February 2022



King County

Rural Forest Commission Strategic Priorities

Recommendations and Actions for Conservation of Forestland in King County

King County
Department of
Natural Resources and Parks

Clean Water
Healthy Habitat

King County

Rural Forest Commission Strategic Priorities



Recommendations and Actions for Conservation of Forestland in King County

February 2022

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King County Rural Forest Commission

The King County Rural Forest Commission ("RFC" or "Commission") was established in 1997 (Ordinance no. 12901) to provide guidance to King County Council and the King County Executive on policies, programs, and regulations affecting rural forests and to advise on ways to conserve forestland and retain working forests in King County. Specifically, the Ordinance established that "The purpose of the Commission is to advise the Executive and Council in their efforts to encourage forestry in the rural area. The Commission should apply its efforts to making forestry viable in King County's rural area." The Commission helps ensure that rural viewpoints are incorporated into the development of regulations that affect the largely forested rural area. Commission members are appointed by the County Executive and Council and represent a variety of constituencies, including small and large private forestland owners, Tribes, professional foresters, forest-based businesses, public forestland managers, and conservation organizations. The RFC is supported by staff from the King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP).

Over the past nearly 25 years, the Commission has regularly advised the Council, Executive, and DNRP senior leadership about issues that affect the timber industry and forestland owners. That advice has occasionally taken the form of comprehensive reports, such as the 2009 "Actions Required to Retain and Conserve Forests in King County,"[1] and King County has been able to implement most recommendations outlined in those reports (see Section 3 below for a more detailed summary of progress on the 2009 report). However, RFC's focus has most frequently been issue-specific and has included the following:

- Reviewing forest stewardship plans for County- and agency-owned forestland
- Recommending changes and additions to King County governing plans/initiatives, including the Comprehensive Plan, Strategic Climate Action Plan, and 30-Year Forest Plan
- Proposing amendments to sections of King County Code that affect forestland owners and the ability to manage forestland effectively
- Advocating for enhanced King County support for staff and programs that benefit forestland owners, including support for King Conservation District forest programming, and King County foresters
- Supporting Forest Stewardship Council certification of King County forestlands that are managed to enhance forest composition and structure via timber removal and replanting
- Commenting on site-specific land use actions that can establish a precedent for land use activities Countywide
- Acknowledging that forests in King County provide highly valued services, including timber production, recreation, stormwater management, and carbon sequestration

[1] https://your.kingcounty.gov/dnrp/library/water-and-land/forestry/commission-meetings/KCRFC-ForestActions2009.pdf

Commission Members

(Name and Primary Rural Forest Interest Area Represented)

Dr. Monica Paulson Priebe, Chair
Academic forester

Amy LaBarge, Vice-Chair
Professional forester

Wendy Davis, Executive Committee
Forestland owner (40–500 acres)

Steven Moses, Executive Committee
Tribal representative

Laurie Benson
Washington Department of Natural Resources

Jeff Boyce
Professional forester

Andy Chittick
Local forest products;
residential forestland owner (<20 acres)

Wyatt Golding
Non-timber values of forestland

Steve Horton
Forestland owner 40-500 acres

Liway Hsi
Forestland owner 40-500 acres

Mari Knutson
Advocate non-timber values;
residential forestland owner <20 acres

Grady Steere
Forestland owner > 500 acres

Brandy Reed (*ex officio*)
King Conservation District

Martie Schramm (*ex officio*)
US Forest Service

Brendan Whyte (*ex officio*)
Washington State University Extension

















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Land Acknowledgement

King County Rural Forest Commission acknowledges that we are on the indigenous land of Coast Salish peoples, whose descendants have formed the Duwamish (dxʷdəwʔabš)[2], Muckleshoot (bəqəlšuł), Puyallup (spuyaləpabš), Snoqualmie (sdukʷalbixʷ), Suquamish (dxʷəq̓ʷabs̓), and Tulalip (dxʷlilap) Tribes. We thank these caretakers of the land who have lived, and continue to live, here since time immemorial.

[2] See https://www.puyalluptriballanguage.org/basics/alphabet.php. for an introduction to the Lushootseed language.

Acronyms

CPPs	King County Countywide Planning Policies
CUT	Current Use Taxation
DLS	Department of Local Services
DLS-PD	Department of Local Services-Permitting Division
DNR	Washington Department of Natural Resources
DNRP	King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks
FPD	Forest Production District
FTE	Full-Time Equivalent
GMA	Growth Management Act
KCCP	King County Comprehensive Plan
KCD	King Conservation District
LCI	Land Conservation Initiative
LIP	Landowner Incentive Program
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
Parks	DNRP, Parks and Recreation Division
PBRS	Public Benefit Rating System
RCW	Revised Code of Washington
RFC	Rural Forest Commission
RFFAs	Rural Forest Focus Areas
SCAP	Strategic Climate Action Plan
SPU	Seattle Public Utilities
SWM	Surface Water Management
TDR	Transfer of Development Rights
USFS	United States Forest Service
WDFW	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
WLRD	DNRP, Water and Land Resources Division
WSU	Washington State University

1.0 Executive Summary

The King County Rural Forest Commission ("RFC") aims to advise the King County Council and the King County Executive in their efforts to conserve forestland, retain working forests, and encourage forestry in rural areas. In 2016, approximately 811,000 acres in King County were classified as being dominated by "forest cover," within a total ownership of approximately 889,000 acres ("forestland"). Forestland includes non-forest features like roads and rivers, but also includes land in early stages of regeneration that may not be classified as "forest" when assessing cover with aerial photography. The nearly 890,000 acres of forestland in King County provide multiple benefits, including storing carbon, providing innumerable ecological services, supplying timber, creating jobs, and contributing to local communities' economic, physical, mental, and cultural health.

To ensure the longevity and health of these critical forests, the RFC has outlined a vision with three principal components:

- Maintenance of forestland in King County (i.e., no net loss)
- Management of forestland to improve forest health and to be resilient to climate change
- Prevention of conversion of working forests to other uses and maintenance of a working forestland base and viable forest-based industry

The primary goal of this RFC Strategic Priorities report is to advise various elements of King County government on important actions needed to ensure healthy and resilient forests into the future. The report is meant to guide policy at the King County Council and Executive level, in addition to serving as a guiding document for future RFC commissioners, the King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks ("DNRP"), King County foresters, and collaborating agencies. The report supports other plans developed by King County that include strategies focused on forest conservation, such as the Clean Water Healthy Habitat Strategic Plan, the Strategic Climate Action Plan ("SCAP"), the Land Conservation Initiative ("LCI"), and the 30-Year Forest Plan.

The report's recommendations are grouped into four focus areas, 16 objectives, and 65 actions. The RFC has tried to be as thorough as possible with information available at the time of writing, but recognizes this report is not exhaustive and changing situations may add to the priorities, objectives, and/or actions. However, the actions detailed in this report, if fully implemented, will make significant contributions to retaining, conserving, and restoring the health of King County's forestland. The focus areas and objectives highlighted in this report include:

Focus Area 1: Protection, Restoration, and Stewardship of Private Forestland

- Objective 1.1: Protect remaining priority privately-owned forest tracts not currently under easement, with special focus on protecting contiguous blocks of forest and meeting LCI goals.
- Objective 1.2: Improve access to needed technical assistance to enable private forest landowners to retain forest cover and enhance forest health.
- Objective 1.3: Encourage forest stewardship through education, planning, active forest management, and partnerships.
- Objective 1.4: Increase the availability and access to financial incentive programs to support implementation of forest stewardship practices by small forest landowners.

- Objective 1.5. Promote understanding of the benefits of commercial timber production in King County and support increased production of locally produced forest products.
- Objective 1.6: Reduce operating and permitting costs for forest management and remove permitting and other roadblocks to forestry practices.
- Objective 1.7: Explore opportunities to expand programs that monetize ecosystem services on private and public land.

Focus Area 2: Acquisition, Restoration, and Stewardship of County-owned Forestland

- Objective 2.1: Strengthen stewardship planning protocols for King County forestland.
- Objective 2.2: Implement and monitor stewardship plans for all Parks Division forest units of 200 acres or more.
- Objective 2.3: Identify opportunities to monetize ecosystem services to fund forestland acquisition and management.

Focus Area 3: Wildfire Hazard Reduction

- Objective 3.1: Expand delivery of community and landowner wildfire risk management and safety planning services.
- Objective 3.2: Develop a comprehensive approach to rural wildfire planning.
- Objective 3.3: Reduce risk to public forestland from park visitors.
- Objective 3.4: Improve King County capacity for wildfire response and training.

Focus Area 4: Tribal Sovereignty and Cultural Resources

- Objective 4.1: Consult with Tribal Governments about forest management and protection.
- Objective 4.2: Engage with Tribal Governments early in any forest planning process.

Each focus area contains a series of relevant recommended actions. Thirty-six of the 65 recommended actions are a continuation or enhancement of work that is already being done by King County, usually in collaboration with partners. Those actions were deemed important enough to continue in the years ahead; however, it was recognized that many of those actions are currently under-resourced and the County and partners may not be able to achieve desired objectives without additional staff and/or financial support.

The remaining 29 of the 65 recommended actions are not currently included in work plans for King County forestry staff and partners. While each of these actions is important for the health and longevity of King County forests, the RFC recognizes that not all actions can be implemented immediately with limited resources. It is further noted that many actions are interrelated (e.g., forest restoration and wildfire resiliency) so they will not be implemented in isolation. New actions have been grouped based on their implementation priority, with the highest priority actions needing to be implemented immediately (“now”; 10 of 29), moderate priority actions needing to be implemented within the next 3 to 5 years (“soon”; 12 of 29), and the least urgent actions recommended for implementation in the next 6 to 10 years (“later”; 7 of 29).

The RFC requests that the County provide annual progress updates for each action to allow for the Commission and King County to review and reprioritize the work being done.

Because the need is great and available resources are limited, it is recommended that King County consider allocating a greater proportion of the nearly $7 million per year that the County receives from forestland to support the actions outlined in this report.

2.0 Forests in King County

Forests cover 60% (811,000 acres) of King County's 2,130 square miles (1.36 million acres) of land area (Table 1). The forested land includes a large spectrum of tract size and ownership. The landscape transitions from urban areas with modest forest cover in the west, to small tracts of privately-owned forests and industrial timberland at the start of the Cascade Mountains, to extensive tracts of public, multi-use forestland and wilderness area in the east. The transition from urban forests to rural forests helps mitigate impacts of development on forest cover in King County. Forests across this spectrum provide multiple benefits, including storing carbon, growing timber, providing habitat for salmon and other wildlife, improving water quality, regulating water quantity, providing human health benefits and recreation opportunities, and supporting cultural heritage and historical values.[3]

Due to a combination of climate, soils, and the native species that are found here, forests of the Pacific Northwest are some of the most productive in the world.[4] These carbon-dense forests provide renewable, high-value timber, which creates jobs and generates revenue while supplying carbon-beneficial building materials for local markets. Large-scale commercial forestry in the eastern half of King County is a significant contributor to the rural economy, providing employment both in the forests and in forest-based businesses that process and sell forest products. In 2018, timber sales generated approximately $29.3 million from the harvest of roughly 70 million board feet.[5] Although significant, that harvest level is substantially below the recent harvest peak between the mid-1960s and early 1980s when 400 to 500 million board feet were harvested in King County annually.

Despite these declines in timber harvest, King County government still receives sizable revenue from the management of forestland. The County collects $6 to $7 million annually from proceeds on Washington Department of Natural Resources ("DNR")-managed trust land, excise taxes on private timber harvests, and payments in lieu of taxes from federal land. One recent study indicated that the timber industry generates approximately $9 of gross business income from every board foot harvested, after accounting for the full cycle value from harvest to final product.[6] Thus, according to that study, the King County timber industry generates about $630 million in gross business income each year and should be considered a vital element of the County's economy.

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[3] https://kingcounty.gov/services/environment/water-and-land/forestry/forest-policy/30-year-forest-plan.aspx

[4] Franklin, J. F., & C. T. Dyrness. 1973. *Natural Vegetation of Oregon and Washington*. Gen. Tech. Rep. PNW-GTR-008. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station: Portland, Oregon. 427 pp.

[5] https://dor.wa.gov/taxes-rates/other-taxes/county-distribution-statistics

[6] https://www.commerce.wa.gov/growing-the-economy/key-sectors/forest-products/

The ecological value of these forests is immeasurable. Forests sequester and store carbon, which helps to combat the buildup of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere that leads to climate change. Forests slow, store, and filter rainwater with their soils and vegetation, improving water quality by removing pollutants and regulating water quantity by allowing water to infiltrate into underground aquifers. King County forests are also home to diverse wildlife communities, including many threatened and endangered species. Contiguous tracts of forest provide additional benefits by creating habitat corridors for wildlife and minimizing edge effects that impact forest health and wildlife population viability.

In addition to economic and ecological benefits, rural forests contribute to the mental and physical health of the County's 2.3 million residents. Forests improve mental health by reducing depression and anxiety, improve physical health by improving air quality and mitigating urban heat islands, and provide myriad opportunities for outdoor recreation. King County's forests host bikers, hikers, birders, horseback riders, and anglers as they exercise, socialize, and explore the outdoors. These recreational activities are an economic engine that supports vibrant tourism and recreation industries, while also providing safe, socially-distant activities during the current Covid-19 public health crisis. Although not specifically focused on forested landscapes, in 2015 nearly $5.4 billion was spent on various forms of outdoor recreation in King County.[7]

Legacy of Forest and Natural Area Conservation

King County can point to almost three decades of successful policies and programs related to forest retention and conservation. At the highest level, these programs succeed because of the forest policies in the King County Comprehensive Plan ("KCCP"). The KCCP is a long-range guiding policy document for all land use and development regulations in unincorporated King County. The initial 1994 KCCP[8] and the 1996 "Farm and Forest Report"[9] both established the County's commitment to forest protection and management.

The KCCP is updated on annual, 4-year, and 8-year cycles, depending on the proposed amendments' importance. The most recent update took place in 2020.[10] Chapter 5 of the Comprehensive Plan ("Environment") includes a suite of high-level policies that guide King County's environmental development regulations as well as incentives, education, and stewardship programs in unincorporated King County. Many of these touch directly on forestland or directly impact forest cover. One of the central tenants of the KCCP is that new growth in the County is focused within designated urban areas, with the aim of protecting resource land and reducing development pressure on the rural area and natural resource land.

