will get $500,070 with the remainder going to reimburse the State Forest trust land management account. The parcel is among the several thousand acres of forestland that the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages to support Skamania County services.

“Our county is timber-dependent and relies on timber revenues from State Forest Trust lands,” said Paul Pearce, Skamania County Commissioner. “The funding from this transfer will provide jobs for ten employees for the next year.”Following the transfer of the parcel into conservation status, DNR will use $34,000 of the legislative appropriation—reflecting the parcel’s land value—to purchase replacement, working forestland elsewhere in Skamania County.DNR will manage the 85-acre parcel as a Natural Resources Conservation Area (NRCA). The parcel is classified as nesting, roosting and foraging habitat for the northern spotted owl, an endangered bird that lives in older timber stands.**State Forest Replacement Lands Program**The 2009 Legislature created a program to help relieve the impact of long-term, endangered, species-related habitat conservation restrictions on State Forest trust lands. The program is targeted to small timber-dependent counties, namely Klickitat, Pacific, Skamania and Wahkiakum. An appropriation by the 2011 Legislature provides funding to create the NRCA and pay the county for the timber on that parcel.NRCAs are conservation areas that protect outstanding examples of native ecosystems, scenic landscapes, and habitat for endangered, threatened and sensitive plants and animals. Low impact public uses, such as hiking, are allowed in NRCAs if they do not impair the protected resource.**Annual trust lands report shows increase revenue from Agricultural leases**The board received its annual state of the State Trust Lands Report. In 2012, timber harvest brought in $201.8 million in revenue for schools, counties, and other beneficiaries. The report also showed an increase in non-tax revenue from agricultural leases. DNR increased revenue by more than 30 percent to $17 million in Fiscal Year 2012. DNR took a number of systemic steps to improve agricultural lease revenue including:· Moving from crop share to cash rents, stabilizing annual income, and reducing risk to the trust.· A strong marketing push that resulted in $1.3 million in bonus bids over previous years.· Blocked up lands in various geographic locations to gain management efficiency.· Taking steps to prevent relinquishment of water rights and positioning those rights for flexibility in the future.· Investing in infrastructure projects to make available over 4000 acres of new, irrigated agriculture for production.**Media Contact:** Bryan Flint,

Communications and Outreach Director, 360-902-1023, bryan.flint@dnr.wa.gov