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[7] Briceno, T., & G. Schundler. 2015. *Economic Analysis of Outdoor Recreation in Washington State*. Earth Economics: Tacoma, Washington. 116 pp.

[8] https://kingcounty.gov/~/media/depts/executive/performance-strategy-budget/regional-planning/Comprehensive-Plan/1994_-_Adopted_Plan.ashx?la=en

[9] https://www.kingcounty.gov/services/environment/water-and-land/forestry/forest-policy/farm-and-forest-report-1996.aspx

[10] https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/executive/performance-strategy-budget/regional-planning/king-county-comprehensive-plan/2020-Executive-Recommended-Plan.aspx

Extensive areas of forest cover are conserved in King County, including, but not limited to, 272,000 acres in Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, 100,000 acres owned and managed by the City of Seattle for municipal drinking water, 99,000 acres owned and managed by DNR, 32,000 acres owned and managed by Tribes, 24,000 acres owned and managed by King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks ("DNRP"), and 7,000 acres owned and managed by Washington State Parks. In addition, 138,000 acres of private forestland is enrolled in current use taxation ("CUT") programs, much of which is encumbered by conservation easements, adding an additional layer of protection. In total, over 670,000 acres of the County's 811,000 acres of forest cover have at least a minimum level of protection and are managed for long-term forest cover.

Most forest management activities on non-federal public and private land are regulated through the Forest Practices Act ("FPA")[11], which is codified in Title 222 of the Washington Administrative Code. FPA is designed to protect public resources in Washington while maintaining a viable forest products industry.

Although King County has a proud history of forestland conservation, more needs to be done to protect remaining forests in the County. Many of the County's recent planning efforts have highlighted the importance of forestland conservation and the recommendations in this report are fully aligned with the LCI[12], 30-Year Forest Plan, and Strategic Climate Action Plan (SCAP)[13].

The 2017 King County LCI established bold objectives for the protection of remaining high-quality forestland, farmland, river corridors, and other open space priorities. Approximately 26,500 acres of the 65,000 acres identified in the LCI as priorities for preservation over 30 years were identified because of their forest values.

Building on earlier County efforts, in 2020, King County and partners developed a 30-Year Forest Plan to optimize maintenance and enhancement of forests Countywide. The purpose of the 30-Year Forest Plan is to develop a shared vision of priorities and goals associated with tree canopy, forest cover, and forest health that can be achieved by 2050. Actions outlined in this report contribute directly to the goals and objectives outlined in the 30-Year Forest Plan.

Additionally, the 2020 SCAP identified a number of strategies that both public and private forestland owners can implement to protect forestland and to enhance the potential of forests to sequester carbon and to be resilient in the face of a changing climate.[14]

[11] https://www.dnr.wa.gov/publications/fp_fpi_introduction.pdf

[12] https://kingcounty.gov/services/environment/water-and-land/land-conservation.aspx

[13] https://kingcounty.gov/services/environment/climate/actions-strategies/strategic-climate-action-plan.aspx

[14] https://www.kingcounty.gov/services/environment/climate/actions-strategies/strategic-climate-action-plan.aspx

Forest Cover

Prior to Euro-American settlement, the Puget Sound Lowlands[15] were dominated by continuous forests of western hemlock, western redcedar, and Douglas-fir.[16] Since the arrival of European settlers, the area has oscillated between periods of deforestation and reforestation. Despite periods of net forest gain, the overall trend has been toward reduced forest cover compared to the pre-European settlement era. A study of changes in forest cover over the past 100 years shows that the area was marked by severe declines in forest cover between 1857 and 1948, as the early logging industry boomed with little thought to long-term sustainability.[17] Gradually, this style of extraction gave way to a more conservationist school of thought, followed by a period of net forest gain that lasted to the mid-1980s. Since then, the permanent conversion of forestland to developed land, specifically in cities and urban unincorporated areas, has led to a pattern of gradual net forest loss that has continued to current times. It is estimated that over 50% of historic conifer forests in the Puget Sound Lowland ecoregion have been converted to urban or agricultural use since the mid 1800s.

Over the past 20 years, King County has changed dramatically. King County gained nearly 200,000 residents between 2000 and 2010 (11.4% increase) and added another 270,000 between 2010 and 2020 (13.7% increase).[18] Constant pressure from population growth has created challenges for retaining our valuable forest landscape. Fortunately, as a result of careful growth management planning, most development in recent decades has occurred within Urban Growth Areas instead of the rural forest and agricultural areas.

Much of King County's forestland was conserved through the previously mentioned public acquisition of land and conservation easements by federal, state, and County partners, as well as direct engagement with forestland owners throughout the County. As a result, 98.9% of the area forested in 1992 was retained in forests through 2016, and approximately 60% of the County remains forested (Table 1). Although total forest cover remained relatively stable in that time, there has been a continued downward trajectory. Total forest cover decreased from 61% to 60% between 1992 and 2016, which represents a loss of nearly 9,000 acres. All that loss was due to forest conversion within cities and urban unincorporated areas as there was a net increase in forested acreage in rural portions of the County (Table 1).

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[15] The Puget Lowland region is a wide low-lying area between the Cascade Range to the east and the Olympic Mountains to the west. The region extends from the San Juan Islands in the north to past the southern end of the Puget Sound. https://www.dnr.wa.gov/programs-and-services/geology/explore-popular-geology/geologic-provinces-washington/puget-lowland

[16] Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2005. Ecoregions: Washington's Ecoregional Conservation Strategy. *In Washington's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy*, Volume I, Chapter 6. Pp. 257–555. https://wdfw.wa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/00727/chapter_vi.pdf

[17] King County. 2013. Implications of Land-Cover Change History for Monitoring Present and Future Ecological Condition in Nine Basins on the Urban Fringe of Seattle, Washington, Appendix D. Prepared by Michalak, J., Lucchetti, G., Latterell, J., & Timm, R. Seattle, Washington. https://your.kingcounty.gov/dnrp/library/water-and-land/critical-areas/Appendices-CAO-Report_Final.pdf

[18] https://kingcounty.gov/independent/forecasting/King%20County%20Economic%20Indicators/KC%20Population.aspx

	Rural Land		Cities		Urban Unincorporated		Total	
Land Cover	1992	2016	1992	2016	1992	2016	1992	2016
Forested	70% (748,437)	71% (753,806)	23% (61,631)	18% (49,441)	37% (9,533)	29% (7,408)	61% (819,601)	60% (810,655)
Deciduous	3% (33,229)	3% (36,183)	6% (14,903)	5% (13,372)	7% (1,855)	6% (1,620)	4% (49,987)	4% (51,175)
Conifer	55% (586,766)	55% (584,921)	7% (19,536)	5% (14,549)	12% (2,961)	8% (2,122)	45% (609,263)	44% (601,592)
Mixed	12% (128,442)	12% (132,702)	10% (27,192)	8% (21,520)	18% (4,717)	14% (3,666)	12% (160,351)	12% (157,888)

Table 1. Forest cover as a percent of land cover (and acres) for rural areas, cities, and urban-unincorporated areas of King County. Calculated using NOAA C-CAP FTP data, 1992 and 2016. Percentages exclude water area.

The concept of "no net loss" of forests was incorporated into the 2020 update of the KCCP.[19] As part of the Comprehensive Plan review, King County Council directed DNRP to assess forest cover loss due to development and the concomitant loss of forest carbon and carbon sequestration potential (Ordinance 19146). Council's desire to maintain forest cover is clear in the statement, "...and the loss of carbon sequestration capacity resulting from such forest conversions should be fully mitigated." The results of DNRP's study are due in 2022.

Ownership

It is important to differentiate between "forest cover" and "forestland" as used in this report. Forest cover specifically refers to land cover that can be detected and classified as "forest" using remote sensing. This would include the full range of forest composition and structure from primarily conifer to primarily hardwood and forests of any age, except for recently clearcut land. Forestland, on the other hand, also captures land cover not classified as "forest," which includes recent clearcuts, rural roads, rivers, and low density rural development that fall within an otherwise forested landscape. In 2016, approximately 811,000 acres in King County were classified as being dominated by "forest cover," within a total forestland of approximately 889,000 acres (Tables 1 and 2).

[19] https://www.kingcounty.gov/~/media/depts/executive/performance-strategy-budget/regional-planning/2020-Comprehensive-Plan-Update/2016-KCCP-KingCountyComprehensivePlan-updated072420-by-19146.ashx?la=en

As of 2016, approximately 517,000 acres (64%) of the forest cover in King County were in public ownership and about 294,000 acres (36%) were in private or tribal ownership (Table 2, Figure 1). When considering total forestland, which includes recently harvested and regenerating forests, 566,000 acres (64%) of forestland were in public ownership and 320,000 acres (36%) were in private or Tribal ownership (Table 2, Figure 2). While most publicly owned forestland is in relatively large blocks, private and Tribal forestland ranges from small family forests of a few acres to Tribal and industrial forestlands of tens of thousands of acres. The recommendations included in this report are primarily focused on actions the County can take, in collaboration with partners, to support management on non-industrial private and County-owned forestland.

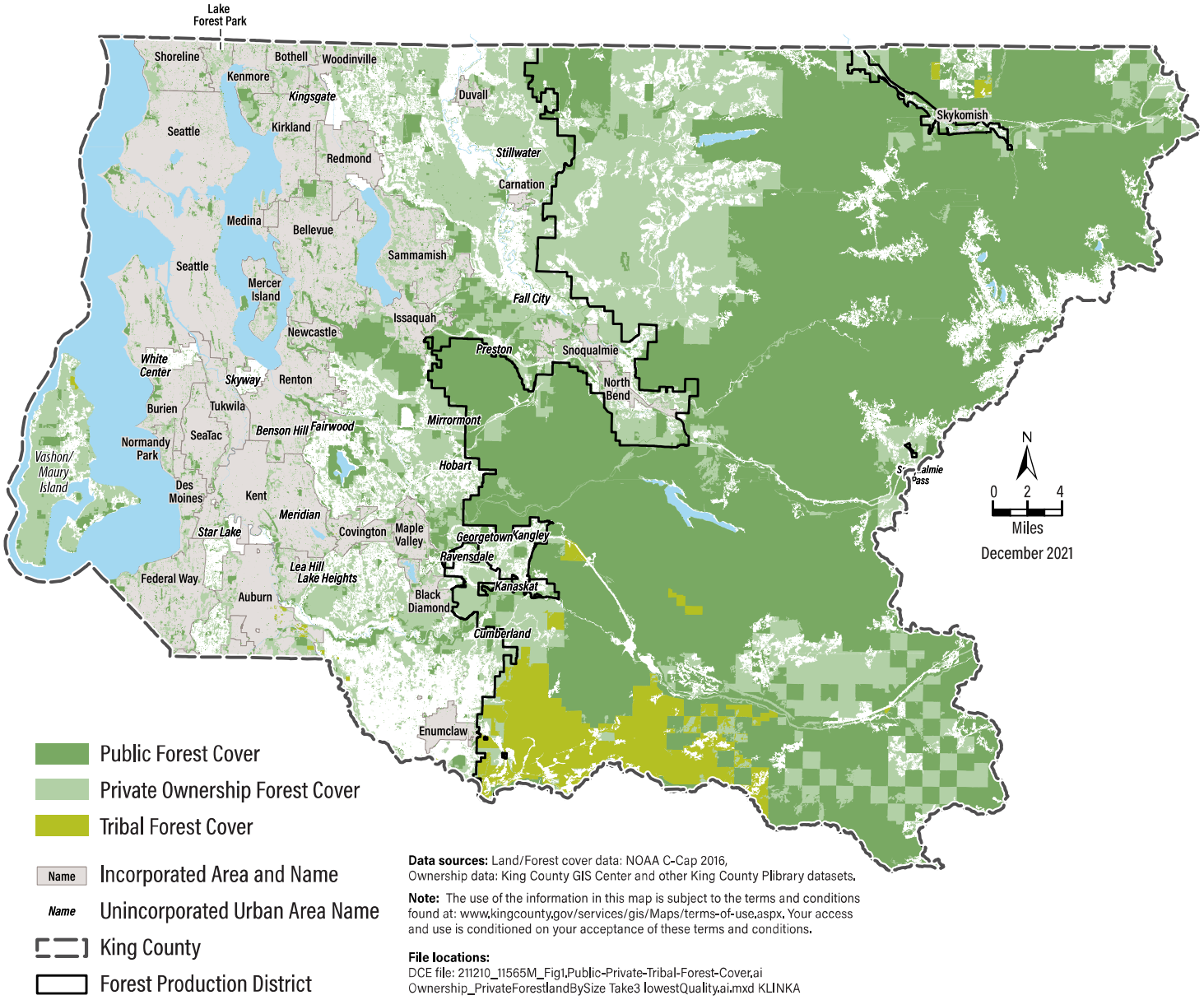


Figure 1. Public, Private, and Tribal Forest Cover in King County (Forest Cover 2016, Ownership 2018).

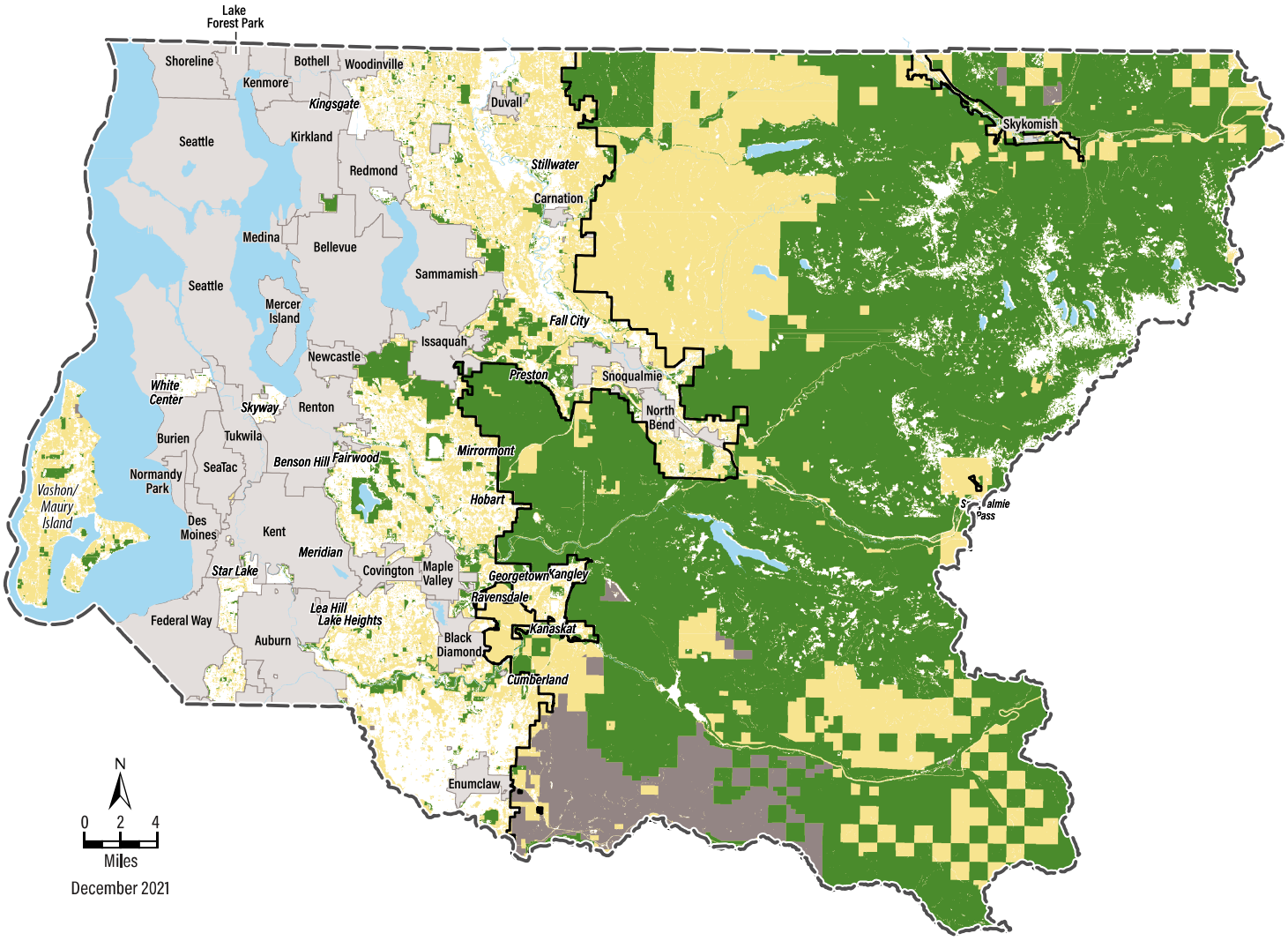


Figure 2. Public, private, and Tribal forestland in King County. Forestland includes recently harvested and regenerating forests, in addition to mature forest cover.

Category	Number of Owners	Forest Cover Acres (2016)*	% Total Forest Cover Acres	Total Forestland Acres***
Public Forestland		517,000	64%	566,000
Federal (USFS)		272,000	34%	301,000
State (DNR, Parks)		107,000	13%	127,000
City and County		135,000	17%	138,000
Private Forestland	20,931	262,000	32%	275,000
Large Tract (> 1,000 acres of forest)	13	126,000**	16%	163,000
Medium Tract (5–1,000 acres of forest)	4,131	68,000**	8%	75,000
Small Tract (< 5 acres of forest)	16,777	40,000**	5%	40,000
Tribal Forestland	3	32,000	4%	45,000
Total		**811,000**	**100%**	**889,000**

Table 2. King County forest cover and forestland ownership (2016 land cover data, 2020 ownership data).

* Forest cover calculated from the National Land Cover Database 2016 (NLCD 2016) data. This represents acreage of young to mature forest that supported readily detectable trees at the time of data collection.

**Acreage for size classes of private forestland was produced from 2017 King County forest cover data, a higher resolution data source than the NLCD 2016. This resulted in some discrepancies in acreage totals.

*** Total forestland acres include recently harvested, replanted, and regenerating forests, as well as young to mature forest cover. To estimate this expanded acreage of forestland, scrub/shrub and grassland within the FPD were re-classified as forestland. Outside of the FPD, a visual assessment of NLCD 2016 data located recent harvested and regenerating forests, which were reclassified as forestland.

Public Forestland (64% of Forests and Forestland in King County)

Forests cover about 517,000 acres of the 566,000 acres of forestland in King County that is in public ownership. Nearly 53% of that total is owned and managed by the United States Forest Service ("USFS") as part of Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest (Table 2). Nearly one-half of the USFS acreage in King County is designated wilderness (Alpine Lakes and Wild Sky wilderness areas). Other public forestland managers in King County include DNR, Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, cities (watershed protection), and DNRP. Most of these lands are in the Forest Production District ("FPD") in the eastern half of King County (Figure 3).

Land management goals differ significantly among public agencies. USFS is the single largest forestland owner in King County, with approximately 272,000 acres of forest cover included in the King County portion of Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. Once a major timber producer, the Forest Service's management priorities on the National Forest shifted away from commodity timber production toward custodial management of forested ecosystems, endangered species recovery, and recreation.

Most DNR land is managed for revenue production for trust beneficiaries, such as schools, as a primary objective, which sets them apart from other public land. However, DNR does manage some land for conservation and recreation, such as Mount Si and numerous Natural Resources Conservation Areas.

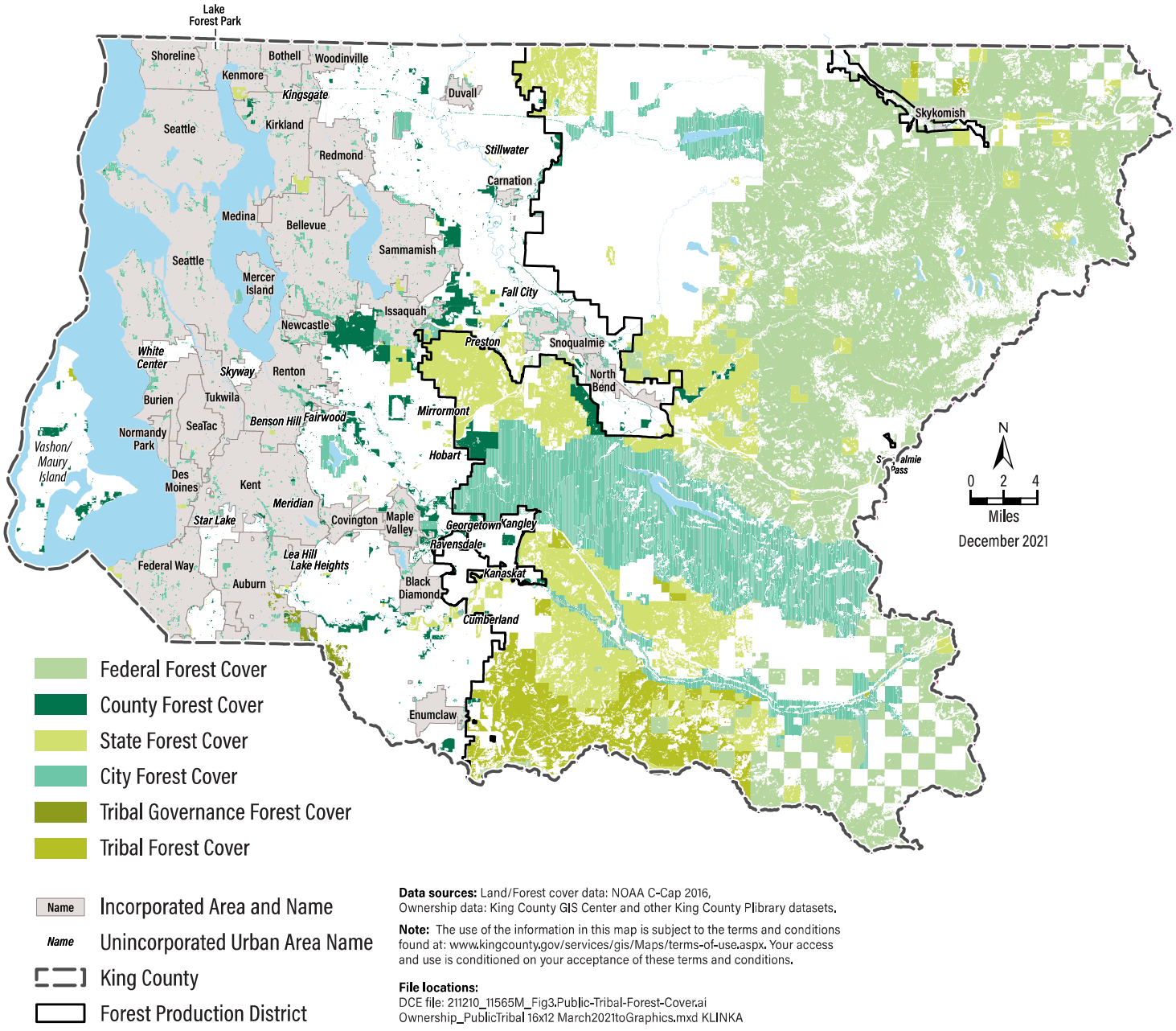
King County DNRP Parks and Recreation Division ("Parks") is responsible for management of working forest, forested natural areas, and open space, most of which have significant recreational value. County forestlands are diverse in size, location, past management history, and use restrictions. DNRP is in the process of developing comprehensive forest stewardship plans for all significant forest holdings (typically those >200 acres), and will soon be updating the 2016 Open Space Plan.[20] Together, these resources will guide future forest management actions.

DNRP Parks Division is also responsible for monitoring 138,000 acres under forest conservation easements. The overarching goal of those easements is to retain a significant working forestland base and limit forest conversion and forest fragmentation from development. Most of the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program forest easements are in the Parks system inventory, along with conservation easements acquired through other means.

Many of the cities in King County obtain high-quality drinking water from large, protected, forested watersheds in eastern King County, the two largest of which are the Cedar River and Tolt River watersheds that combined serve over 1.5 million people. At nearly 100,000 acres in size, The Cedar River Municipal Watershed, which is owned and managed by the City of Seattle, is the largest municipality-owned watershed in the County. Many other cities have protected local tracts of forestland as part of groundwater/wellhead protection efforts.

[20] https://kingcounty.gov/services/parks-recreation/parks/about/open-space-plan.aspx





Data sources: Land/Forest cover data: NOAA C-Cap 2016, Ownership data: King County GIS Center and other King County Plibrary datasets.

Note: The use of the information in this map is subject to the terms and conditions found at: www.kingcounty.gov/services/gis/Maps/terms-of-use.aspx. Your access and use is conditioned on your acceptance of these terms and conditions.

File locations:
DCE file: 211210_11565M_Fig3.Public-Tribal-Forest-Cover.ai
Ownership_PublicTribal 16x12 March2021toGraphics.mxd KLINKA

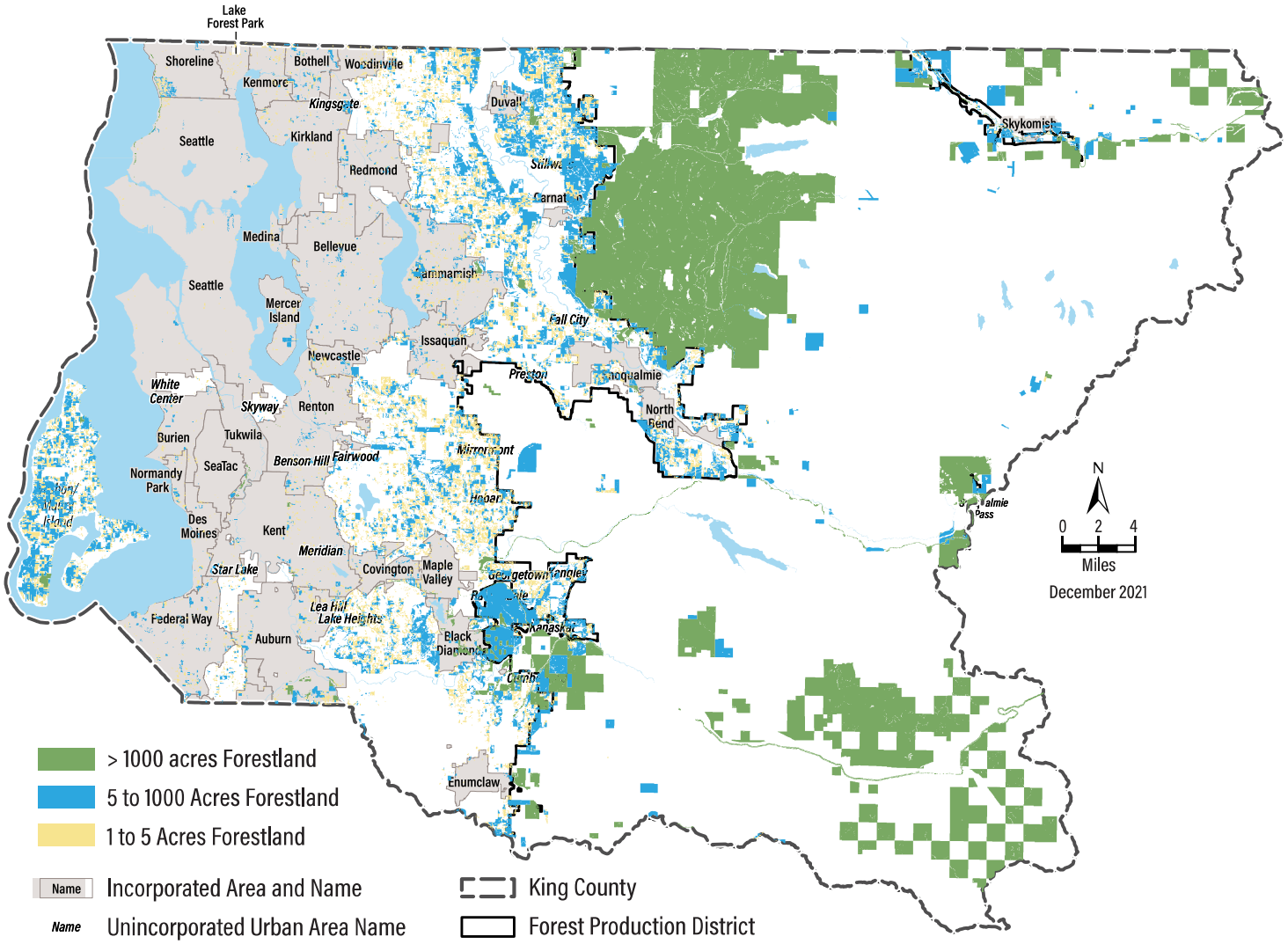
Figure 3. Map of Public and Tribal Forest Cover in King County (Forest Cover 2016, Ownership 2018).

Private Forests (32% of forests and forestland in King County)

Combined, the nearly 21,000 unique private forestland owners in King County manage 262,000 acres of forest cover and 275,000 acres of total forestland (Table 2). For the purpose of this report, private ownership is classified as "large" (>1,000 acres of forestland in a single ownership), medium (5–1,000 acres in a single ownership), and "small" (less than 5 acres of forestland in a single ownership). Management options and challenges vary greatly both within and among those ownership size classes and among ownership types.

Large Tract Private Forest Cover (54% of privately held forest cover; 16% of forest cover in King County)

In 2020, 13 entities owned and managed at least 1,000 acres each of forestland in King County (Table 2). Combined, those owners managed over 163,000 acres of forestland on over 213,000 acres of property (Figure 4). Most of those, both industrial and non-industrial forestland owners, manage their land for sustainable timber production. Several major timber-based companies operate in King County, including Campbell Global (largest private timberland manager in the County), Weyerhaeuser, and Olympic Resource Management, along with several smaller forest companies. DNR, in cooperation with other state agencies, is responsible for almost all the regulatory oversight of commercial forest management in Washington and administers the state Forest Practices Rules. While many of the recommendations presented in this report do not directly pertain to large tract ownership, the value of keeping these forested lands in commercial forest ownership is paramount to the Rural Forest Commission because these businesses are critical to the protection of thousands of acres of forestland in King County and for ensuring viability of a commercial timber industry.



File locations: DCE file: 211214_11565M_Fig4.Privately-Owned-Forest-Cover.ai • Ownership_PrivateForestlandBySize 16x12 March2021ToGrahpics.mxd KLINKA

Figure 4. Map of privately-owned forest cover in King County (forest cover 2016, ownership 2018).

Medium Tract Private Forest (29% of privately held forest cover; 8% of forest cover in King County)

There are over 4,100 individual property owners that own between 5 and 1,000 acres of forestland in King County (Table 2). Combined, this landowner classification controls nearly 75,000 acres of forestland on a total of about 104,000 acres held in private ownership. Much of this land presents an opportunity to maintain forest connectivity and enhance forest health, fish and wildlife habitat, and other values. Active stewardship, such as thinning, increasing tree species richness and stand structure diversity, and removing invasive species, contributes to overall resiliency and sustainability. The King County forestry program focuses the majority of its resources on this forest ownership category.

Small Tract Private Forest (17% of privately held forest cover; 5% of forest cover in King County)

There are nearly 17,000 individual landowners who own between 1 and 5 acres of forest in King County. This ownership class controls approximately 40,000 acres of forestland on a total of about 67,000 acres of land, which equates to about 15% of all privately owned forest cover in King County and 4% of the total forest cover in the County (Table 2). Most of these forested acres are associated with residential properties; thus, fragmentation and wildfire are significant risks.

Small tracts of forest serve as the buffer for larger tracts of forest and are critical to the protection of all forests in the County. They are part of a gradient of forests in King County, from highly urbanized cities to expansive blocks of unbroken wilderness. King Conservation District (KCD) has traditionally focused their forest stewardship resources on this ownership group. Whenever possible, KCD and King County work together at the community scale to support wildfire risk reduction and other efforts that benefit large numbers of small forest landowners within the wildland/urban interface.

Tribal Forestland (4% of forests in King County)

For thousands of years, Indigenous Tribes occupied and managed forests across the entire Pacific Northwest region. In the 1850s, many Tribes signed treaties with the U.S. Government in exchange for their ancestral homelands. Through those treaties, Tribes retained various rights and guarantees, such as fishing, hunting, and gathering, as well as recognition as sovereign governments. King County strives to carry out its work in forestland and other natural areas in the County with a core understanding of the obligations to Tribal treaty rights and sovereignty at the forefront. Specifically, the County's government-to-government relationships with regional Tribes include strategies to conserve forestland to better provide the natural and cultural resources that Tribal people rely upon to meet their spiritual, subsistence, and economic needs (e.g., 30-Year Forest Plan).

Over time, Tribes have purchased ecologically and culturally significant land, including 43,500 acres owned by the Muckleshoot Federal Corporation, approximately 1,000 acres owned by the Tulalip Tribes, small holdings by the Puyallup Tribe, and the recent acquisition of land around Snoqualmie Falls by the Snoqualmie Tribe. Of the Tribally owned land in King County, 45,000 acres are forested. This forested land is managed to protect natural and cultural resources and, when compatible, for timber production.



Forest Condition

Although preserving forests through public purchase or conservation easements prevents conversion of forests to developed uses, these actions do not necessarily ensure the health or environmental, social, and ecological benefits of these forests. Strict regulation of land use also does not ensure that high-quality resource management is implemented on a given property.

Increasingly, policymakers and forest managers consider the health and resilience of forest systems to be at risk. Central to this discussion is a shared understanding of the terms "forest health" or "healthy forest." The RFC recognizes that the definition of those terms is strongly dependent on the landowner's vision for their property. However, there are some established definitions such as in the Revised Code of Washington ("RCW"), which defines forest health as "the condition of a forest being sound in ecological function, sustainable, resilient, and resistant to insects, diseases, fire and other disturbance, and having the capacity to meet landowner objectives" (RCW 76.07).

DNRP is in the process of adopting a definition of forest health and has reached out to the RFC and others to assist with that effort. The current DNRP working definition of forest health is "the continued capacity of the forest to function as a living system, to sustain biological productivity, promote the quality of air and water, and support plant, animal, and human health." Regardless of the definition used, many of the forested areas in King County fall short.

Healthy forests are better able to withstand wildfire, insect infestations, and the challenges of climate change. Researchers anticipate that climate change will bring longer and warmer summers, which will lead to periods of extended drought that will affect forests even in years of normal, average rainfall when storm-filled winters are followed by dry summers.[21] Those prolonged droughts are likely to lead to more frequent, and more intense, wildfires west of the Cascades. The effects of climate change are expected to increase tree mortality, due to the combination of drought, disease, insects, slower growth, reduced regeneration, and higher frequency and intensity of wildfire. Forests can benefit from ecological harvesting, in some cases, to mimic the natural disturbances that have been removed from the system and to maintain a healthier ecosystem. This, in turn, may make them more resilient to the increased challenges caused by climate change.

[21] Malone, Lr. 2020. *Climate Adaptation Strategies for Western Washington and Northwest Oregon Forests*. Northwest Natural Resource Group: Seattle, Washington.





Virtually all lowland forests, and many of the upland forest habitats in King County, have experienced disturbance from timber harvest, clearing, unmanaged regeneration, or fragmentation. As a result, stands of old growth forests[22] are rare in the Puget Sound Lowlands, composing somewhere between 3% to 10% of current forest cover in Western Washington, and occurring almost entirely on federal land.[23, 24] In Western Washington, about 45% of forests are less than 40 years old, and about 75% of forests are less than 100 years old. Current forested areas are generally second- or third-growth forests that are still dominated by Douglas-fir, western hemlock, western redcedar, red alder, and bigleaf maple. Because of management, in many cases, stand density (i.e., number of trees per acre) in these forests is higher and age structure tends to be significantly younger and less diverse than in the pre-Euopean settlement era. Trees that grow too close together form a dense canopy that supports limited understory. Conversely, stands that were not properly treated and planted after harvest are often dominated by brush and invasive weeds. Those two condition states are common in King County forests and will require active management to restore a more natural forest structure and species composition.

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[22] "Old growth" is characterized by structural and species diversity, relatively large diameter trees, shade tolerant species in all forest layers, canopy emergent trees, large diameter snags and down woody debris and patch canopy gap distribution. Washington Department of Natural Resources. 2005. Definition and inventory of old growth forests on DNR-managed state lands. https://www.dnr.wa.gov/publications/lm_ess_westside_oldgrowth_rpt.pdf

[23] Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2005. Ecoregions: Washington's Ecoregional Conservation Strategy. In *Washington's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy*, Volume I, Chapter 6. Pp. 257–555. http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/00727/chapter_vi.pdf

[24] Washington Department of Natural Resources. 2007. The Future of Washington Forests. Prepared by Craig Partridge and Barbara MacGregor. Olympia, Washington. http://www.ruraltech.org/projects/fwaf/final_report/index.asp

Threats to King County Forests

While earlier planning and conservation efforts have done a great deal to protect King County's forestland, climate change, population increases, and legacies of improper management still threaten the longevity of these forests. The primary challenges for King County's forests come from risk of conversion and declining forest health. These challenges vary depending on the ownership and size of forested properties.

Although land in public ownership is unlikely to be converted to non-forest uses at a large scale, adequate funding is needed to actively manage these lands for ecological, social, and economic benefits. It is a challenge to balance timber production with non-timber forest benefits, but public land provides the ideal platform to demonstrate multiple-use forest management. Public land can provide examples of "ecologically sustainable, economically viable" forest management that can be replicated by private forestland owners. In addition, consideration must be given to the effects of taking public land out of commercial timber production. This can have a negative impact on the long-term commercial significance of other forestland (e.g., shifting harvest) and the associated timber-related businesses that depend on them, further reducing the economic viability of forest protection.

Most large tracts of private forestland are in the FPD (Figure 4). Zoning of commercial forestland helps to discourage subdivision and conversion. To further ensure that this critical land is not converted to smaller lots or residential use, King County plays a role in acquiring and monitoring conservation easements and transferring development rights. For this reason, a majority of the large tracts of private forestland is at low risk of conversion.

The FPD is buffered by midsized parcels (5–20 acres), which can limit forest fragmentation and reduce edge effect. Midsize tracts of forest are primarily found in rural- and forest-zoned regions of the County. Although residential and commercial development in these areas is restricted, there is a strong and growing demand for low-density residential development (e.g., one home per 5 acres). Opportunities for higher density development are limited, but possible.

Small-tract forestland is often in closest proximity to population centers and are the most at-risk for conversion. Smaller tracts of privately owned forestland tend to be in rural-zoned portions of the County and serve as a critical buffer between more contiguous forestland to the east and more highly fragmented, smaller forest blocks in urban/suburban areas to the west. All lands in this mosaic of ownership are important when managing forests at a landscape scale. Unfortunately, without technical and financial support, many of these smaller forested areas will continue to be degraded and developed; additionally, forest health will decline and risk from wildfire will increase.





Small-tract forestland owners represent a critical sector among land managers. Although they are responsible for forests that provide significant and essential public benefits, they often take on ownership of forests without any prior knowledge of forest management. Despite tending to lack the knowledge and skills needed to maintain and enhance the ecological values and functions of their land, they are typically open to training/education opportunities. A 2017 Washington State University (WSU) study found that 74% of small-tract forest owners in the Puget Sound region were likely to take advantage of education opportunities or to request technical assistance.[25] Indeed, if they neglect stewardship of their properties, forest health may decline, and wildfire risk may increase. Additionally, where their land borders other forested properties, these landowners can be problematic for neighbors by contributing to weed infestations and fire risk.

WSU Extension, supported by King County and KCD, offers small forest landowner classes that are in such high demand that seats typically fill on the day class enrollment opens. Although there is a need for more educational opportunities for private forest landowners, it is important to note that landowners take what they learn seriously and apply it to their forest stewardship programs. A 2020 WSU survey of participants in coached planning classes indicated that 84% had developed forest stewardship plans and that 87% of those consult the plans regularly (84% and 91% of King County forestland owners, respectively).[26] Furthermore, over 45% of class participants had enrolled in CUT programs and over 17% had taken advantage of forest stewardship cost-share programs (62% and 22% of King County forestland owners, respectively).

Lastly, about 90% of small forest landowner class participants had recommended the coached planning classes to other landowners and over 93% had shared information they gained from the classes with others (87% and 95%, respectively, for King County forestland owners), which is a strong measure of class effectiveness. Results were similar for class participants surveyed 1 year and 3 years after taking the classes. This demonstrates that there is a need to continue and increase forest stewardship education and technical assistance for small forest landowners in King County.

Actions necessary to restore a forest to healthy conditions can include but are not limited to: (1) harvesting to restore natural composition and structure or to thin overstocked stands, (2) planting species and genotypes better adapted to the projected future climate, and (3) invasive weed control. While much of King County's forested landscape needs stewardship to achieve desired conditions, many landowners, especially smaller forestland owners, are unaware of appropriate silvicultural practices, lack the technical expertise, or are challenged to find necessary resources to accomplish the needed work. These are all areas where King County is positioned to provide support.

[25] Zobrist, K. 2020. WSU Extension Forestry, pers. comm.

[26] Zobrist, K. December 31, 2020. King County Forest Stewardship Extension Education Final Report; Appendix 1a.

3.0 Review of 2009 Report

In 2009, the RFC released a report titled "Actions Required for King County to Conserve Rural Forests,"[27] which presented a set of priority actions that built upon the successful history of forest stewardship in King County. In that report, the Commission focused on actions that were primarily the responsibility of King County and were expected to achieve the following objectives:

- Retain the forestland base of King County
- Maintain and improve the health and resilience of these forests
- Encourage sustainable forest management practices
- Ensure that forestland owners are aware of the values, functions, and management needs of their land
- Ensure that forestland owners and managers have access to the resources they need to keep forests healthy
- Ensure that forestland owners have the knowledge and means to make optimal use of the resources available to them
- Strike a balance between advocating voluntary actions and imposing regulations

The recommendations presented in the 2009 report were developed to ensure that public and private forest owners and managers would be better able to manage their forestland. Beginning in 2018, the RFC reviewed progress on the 2009 actions and determined that more needed to be done to ensure that King County forest resources are maintained and enhanced and that forestland owners have the necessary tools to do so. Of the 26 recommended actions listed in the 2009 plan, significant and sustainable progress was made on 17 actions, modest progress was made on six actions, and there has not been any significant progress on three actions (Appendix A).

The six actions that need additional resource investment are:

- Increased support for public agency forest management
- Increased public education about the value of the local timber industry
- Greater focus on community fire risk reduction
- Additional clarity and streamlining of County land use code that pertains to forestry
- Securing a greater share of County revenue generated from timber harvests to reinvest in forest protection
- Ensuring long-term funding through Title III of the Secure Rural Schools Act

All but the last action (Title III funding) are included in the 2020 recommended actions.

[27] https://your.kingcounty.gov/dnrp/library/water-and-land/forestry/commission-meetings/KCRFC-ForestActions2009.pdf

The only 2009 recommended actions that were not addressed in any meaningful way were:

- Capping costs for County permits for forestry activities (as is done for farming)
- Developing strategies to support establishment of additional forest stewardship businesses
- Directing early withdrawal fees from timberland/designated forestland CUT programs to forestry programs (prohibited by state law)

All but the last action (CUT withdrawal fees) are included in the 2020 recommended actions.

This report builds on the progress stimulated by the 2009 report, retains those actions that are proven effective and continue to have value, "sunsets" actions that were completed or no longer considered priorities, and adds new actions that acknowledge the many changes in our forest landscape in the past 12 years.

4.0 2022 RFC Report

- The RFC decided that an update to the 2009 plan was imperative to fulfill the mandate to inform and advise King County decision makers and support forest landowners. Because of rapid population growth in the last decade, as well as impacts from climate change and invasive species, the 2009 report was no longer serving the purpose as a guiding document for policy and policy makers. This 2022 update to the 2009 report allows the County to stay abreast of current issues that impact forest cover and incorporates contributions from partner agencies and organizations. Many of the actions identified in this report support plans developed by the County that include strategies for forest conservation, such as the Clean Water Healthy Habitat Strategic Plan[28], the Strategic Climate Action Plan, the Land Conservation Initiative, and the 30-Year Forest Plan.
- This updated RFC Strategic Priorities report primarily serves to advise King County on important actions that can be taken over the next 10 years. The report is meant to guide policy development and implementation at the King County Council and Executive level, in addition to serving as a guiding document for RFC, DNRP, King County foresters, and collaborating agencies and partners. The RFC will review progress on the report annually to revisit goals, objectives, and actions and inform the County of what is working and what needs to be re-prioritized. After 10 years, progress on this report's goals will be used to measure the County's success in conserving forestland and retaining working forests.

[28] https://kingcounty.gov/elected/executive/constantine/initiatives/clean-water-healthy-habitat.aspx





The RFC developed the suite of objectives and related actions that, if fully implemented, will make significant contributions to achieving the vision it has created for forestland in rural King County. This vision includes three principal components:

- Maintenance of forestland in King County (i.e., no net loss)
- Management of forestland to improve forest health and to be more resilient to climate change
- Prevention of conversion of working forests to other uses and maintenance of a working forest land base and viable forest-based industry

To achieve this vision, forest management at all scales and under all ownerships will need to be supported. Because of general limited access to resources, there is a special need to support non-industrial forestland owners. The RFC stresses the need to create a community of small-tract forestland owners and service providers with the ability to effectively address the diverse needs of small-scale forest operations in King County. The RFC recognizes that, while many services are provided appropriately by private businesses or federal and state agencies, certain services and actions are best delivered by the closest provider to the landowner. Although a number of actions anticipate partner engagement, the recommendations outlined in this report are intended to inform the King County Council and King County Executive about actions County departments and staff can take to best address the needs of rural forest landowners.

Recommended actions are grouped into four focus areas, 16 objectives, and 65 actions. Each focus area includes a goal statement that represents intended measures of success. RFC support for the forestry programs currently being implemented by King County and partners is reflected in the fact that 35 of the 65 recommended actions are currently included in program work plans and are identified as "Continue." Those actions were deemed important enough to continue in the years ahead; however, it was recognized that many of those actions are currently under-resourced and that County and partners may not be able to achieve desired objectives without additional staff and/or financial support. Appendix F describes the status of actions that are already being implemented and identifies where more time or resources are needed to implement these actions.

Thirty of the 65 recommended actions are not currently included in work plans for King County forestry staff and partners and are identified as "New." Although all newly recommended actions were deemed important, the RFC recognizes that resources are limited and not all new actions need to be implemented immediately. New actions were prioritized as "Now," "Soon," and "Later," for those that are recommended to be initiated immediately, within the next 3-5 years, and within the next 6-10 years, respectively.

NEW RECOMMENDED ACTIONS ARE GROUPED BY RELATIVE IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITY

 NOW = initiate immediately (10 actions)

 SOON = initiate in the next 3 to 5 years (15 actions)

 LATER = initiate within 6 to 10 years (4 actions)

 CONTINUE (36 actions)

The focus areas, goals, objectives, and actions are outlined below (see Appendix F for more details).

Focus Area 1: Protection, Restoration, and Stewardship of Private Forestland

Goal Statement: Utilize King County resources to enable private forestland owners to effectively protect, restore, and steward their land. Increase the number of landowners who prepare comprehensive forest stewardship plans, ensure they are able to access financial and technical assistance needed to implement those plans, and implement forest stewardship practices.

Objective 1.1: Protect remaining priority privately-owned forest tracts not currently under easement, with special focus on protecting contiguous blocks of forest and meeting LCI goals.

 1.1.1 Partner with DNR and land trusts to secure easements on forestland.

 1.1.2 Increase public engagement and communication around objectives for acquisition and restoration (e.g., LCI).

 1.1.3 Support acquisition of additional working-forest conservation easements on commercial forestlands that are LCI targets.

 1.1.4 Where appropriate, design conservation easements to include an allowance for sustainable timber harvest.

 1.1.5 Regularly monitor all working forest conservation easements to ensure terms of easement are being honored and work with forestland owners to resolve any issues of noncompliance.

 1.1.6 Maintain CUT/Public Benefit Rating System (PBRS) program capacity to manage current program and explore opportunities to enhance existing current use programs to further reduce taxation-driven forestland conversion rates.

 1.1.7 Ensure sufficient staff resources to meet LCI expectation for greater CUT/PBRS contribution and explore new approaches to expanding CUT/PBRS programs.

 1.1.8 Evaluate forest cover and condition for land identified as high conservation value in the Land Conservation Initiative.

NOW SOON LATER CONTINUE

Objective 1.2: Improve access to needed technical assistance to enable private forest landowners to retain forest cover and enhance forest health.

- 1.2.1 Provide support for and increase the capacity of state and local service providers to deliver forest stewardship technical assistance and advice to small forest landowners.
- 1.2.2 Identify and remove barriers for forestry-related businesses to ensure reasonable access to forestry contracting and consulting services.
- 1.2.3 Research best available science to better understand the linkage between forest protection/management and stormwater management as well as other ecosystem services and develop and implement science-based policies and practices to manage and conserve these ecosystem services; support delivery of forestry programs aligned with water quality and stormwater runoff management priorities.

Objective 1.3: Encourage forest stewardship through education, planning, active forest management, and partnerships.

- 1.3.1 Advise landowners about programs that support forest stewardship on private land.
- 1.3.2 Collaborate with KCD to expand capacity for increased delivery of technical and financial assistance services to forest landowners through KCD Rural Forest Stewardship, Wildfire Resiliency, and Landowner Incentive programs.
- 1.3.3 Collaborate with KCD and WSU Cooperative Extension Forestry to expand capacity for increased delivery of education (especially coached stewardship planning) and educational resources that enable forest landowners to meet both personal and King County management objectives.
- 1.3.4 When developing stewardship plans, include consideration of activities ongoing or planned for adjacent properties (both public and private) to leverage resources, enhance benefits, scale-up contractor and consultant services, and avoid unintended consequences.
- 1.3.5 Investigate and, if appropriate, establish a County-owned and -managed "demonstration forest" to serve as an example of forest management for landowners and an outdoor classroom that demonstrates various sustainable forest practices for students and King County residents; develop management and monitoring plans and secure project funding.

Objective 1.4: Increase the availability and access to financial incentive programs to support implementation of forest stewardship practices by small forest landowners.

- 1.4.1 Increase capacity for cost-share funding to forest landowners implementing on-the-ground forest stewardship practices.
- 1.4.2 Partner with DNR and the Washington State Conservation Commission to increase capacity to deliver financial incentives to forest landowners.

NOW SOON LATER CONTINUE

Objective 1.5. Promote understanding of the benefits of commercial timber production in King County and support increased production of locally produced forest products.

- 1.5.1 Explore opportunities to provide incentives for using locally sourced lumber and other forest products, starting with King County government projects.
- 1.5.2 Support small forest landowners maintaining working forests in King County by providing tax incentives for local sawmills.
- 1.5.3 Research strategies to incentivize greater use of locally sourced forest products that have been employed elsewhere and pursue adoption of appropriate strategies in King County.
- 1.5.4 Support efforts to develop markets for pulpwood.
- 1.5.5 Support Department of Local Services (DLS) to ensure wood recycling operations remain viable and accessible and meet industry standards for operation.
- 1.5.6 Explore opportunities to use pulpwood and wood waste in co-generation plants.
- 1.5.7 Collaborate within King County departments (DNRP and DLS) to support the establishment of permanent and mobile mills and kilns.
- 1.5.8 Support businesses focused on using local products (e.g., cross-laminated timber).

Objective 1.6: Reduce operating and permitting costs for forestry activities and remove permitting and other roadblocks to forestry practices.

- 1.6.1 Continue efforts to clarify permitting process and fee structure for forestry activities not governed by FPA.
- 1.6.2 Eliminate the need for King County Clearing and Grading permit for fire risk reduction activities within 150 feet of home.
- 1.6.3 Ensure there is adequate forestry expertise on DNRP/Department of Local Services-Permitting Division (DLS-PD) permit team.
- 1.6.4 Revise and update Forest Stewardship Plan Public Rule to establish framework for stewardship plans and ensure plans include actions to address climate change and increased wildfire risk.
- 1.6.5 Advocate for changes to County Code and Comprehensive Plan to ensure landowners are able to manage forestland and avoid loss of forest cover, and ensure other segments of forest industry are retained, including support for small mills and kilns.
- 1.6.6 Cap costs of permits for forest practices as has been done with agriculture.
- 1.6.7 Revise King County Code so that permits are not granted to applicants with outstanding compliance issues on the same or other applicant-owned property.

NOW SOON LATER CONTINUE

- 1.6.8 Revise King County Code to ensure that restoration activities are not treated the same as conversion/development (e.g., alternative permitting pathway).
- 1.6.9 Minimize regulatory burden for construction and maintenance activities related to forest management; eliminate duplication with state and County regulations.
- 1.6.10 Repair rural bridges to comply with loading and code requirements that accommodate log hauling and transportation of other forest products associated with noncommercial and commercial forest management activities.

Objective 1.7: Explore opportunities to expand programs that monetize ecosystem services on private and public land.

- 1.7.1 Expand King County's Forest Carbon Program to enable enrollment of privately owned forestland.
- 1.7.2 Educate forest landowners with holdings that do not meet King County LCI protection criteria about forest protection options, including CUT, PBRS, and alternative incentives for forestland protection such as the Rural Forest Carbon Program and TDR.
- 1.7.3 Increase program marketing to educate landowners about CUT, PBRS, TDR, and other program availability, targeting owners of LCI priority properties.

Focus Area 2: Acquisition, Restoration, and Stewardship of County-owned Forestland

Goal Statement: Secure sufficient funding to achieve the forestland preservation goals described in the LCI and provide managers with sufficient resources to implement forest stewardship plans. County-owned forestland should be examples of multiple use management that protects biodiversity, enhances carbon sequestration, provides recreation opportunities, and demonstrates ecologically sustainable and economically viable timber production.

Objective 2.1: Strengthen stewardship planning protocols for King County forestland.

- 2.1.1 Include forest stewardship policies that highlight restoration of natural forest composition and structure in the next version of the Parks Division Open Space Plan.
- 2.1.2 Ensure that stewardship of all forestland acquisitions is guided by approved plans. Brief, early action plans are required prior to any acquisition, and formal forest stewardship plans should be completed for all large properties within 6 to 12 months of acquisition.
- 2.1.3 Develop standard template for Forest Stewardship Plans for units of 200 acres or more.
- 2.1.4 Complete Forest Stewardship Plans for all Parks Division forest units of 200 acres or more by 2025; plans should clearly state desired future conditions and/or desired services to be provided/generated.
- 2.1.5 Support coordination among agencies, especially where ownerships are adjacent (e.g., USFS, DNR, Seattle Public Utilities [SPU]) to ensure that off-site impacts are minimized and resource benefits can be taken to scale.

NOW SOON LATER CONTINUE

- 2.1.6 Develop and implement streamlined planning process for smaller units.
- 2.1.7 Work with local, state, and federal partners to accelerate the rate of forestland acquisition to meet LCI goals.

Objective 2.2: Implement and monitor stewardship plans for all Parks Division forest units of 200 acres or more.

- 2.2.1 Complete development of 5- to 10-year forest stewardship operating plans for King County-owned forestland, which aggregate all high-priority stewardship actions for all units, regardless of size, with initial focus on units of 200 acres or more.
- 2.2.2 Explore additional opportunities to ensure adequate resources are available for restoration and management of County forestland and consider stewardship needs of all newly acquired properties.
- 2.2.3 Dedicate at least one forester full-time equivalent ("FTE") to the Parks Division for forest stewardship work.

Objective 2.3: Identify opportunities to monetize ecosystem services to fund forestland acquisition and management.

- 2.3.1 Expand King County Rural Forest Carbon Project to support County land acquisition program.

Focus Area 3: Wildfire Hazard Reduction

Goal Statement: Develop and implement comprehensive wildfire plans that address issues related to wildfire risk reduction, wildfire response, and wildfire recovery. Improve forest resilience to climate change and implement preparedness plans to reduce forestland acres that experience uncontrolled burning.

Objective 3.1: Expand delivery of community and landowner wildfire risk management and safety planning services.

- 3.1.1 Increase cost-share funds to support wildfire risk reduction strategies, including construction of interior access roads.
- 3.1.2 Emphasize fire plan development and implementation at the community scale and ensure that there is collaboration among all parties engaged in wildfire risk reduction to deliver services more efficiently and effectively.
- 3.1.3 Deliver wildfire safety and fire risk management services to King County forest landowners and increase capacity to deliver fire risk management and fire resiliency planning to more rural King County forest landowners in the urban/rural wildland interface.

Objective 3.2: Develop comprehensive approach to rural wildfire planning.

- 3.2.1 Increase frequency of roadside maintenance, including mowing and control of flammable invasive species such as Scotch broom to reduce fire ignition along publicly maintained roads.

NOW SOON LATER CONTINUE

- 3.2.2 Support Office of Emergency Management coordination of comprehensive wildfire preparedness, response, and recovery plan.
- 3.2.3 Create "wildfire round table" that includes agencies and partner organizations focused on wildfire risk reduction in King County; meet regularly to understand roles and responsibilities, coordinate across entities to capitalize on opportunities and strengths, and share information and lessons learned.

Objective 3.3: Reduce risk to public forestland from park visitors.

- 3.3.1 Increase communications with the public about closures and burn bans; collaborate with adjacent agencies and landowners to ensure there is a common message.

Objective 3.4: Improve King County capacity for wildfire response and training capacity.

- 3.4.1 Deploy staff during and after high fire risk weather events for early fire detection.
- 3.4.2 Explore opportunities to train staff to be prepared to respond to wildfire in some capacity.
- 3.4.3 Enhance vehicle fleet to include vehicles and equipment capable of supporting early wildfire response.

Focus Area 4: Tribal Sovereignty and Cultural Resources

Goal Statement: Recognize and honor Tribal sovereignty and historic connections to forests in King County, which includes engaging with Tribes early in land use planning efforts.

Objective 4.1: Consult with Tribal Governments about forest management and protection.

- 4.1.1 Explicitly recognize Tribal treaty rights and Tribal sovereignty.
- 4.1.2 Recognize that each Tribe is a sovereign government with their own policies and processes.
- 4.1.3 Recognize the history, culture, and tradition of Tribes who historically occupied King County and the importance of forests to those Tribes in all documents related to and events held on land historically occupied or managed by local Tribes.

Objective 4.2: Engage with Tribal Governments early in any forest planning process.

- 4.2.1 Support greater engagement with all affected Tribes to support forest management and protection at a landscape scale.
- 4.2.2 Ensure all County departments have pre-project planning protocols to identify and protect culturally sensitive sites prior to initiation of any construction or site management actions, which may include archeological review, survey, or inadvertent discovery plans to guide response should cultural resource deposits be discovered during construction; Tribes should be consulted during the design of plans and protocols.

5.0 Existing Forest Management Resources in King County

Departments and Groups Within King County that Support Rural Forests

King County's Forestry Program is housed within DNRP's Water and Land Resources Division (WLRD) and partially supported by DNRP Parks Division. Forestry Program staff have two primary responsibilities: support private forestland owners and manage DNRP-owned forestland. The Forestry Program provides technical support to private landowners and to Parks land management staff, so they are able to develop strong forest stewardship plans and have the resources they need to restore and maintain productive and resilient forest ecosystems.

There are six positions dedicated all or in part to the King County Forestry Program. The primary staff include two professional foresters, one forestry technician, and a strategic planner. Auxiliary staff include a regulatory/permitting specialist and the manager of the Agriculture, Forestry, and Incentives Unit. The three County foresters provide technical advice to landowners on topics such as forest health, timber enhancement, improvement of wildlife habitat, and protection of water resources. County foresters also provide forestry expertise needed to develop Forest Stewardship Plans on units in the Parks portfolio and lead implementation of the stewardship actions identified in the plans. Foresters are key participants in discussions about forest management policies within DNRP. One of the professional foresters serves as staff liaison to RFC.

The County encourages private forest landowners to develop Forest Stewardship Plans and assists with plan implementation. County foresters review and approve stewardship plans required for enrollment in CUT programs, building permits within FPD, and TDR Program or Forest Legacy applications; they also support development of forest management plans that are needed to obtain flexibility under the County's Critical Areas Ordinance. When appropriate, County foresters assist landowners with securing private contractors able to implement actions identified in the Forest Stewardship Plans and will provide guidance to navigate the State's Forest Practices Act permitting process.

WLRD also supports an additional forest team position that is responsible for landscape-scale forest conservation issues, which recently included development of the King County Forest Carbon Program[29] and the 30-Year Forest Plan.

Additional responsibilities of the Forestry Program include working with KCD and the WSU Forestry Extension Office to co-sponsor coached forest planning workshops that are held several times each year for forest landowners. County foresters work with KCD to support community wildfire risk reduction planning and implementation, which will increase in importance with elevated wildfire risk due to climate change. Lastly, WLRD supports a regulatory/permitting specialist position to assist landowners in addressing County land use code issues.

The Forestry Program is responsible for implementing several mandates and policies, including the Forest Stewardship Plan Public Rule[30], and is fully integrated into the many services that the County provides. The Commission has determined that the Forestry Program fulfills the following functions, in addition to providing the services described in the preceding paragraphs:

[29] https://kingcounty.gov/services/environment/water-and-land/forestry/forest-carbon.aspx

[30] https://your.kingcounty.gov/dnrp/library/water-and-land/forestry/public-rule-2014/forest-stewardship-public-rule-2014-revision.pdf

1. **Legal mandate:** Under the Growth Management Act, the state requires the County to "protect natural resource lands and rural character." The Commission maintains that simply identifying forestland of long-term commercial significance and establishing forest zoning is insufficient. The state requires the County to act. Likewise, the Countywide planning policies, Comprehensive Plan, and Rural Economic Strategies call for the County to undertake actions to retain the extent and health of forests. Active participation by private forestland owners in the stewardship of forestland is essential to retaining healthy forests in King County.

2. **Ensuring compliance with King County Code:** Forestry Program staff assist rural residents in understanding and complying with County regulations and guidelines. Foresters are available to help with the writing of forest stewardship plans, and to support DLS-PD staff in reviewing plans, carrying out targeted technical assistance, providing forest stewardship education, and monitoring implementation. In addition, certain permits from DLS-PD and participation in CUT (Appendix B) and TDR (Appendix C) require forest stewardship plans to be approved by County foresters. WLRD also employs a Regulatory and Permitting Specialist who is charged with working closely with farm and forestland owners to help them navigate permitting challenges.

   DLS-PD has reported better compliance with regulations when clients can be advised, at no charge, by County foresters. WLRD foresters and DLS-PD now work together so that foresters can smooth the way for landowners seeking forest-related permits. This reduces the time that DLS-PD needs to work on each permit, provides landowners with greater process clarity, saves landowners time and money, and has resulted in higher rates of compliance.

3. **Build positive relationships with rural residents:** A major part of a King County forester's job is building relationships with rural residents so that rural residents have a voice in the development of regulations and policy. Field staff understand the rural programs and the issues faced by farmers, forestland owners, and rural residents. Rural residents can perceive King County government as urban-based and distracted from rural affairs by the broad responsibilities of County government. Forestry staff ensure that policy makers and environmental interests better understand natural resource issues, including the viewpoint of the rural area.

4. **Promote voluntary compliance with King County Comprehensive Plan:** The most effective and acceptable method to landowners for achieving native vegetation (forest) retention called for in the Comprehensive Plan on individual parcels has been through a suite of incentives. These include education through classes and workshops, on-site technical assistance, assistance to develop Forest Stewardship Plans, CUT programs, access to cost-share programs, and other tools.

5. **Provide Forestry expertise to ground-truth policies and programs:** In-house expertise helps ensure that policies and programs support rural residents. Forestry Program staff are within County government and are in close physical proximity to other County programs. Therefore, the other programs that serve the rural area have the benefit of the skills and expertise of the Forestry Program. Foresters assist staff in the TDR Program, DLS-PD, WLRD Stormwater Services, and Water Resource Inventory Area Salmon Recovery Planning, among others.

6. **Implementation of forest management plans for County-owned property and enforcement of forest conservation easements held by King County:** King County is responsible for both management of King County Parks-owned forests and the monitoring and enforcement of the restrictions imposed through forest conservation easements held by the County. Forest Program staff

coordinate development and implementation of forest stewardship plans that cover forestland in the Parks portfolio. Parks staff are responsible for monitoring working forest conservation easements that were developed in collaboration with the County's TDR Program.[31]

Tribal Interest in Forest Conservation

Tribes in King County. Tribes retained a broad range of rights when they agreed to treaties that supported Euro-American expansion and many of those rights relate to management and use of forestland.[32] Additionally, several Tribes, most notably the Muckleshoot Tribe[33] and Snoqualmie Tribe[34], have been acquiring forestland in King County, which will afford them greater management control. Tribes in the region own 32,000 acres of forest in King County and that land is often managed for multiple benefits. For example, the Muckleshoot Federal Corporation[35] owns and manages the Tomanamus Forest, which is managed for long-term sustainable timber harvest while also maintaining and enhancing wildlife habitat, providing medicinal and food plants, and preserving areas of cultural importance.

Government Entities and Resource Agencies that Support Rural Forests

City of Seattle. The 90,638-acre Cedar River Municipal Watershed and 8,400-acre Tolt River Watershed are both owned by the City of Seattle to provide drinking water for the greater Seattle area, while also aiming to increase biodiversity and facilitate development of old growth forest conditions. www.seattle.gov/utilities/protecting-our-environment/our-water-sources/

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[31] https://kingcounty.gov/services/environment/stewardship/sustainable-building/transfer-development-rights.aspx

[32] www.ltgov.wa.gov/washington-tribes/

[33] http://www.muckleshoot.nsn.us/

[34] https://www.snoqualmietribe.us/

[35] NW Treaty Tribes. 2019. "Muckleshoot Tribe's Tomanamus Community Day: Connecting with the Land and Community." https://nwtreatytribes.org/muckleshoot-tribes-tomanamus-community-day-connecting-with-the-land-and-community/



King Conservation District. KCD helps jurisdictions, landowners, and residents steward their forests, street trees, and open space to enhance wildlife habitat, reduce stormwater runoff, and improve human health and well-being. KCD's Rural Forest Stewardship and Wildfire Resiliency programs provide technical assistance, forest stewardship planning, wildfire safety evaluations, forest fuel reduction projects, and funding opportunities for land managers with fewer than 5 acres of woods in unincorporated King County. KCD's Urban Forest Stewardship Program offers technical assistance, project management services, and project funding to member jurisdictions to support their urban forestry programs. https://kingcd.org/programs/better-forests/

Natural Resources Conservation Service. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides technical and cost-share support to landowners so that they can better conserve, maintain, and improve their natural resources. www.nrcs.usda.gov

Tacoma Watershed. The Green River Municipal Watershed, owned by a variety of public and private entities, encompasses 148,000 acres of forestland surrounding the Green River and its tributaries between the Chinook and Snoqualmie passes in the western Cascades. Agreements between federal, state, Tribal, and private landowners limit watershed access and protect forest health. www.mytpu.org/about-tpu/services/water/water-source/green-river-watershed

United States Forest Service. USFS owns and manages the Mount Baker Snoqualmie National Forest, making them the largest single landowner in King County for ecological benefits and recreation. www.fs.usda.gov

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. WDFW enforces state and federal laws that protect natural resources, in addition to providing active management for publicly owned land and water access areas. WDFW prioritizes protection of fish, wildlife, and ecosystems while providing commercial and recreational opportunities. https://wdfw.wa.gov/about

Washington State Department of Natural Resources. WADNR partners with King County in forest conservation through land exchanges and land purchases. In addition, they permit Forest Practices for Class II through IV-Special practices (applications for Class IV General permits are managed by DLS-PD) and coordinate with federal agencies, local governments, and fire districts for wildland fire suppression efforts. https://www.dnr.wa.gov/programs-and-services/forest-practices

Washington State Parks. Washington State Parks make up over 8,000 acres of land in King County and are managed primarily for outdoor recreation and public enjoyment. www.parks.state.wa.us

Washington State University Extension Forestry. WSU Extension provides forestry research and technology transfer, serving as a conduit that connects landowners and practitioners to best available science. https://forestry.wsu.edu/





Private/Nonprofit Entities that Support Rural Forests

Forterra. Forterra is a land conservation, stewardship, and community building organization that works with a diverse set of partners to purchase and protect ecologically valuable land in western Washington. www.forterra.org

Green River Coalition. Green River Coalition collaborates with community, municipalities, nonprofits, educational institutions, and other agencies to protect and enhance the Green River watershed. www.greenrivercoalition.org

Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust. Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust is made up of a diverse coalition of directors, technical advisors, and staff that work to conserve and enhance the landscape between Seattle and the Cascade Mountains. www.mtsgreenway.org

Northwest Natural Resource Group. Northwest Natural Resource Group provides ecological forestry consulting and forest management planning services to optimize the economic and ecological potential of forests. www.nnrg.org

The Nature Conservancy. The Washington Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, which is the world's largest conservation organization, partners with local groups to conserve forests and other natural areas throughout Washington. https://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/united-states/washington/

Trust for Public Land. The Trust for Public Land works to create and protect parks in order to bring benefits of nature to all people and communities. www.tpl.org

Washington Trails Association. The Washington Trails Association protects and advocates for trails and public land throughout Washington to reduce barriers for hikers and protect important recreation areas. www.wta.org

Washington Environmental Council. The Washington Environmental Council builds partnerships and coalitions and advocates for effective and equitable policies to ensure that working forests are managed sustainably and continue to provide benefits for all Washington residents. https://wecprotects.org/about-us/

6.0 Summary of Funding and Resource Needs

Forestry programs within WLRD are primarily supported by funding provided through the Surface Water Management ("SWM") fee assessed to all parcel owners in unincorporated King County. The program also receives a relatively small annual allocation of funds from the King County General Fund to support the RFC and from Title III of the Secure Rural Schools Act for wildfire education. Combined, those funding sources support the equivalent of 4 FTE staff in WLRD that are primarily focused on forest conservation and management issues.

DNRP's Parks and Recreation Division supports the management and operations of County forests. The Parks Division does not have a dedicated forestry position but provides funding for 1 FTE housed in WLRD (split among two positions) to support forest restoration work on Parks property; those positions reside within WLRD. As needs dictate, WLRD-funded forestry staff are assigned to support Parks forest stewardship activities. Parks funding for forestland management is primarily provided by the Parks Levy, a 6-year, voter-approved, Countywide property tax. In addition to dedicated forestry support, this levy supports the daily efforts of Parks Division operation crews and land use planners to conduct site inspections for safety and cleanliness, manage public access, and monitor/manage the health of native species. Volunteer coordinators foster community engagement with tree plantings and restoration events. The Parks Division also contracts with forestry consultants and contractors to provide technical expertise and to accomplish large-scale forestry projects.

Parks Division is building the next generation of forest stewards through its internship program. Interns from the University of Washington and Green River College work with DNRP staff to learn from forestry professionals, prepare forest stewardship plans, and complete other activities and projects that advance the natural land management work of Parks Division and WLRD. New in 2021 is the Parks Youth Conservation Corps, a teen internship program for high school-aged students interested in environmental justice, conservation, and natural land stewardship.

Funding for land protection, either through conservation easements or fee title, comes from a variety of sources, including the Parks Levy, Conservation Futures Tax, TDR Program, and state and federal grants.

Although the RFC and King County have yet to estimate the cost for full implementation of the actions outlined in this report, it is understood that additional funding and staff capacity will be required. A combination of existing and new sources of funding would need to be aggressively pursued if the vision outlined in this report is to be realized.

In addition to the desire to meet landowner needs, there is justification for enhancing financial support for forestry programs (both County-run and partner programming) because forestland generates significant income for King County. King County generates revenue from the harvest and management of forestland through a number of federal and state programs. Federal programs include Payment in Lieu of Taxes, which compensates local jurisdictions for lost property tax due to federal ownership. In 2019, King County received $876,011 as payment in lieu of taxes for the 358,429 acres of federal land in the County.

There is a much smaller federal program, the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000, that was created to support local communities. Many rural communities had depended on tax revenue from timber harvested on federal land, but saw those payments decrease significantly as the level of harvest on federal land declined in response to land management changes in support of endangered species. While most of the Rural Schools Act funds are applied to municipality operations,

one section, Title III, specifically earmarks funds for wildfire education and preparedness. King County has received an average of about $15,000 per year for the past 5 years through Title III.

As a comparison, forestland-related revenue through state-managed programs is significantly greater. The Washington State Department of Revenue manages the timber excise tax program. In place of a property tax on trees, timber owners pay a 5% excise tax on the stumpage value of their timber when it is harvested, with 4% allocated to counties and 1% allocated to the state. In 2019, King County received nearly $1 million from excise tax receipts on private land harvests. DNR also manages forestland that is held in trust for counties and local governments. In 2021, King County received over $5.3 million from proceeds on DNR-managed trust land. Relatively little of the funding generated by those programs is allocated specifically to forest protection or management.

King County landowners are assessed a SWM fee that is based on land classification and the amount of impervious surface. The SWM fee is used for landowner technical assistance, maintenance and construction of projects, and land stewardship to protect public health and safety, and to protect and restore the waters and lands in unincorporated King County. A small portion of those fees supports forestland protection and management.

Although forest management decisions are not driven by the potential to generate revenue, income from the sale of timber from Parks' forestland is dedicated to forest restoration projects. Between 2015 and 2020, an average of nearly $38,000 was generated annually from timber sales on land in the Parks Division portfolio. Timber revenue is expected to increase as the rate of forest restoration increases in fulfillment of key County initiatives.

Landowners in King County also are assessed a fee that is used to partially support KCD. KCD manages a very successful Landowner Incentive Program (LIP), which provides cost share to landowners who implement agriculture and forest land management practices. The KCD LIP will provide up to 75% of the project cost (to a maximum of $22,500 per project).

Because the need is great, it is recommended that King County consider allocating a greater proportion of the nearly $7 million per year that the County generates from forestland to support the actions outlined in this report.

7.0 Monitoring Progress and Reporting

The actions recommended in this report should be revisited annually to evaluate progress, reprioritize actions, and revise workplans, as needed. King County should prepare a progress report using Appendix A as a template, and label each action based on whether significant progress has been made, some progress has been made but more is needed, or no progress has been made. In addition, a short description of any accomplishments should be presented with each action. The RFC will dedicate one meeting each year to review the progress and provide comments on the prioritization and implementation of recommended actions. A comprehensive review and update of the report should be conducted in 2031.

As part of an onboarding and training process, this report should be reviewed with all new RFC members at the start of their term and King County staff should assist RFC members to provide regular updates to the King County Council and King County Executive.

Appendix A:
Progress on Actions Identified in the 2009 RFC report

RURAL FOREST COMMISSION REPORT (2009) PROGRESS

- Significant and sustainable progress
- Progress made but more to be done
- No significant progress

Progress assessment completed September 10, 2020, by King County staff.

PUBLIC FORESTLAND

	Recommendations	Accomplishments
	Fund active stewardship of County-owned forestland for forest health and sustainability.	Launched "ecological forestry" program with initial focus on hardwood-dominated uplands and conifer plantations; over 500 acres treated since 2009, plan to treat additional 1,000 acres by 2025; include impacts of climate change in stewardship plans.
	Support public agencies in stewarding forestland.	Collaborate with DNR on management of Rattlesnake Ridge; exploring opportunities for forest carbon on DNR land.
	Hire full-time forester for the Parks system.	Dedicated 1.5 FTE (0.5 FTE PPM III, 1.0 FTE PPM I with additional capacity provided by other WLRD forestry staff and forestry consultants).

LARGE TRACT PRIVATE FORESTLAND

	Recommendations	Accomplishments
	Partner with DNR and land trusts for permanent protection of remaining large forest tracts not under easement.	Approximately 8,000 acres added to Parks portfolio. LCI has identified 21,000 acres of forestland for protection by 2048.
	Monitor compliance with management standards outlined in easements.	County-held forest easements monitored regularly.
	Promote public understanding of commercial timber production and encourage use of local wood.	Included in general messaging.
	Encourage forest stewardship planning and active forest management to discourage forestland conversion.	King County and KCD prepare over 50 forest stewardship plans each year for private forest landowners; PBRS and CUT protect forestland; King County Council adopting "no net loss of forest carbon" position.

RURAL FOREST COMMISSION REPORT (2009) PROGRESS

- Significant and sustainable progress
- Progress made but more to be done
- No significant progress

SMALL LOT PRIVATE FORESTLAND

	Recommendations	Accomplishments
▢	Continue CUT for forestland and retain staffing level of 2 FTE in WLRD.	CUT for forestland is managed by Assessor's Office. WLRD has 2 FTEs dedicated to PBRS and supporting CUT. Of the more than 13,000 acres enrolled in PBRS, over 8,000 acres are forestland.
▢	Provide forest stewardship classes and workshops for landowners including partnership with WSU Extension.	WSU Extension, KCD, and King County continue to collaborate and hold three coached planning classes each year (one in Preston, one elsewhere in rural King County, and one online); classes are typically at capacity. KCD uses local funding to support forest stewardship education.
▢	Encourage landowners to manage forests for multiple values and require approved stewardship plans for permitting and cost-share.	Forest stewardship plans follow WA Integrated Standard template, which requires consideration of full suite of forest values; landowners are required to have an approved plan before receiving cost-share funding. Starting in 2015, KCD uses local funding to deliver forest planning services to landowners with <5 acres of forest.
▢	Provide guidance to consultants and landowners who are preparing forest stewardship plans.	WLRD and Parks staff review King County forest stewardship plans and WLRD staff approve all forest stewardship plans required for PBRS enrollment; technical support is provided as needed by KCD (parcels < 5 acres of forest) and KC (> 5 acres of forest) foresters.
◔	Facilitate community fire planning with Firewise.	King County and KCD collaborate on community plans and project implementation but capacity is limited. Starting in 2020, KCD utilizes local funding to deliver community wildfire risk management planning and individual landowner defensible space management services.

RURAL FOREST COMMISSION REPORT (2009) PROGRESS

- Significant and sustainable progress
- Progress made but more to be done
- No significant progress

SMALL LOT PRIVATE FORESTLAND (CONTINUED)

	Recommendations	Accomplishments
	Provide landowners with permit guidance.	Dedicated permitting/regulatory specialist hired by WLRD.
	Develop streamlined forestry regulations to ensure consistency and simplicity.	Continue to work with RFC to improve King County Code that challenges private forest management.
	Cap costs of permits for forest practices as has been done with agriculture.	No significant action.
	Establish forestry permit team to develop regulations that achieve policy objectives and minimize costs/barriers.	WLRD coordinates with Department of Permitting and Environmental Review/DNRP Ag and Forestry Permit Team, which addresses site-specific regulatory/permitting issues.
	Develop strategies to support businesses that provide quality forest services.	No significant action.
	Support at least 2 FTE dedicated to providing technical assistance.	3.75 FTEs currently dedicated to providing private forest landowner technical support: WLRD 1.5 FTE, KCD 1 FTE, WSU Extension 1.25.

	Other	
	Educate cites, agencies and citizens about the value of forests.	Forests are a key component of LCI, which has been widely discussed; forest conservation and management a central theme in the 2020 SCAP.

RURAL FOREST COMMISSION REPORT (2009) PROGRESS

- Significant and sustainable progress
- Progress made but more to be done
- No significant progress

FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS (SUPPORT INCENTIVE PROGRAMS, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, LANDOWNER EDUCATION, MANAGEMENT OF KING COUNTY FORESTLAND)

	Recommendations	Accomplishments
	Dedicate Forest Excise Tax, State Forest Board Revenue from DNR, and Payment in Lieu of Taxes to forest-related programs.	King County receives approximately $7 million per year in revenue from forestland each year, exclusive of property tax; DNRP receives approximately $185,000 annually in General Fund support for forest programs.
	Continue to use SWM fees to support forest programs.	Forestry programs are supported by approximately $400,000 per year in SWM funding.
	Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (Title III).	Secure Rural Schools reauthorized 2018 through 2021; annual allocations to King County have declined annually.
	King County forestland harvest receipts should support forest management activities.	Proceeds from timber sales on DNRP land are dedicated to forest health improvement projects.
	Increase fee for PBRS applications.	Increased from $240 to $620. Fees cover approximately 10% of PBRS program expenses.
	Increase KCD special assessment collections.	KCD uses local Rates and Charges funding to extend delivery of forest stewardship services to small acreage forest landowners.
	Direct CUT early withdrawal fees to forestry services.	No action; state statute requires funds to be returned to original taxing authorities.

Appendix B: King County Public Benefit Rating System and Current Use Taxation Programs



King County Current Use Taxation programs provide tax incentives for voluntarily preserving farmland, forestland, or open space on private property.[36] Qualifying properties, or portions of properties, are evaluated for their "current use" value, as opposed to their "highest and best use" value that would otherwise be used to determine tax rates. Forest landowners interested in preserving forests for habitat or timber use are eligible for the Public Benefit Rating System, the Timber Land Program, or the Forest Land Program.

The Timber Land Program is intended for Rural Area- (RA), Forestland- (F), or Agriculture- (A) zoned properties with between 5 and 20 acres of forestland. Forests enrolled in the program must be designated for growth, harvest, and management of forest crops for commercial purposes. Landowners must have a forest stewardship plan developed in accordance with Washington State Department of Natural Resources guidelines[37] and approved by a King County forester. In addition to achieving landowner objectives, forest stewardship plans must address protection and/or enhancement of forest resource categories, extend 10 years or longer, and cover an entire forest ownership, including land that will be planted in the future. The Forest Land Program is intended for larger tracts of forestland (5 acres or greater) that are designated for growth and harvest of timber. Currently, work is underway in King County to combine these two programs and simplify the enrollment process for landowners.

The Public Benefit Rating System uses a point system to determine the current use tax reduction, with a 50% to 90% reduction in assessed land value for enrolled parcels. The program is intended to protect stream and wetland buffers, conserve farmland and native forest, protect groundwater, conserve habitat, and protect historic landmarks. Participating land must contain an identified open space resource and have potential for use or development that will be restricted by enrollment in the program. Open space resources and point systems are defined in the Public Benefit Rating System Resource Information Document.[38] Parcels enrolled in the program may be monitored via planned site inspections or landowner reports, as requested by program staff. Once enrolled, properties remain in the program until (a) the land is withdrawn or removed, (b) a change of use disqualifies some or all of the participating area, or (c) the property is sold, and a notice of continuance is not filed.

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[36] https://kingcounty.gov/services/environment/stewardship/sustainable-building/resource-protection-incentives.aspx

[37] https://your.kingcounty.gov/dnrp/library/water-and-land/forestry/WA-Integrated-Forest-Management-Plan-Guidelines.pdf

[38] https://kingcounty.gov/~/media/services/environment/stewardship/sustainable-building/documents/resource-protection-incentives/PBRS_Resource_Information_April_2011.ashx?la=en

Appendix C: King County Transfer of Development Rights

The Transfer of Development Rights[39] ("TDR") Program allows participating landowners to sell development rights from their property to private developers, who then use them to build more compactly in participating urban areas. With this program, landowners achieve economic return on their property while maintaining ownership of the land and protecting it from future development.

The right to develop land for residential or commercial purposes is one of a bundle of rights associated with land ownership. The County's TDR Program allows landowners of designated sending sites to separate the right to develop land from the bundle of other property rights. Sending sites are rural or resource land with farm, forest, open space, or regional trail amenities. Through TDR, the separated right(s) are turned into a tradable commodity that can be bought and sold—just as land can be bought and sold. When a landowner chooses to separate some, or all, development rights, the property is conserved through a conservation easement. A conservation easement can act to reduce landowner property taxes. Landowners can retain development rights on their property for future use and the land remains in private ownership.

These transferable development rights, or "TDRs," are typically bought by developers of designated receiving sites. Receiving sites are typically urban areas eligible for increased density. The purchased TDRs give developers the ability to build additional houses that exceed the number allowed by the zoning base density. Revenue generated from the sale of forestland TDRs is dedicated to the purchase of easement or fee-title to Land Conservation Initiative priority land.

[39] https://kingcounty.gov/services/environment/stewardship/sustainable-building/transfer-development-rights.aspx



Appendix D: Forest Conservation Partners

The following conservation partners work in concert with King County to deliver forestry programming and services to forestland owners. Each provides unique sets of services consistent with the mission of the organization. Generally, the Commission has noted that forest stewardship services have become scarcer, while at the same time forest health issues are increasing. Compounding that concern is that some rural communities face the effects of a slowing local economy within a rapidly expanding residential landscape.

- **Consulting foresters and various stewardship nonprofit groups** provide a variety of technical and restoration services—each in specific areas of expertise and/or focus. Among the nonprofit groups are the Forterra, Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust, The Mountaineers, Friends of the Trail, Partnership for Rural King County, the Northwest Natural Resource Group, and Stewardship Partners. Many of these groups engage volunteers in important habitat restoration work on federal, state, and municipal forestland. Consulting foresters provide a wide variety of professional and technical forestry services to rural landowners for a fee. Available services are diverse, ranging from forest stewardship plan development to implementation of silvicultural activities for various goals, some of which include fire protection, timber value, wildlife, and forest health. King County foresters assist landowners in formulating a picture of recommended activities based on the landowner's goals. Foresters then advise landowners on how to best approach achieving the goals, whether it is landowners personally undertaking management activities or finding practitioners of services that fit their needs.
- **King Conservation District** ("KCD") helps jurisdictions, landowners, and residents steward their forests, street trees and open space to enhance wildlife habitat, reduce storm water runoff, and improve human health and well-being. KCD's Rural Forest Stewardship and Wildfire Resiliency programs provide technical assistance, forest stewardship planning, wildfire safety evaluations, forest fuel reduction projects, and funding opportunities for land managers with fewer than 5 acres of forest cover in unincorporated King County. KCD's Urban Forest Stewardship Program offers technical assistance, project management services, and project funding to member jurisdictions to support their urban forestry programs.
- **United States Forest Service** ("USFS") and **Natural Resources Conservation Service** ("NRCS") each have federal pass-through funds that come to the State Forester supporting stewardship through programs and cost share at Washington State Department of Natural Resources ("DNR") and cost share at NRCS. NRCS conducts soil surveys and conservation needs assessments to inform better resource conservation planning and provides technical guides and web tools to enhance conservation efforts. The USFS Cooperative Forestry program helps private landowners to prepare for wildfire, invasive species, pests, and disease, while also managing National Forest land for their own unique objectives. King County foresters are active in local working groups, providing guidance to those programs. King County foresters connect landowners with possible cost share and easement programs funded by County, state, and federal programs.
- **Washington State Department of Natural Resources** is a major partner with King County in acquiring both working and conservation forestland through land exchanges and land purchases. The model through which King County purchases a conservation easement and DNR manages the forest has resulted in many acres of retained forest in recent years. For example, the Raging River and Plum Creek exchange brings the total forestland to 36,000 acres that will remain in active forest management through such efforts. King County holds a conservation easement on 4,000 acres of the 7,000-acre Raging River Forest purchased by DNR from Fruit Growers Supply.

The DNR Small Forest Landowner Office provides technical and financial assistance to help landowners achieve their land management objectives. Assistance options include the Family Forest Fish Passage Program, Forestry Riparian Easement Program and Rivers and Habitat Open Space Program. There is an additional program focused on forest health and wildfire risk reduction for eastern Washington forestland owners.

In addition to forest stewardship and conservation, DNR permits Forest Practices for Class II through IV-Special practices while King County permits forest practices for Class IV-General practices. DNR is responsible for wildland fire suppression and coordinates with federal agencies, local governments, and fire districts.

- **Washington State University** ("WSU") Extension provides forestry research and technology transfer, serving as a conduit that connects landowners and practitioners to best available science. WSU provides outreach and educational program support, including workshops, technical bulletins, and comprehensive online resources for landowners. Online resources include information such as lists of consulting foresters, mobile sawmills, and forestry equipment suppliers. The forest stewardship coached planning classes are cosponsored by King County and WSU Extension. WSU depends on state and County funding to continue its forestry outreach and education programming.
- **University of Washington, College of Forest Resources**, provides cutting edge research and technology tools, and works collaboratively with WSU Extension to facilitate technology transfer and continuing professional education opportunities that support King County programs.

Tribes of King County

Native American Tribes were the original stewards of all King County forests and, to this day, have an important role in planning for and protecting forestland and associated resources. The Muckleshoot, Puyallup, Snoqualmie and Tulalip Tribes own over 45,000 acres of forestland in King County, including both reservations and land owned by Tribal corporations e.g., Muckleshoot Federal Corporation). Other Tribes in the region also maintain water, fishing, hunting, and gathering rights in King County, in accordance with treaties between the Tribes and the U.S. government. Tribes in King County engage with many governmental and private land managers, provide input into management decisions, and steward their own land to balance the sustainable harvest of salmon and timber while enhancing, protecting, and preserving cultural and natural resources.

Tribes are sovereign nations that pre-existed the United States. By entering into treaties with the United States, Tribes were not granted rights from the US, but instead reserved pre-existing rights to themselves. A Tribe's right to use land, water, and resources pursuant to a treaty with the United States is often measured by the scope of the Tribe's aboriginal use (subject to reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions). A Tribe's right to use resources includes the right of reasonable access to travel to "usual and accustomed" areas on "open and unclaimed lands." Thus, Tribes have a vested and legal interest in how public land is managed and also have the right to participate in land use decisions that potentially affect a resource of interest.

Appendix E: Legal Mandate for Forest Retention and Conservation

Following is the hierarchy of policies and regulations from the state down to the local level that provides the basis for King County's Forestry Program, Current Use Taxation ("CUT") programs, land acquisitions, and policies and regulations that affect forests.

State Legal Mandate. Under the Growth Management Act (GMA), the state requires King County to protect natural resource land and rural character. The Commission believes that simply identifying forestland of long-term commercial significance is not sufficient. The state requires the County to take action.

The GMA includes as one of its 13 planning goals: "Maintain and enhance natural resource- based industries, including productive timber, agricultural, and fisheries industries. Encourage the conservation of productive forestlands and productive agricultural lands and discourage incompatible uses (RCW 36.70A.020)." The GMA sets other goals that relate to protection of forest cover, including to "protect the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water," "reduce sprawl," and to "identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures, that have historical or archaeological significance."

To achieve these goals, the GMA requires the designation of natural resource lands (RCW 36.70A.170) and the adoption of development regulations to ensure the conservation of these designated natural resource lands (RCW 36.70A.060). Land to be designated for forestry are defined as "Forestlands that are not already characterized by urban growth and that have long-term significance for the commercial production of timber (RCW 36.70A.170)." To emphasize the importance of the protection of natural resource land, the designation and adoption of regulations to ensure their conservation was required to occur within a year after the GMA was passed by the Washington State legislature—well before the deadlines for most of the other provisions of GMA. The GMA also directs that rural character shall be preserved (RCW 36.70A.011).

Countywide Planning Policies. The 2004 King County Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs), the body of regional policies that provide a framework for the comprehensive plans developed by each jurisdiction in King County, include a series of policies to guide protection of natural resource areas. The Growth Management Planning Council is the interjurisdictional body in King County that made many of the cross-jurisdiction decisions about implementation of the GMA.

LU-1: Farmland and forestland are protected primarily for their long-term productive resource value. However, these lands also provide secondary benefits such as open space, scenic views, and wildlife habitat. All jurisdictions should encourage utilization of natural resources through methods that minimize the impacts on these secondary benefits. Resource lands also contain an abundance of critical areas that shall be protected in accordance with adopted state and local regulations.

LU-2: All jurisdictions shall protect existing resource lands within their boundaries that have long-term commercial significance for resource production. Any designated farmland and forestland shall not be considered for urban development. Jurisdictions are required to enact a program authorizing the transfer or purchase of development rights for designated forest or agricultural areas within Urban Growth Areas. At the request of any city, King County will work to reinstate the King County Purchase of Development Rights Program and/or establish an interjurisdictional Transfer of Development Rights ("TDR") Program to protect these resource lands in accordance with the Growth Management Act.

County Comprehensive Plan Policies. The Rural Forest Commission finds that the Comprehensive Plan policies explicitly recognize the aesthetic and social values of forests and the importance of the interplay of forest cover, soils, and water for ensuring adequate groundwater recharge, runoff and pollution reduction, flood risk reduction, carbon sequestration, and wildlife habitat.

Consistent with the GMA and the CPPs, the King County Comprehensive Plan ("KCCP") designates forestlands that have long-term significance for commercial production of timber, and includes a series of policies directing implementation measures to assure their conservation. In addition to recognizing rural residential areas with significant contiguous blocks of timber (identified as Rural Forest Focus Areas ["RFFAs"] in the 2000 KCCP) and providing incentives for property owners in these areas to practice forestry, King County established the Forest Production District ("FPD") to distinguish those lands of long-term significance for commercial timber production. The FPD was first designated in 1985, prior to the adoption of GMA, and then reaffirmed in 1991 to comply with the timeline set by GMA. The FPD boundary has remained largely intact since its original designation.

In a subsequent update of the KCCP, Rural FFAs were established. These are identified geographic areas where special efforts are necessary to retain contiguous small tract blocks of rural forest. The County has made the RFFAs a priority for technical assistance and incentive programs to maintain forest cover where it contributes most to natural resource values and local economies.

The KCCP includes a series of policies intended to preserve long-term commercial forestry in the FPD and encourage forest stewardship of forested properties in the RFFAs. These policies recognize the benefits of managed forestry; encourage the retention of large, contiguous blocks of forestland; limit the removal of land from the FPD; limit land uses that are incompatible with active forest management; seek to reduce conflicts with nearby non-forestry uses; and call for incentive programs to maintain forestry as a viable industry and encourage forest stewardship.

1. **King County Rural Economic Strategies.** The Commission believes that the Forestry Program and CUT programs are integral to the implementation of the strategies, which employ interdepartmental coordination to promote rural economic development, regulatory flexibility, and support for sustainable forestry.

2. **County Permits and Incentive Programs** require review and approval of Forest Stewardship Plans (aka Forest Management Plans) by qualified County Forestry Program staff. Requirements for these plans are described in the King County Forest Management Plan Public Rule of 2015.

Permits and incentive programs that require forest plans include, but are not limited to:

- Application to the TDR Program
- Application to Public Benefit Rating System and CUT programs
- Application for a residential building permit in the Forest Production District
- Critical Areas Ordinance flexibility for forest thinning for fire safety, firewood collecting, habitat restoration, and noxious weed control in critical areas buffers
- Eligibility for a King County Class 4G non-conversion clearing and grading permit
- Flexibility in conducting forest practices under County regulations
- Permission to practice forestry in a resource tract of cluster development or a resource area

3. **Rural Area Clearing Restrictions ("65/35" Rule)**. In response to the Court of Appeals Decision in CAPR v. King County, the provisions of the Clearing and Grading Code that require rural property owners to limit the amount of clearing on their property will not be enforced. Department of Local Services-Permitting Division has proposed to have the Forestry Program carry out targeted technical assistance and forest stewardship education for landowners who are contemplating clearing in order to minimize the impacts of development.

4. **Stormwater Management.** King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks, Water and Land Resources Division (WLRD), Stormwater Services, sought County forester expertise in writing specifications, designing, reviewing, and monitoring the creation of native forest in areas that have been converted to other land cover. WLRD provides a fee reduction for property owners who convert developed land surfaces to forest, as described in the Surface Water Management Fee Protocols. Also, in the Surface Water Design Manual there are specifications for creating native vegetated landscapes for use with the full dispersion flow control best management practices.



Appendix F: Focus Areas, Objectives, and Actions to Conserve, Restore, and Manage Forestland in King County

CONTINUED ACTION PROGRESS	NEW ACTION PRIORITY RANKING
Significant and sustainable progress	NOW
Progress made but more to be done	SOON
No significant progress	LATER

FOCUS AREA 1: PROTECTION, RESTORATION, AND STEWARDSHIP OF PRIVATE FORESTLAND

Goal: Effectively use King County resources to enable private forestland owners to protect, restore, and steward their lands. Increase the number of landowners who prepare comprehensive forest stewardship plans, implement forest stewardship practices, and access financial and technical support needed to implement those plans.

	Objective 1.1: Protect remaining priority privately-owned forest tracts not currently under easement, with special focus on protecting contiguous blocks of forest and meeting LCI goals.	**Accomplishments**
	1.1.1 Partner with DNR and land trusts to secure easements on forestland.	King County has purchased conservation easements to permanently protect nearly 150,000 acres of forestland, most of which will be managed for sustainable timber production. King County will continue to use grants, TDR, Forest Carbon, and other funding sources to continue to secure easements on priority forest.
	1.1.2 Increase public engagement and communication around objectives for acquisition and restoration (e.g., LCI).	King County and partners have focused significant resources on outreach and education regarding Countywide land conservation efforts (e.g., LCI, Conservation Futures Tax), but also work closely with local stakeholders when pursuing individual acquisitions and management actions.
	1.1.3 Support acquisition of additional working-forest conservation easements on commercial forestland that are LCI targets.	Although there was significant attention to acquiring easements on working forestland (e.g., Snoqualmie Tree Farm), recent efforts have diminished somewhat. ;
	1.1.4 Design conservation easements to include an allowance for sustainable timber harvest.	All County-acquired easements that protect forestland are developed to meet conservation objectives and landowner goals. When appropriate, sustainable timber production is accommodated.

CONTINUED ACTION PROGRESS	NEW ACTION PRIORITY RANKING
Significant and sustainable progress	NOW
Progress made but more to be done	SOON
No significant progress	LATER

	Objective 1.1: Protect remaining priority privately-owned forest tracts not currently under easement, with special focus on protecting contiguous blocks of forest and meeting LCI goals.	Accomplishments
	1.1.5 Regularly monitor all working forest conservation easements to ensure terms of easement are being honored and work with forestland owners to resolve any issues of noncompliance.	All forest easements are monitored regularly and any issues of noncompliance are addressed in a timely manner.
	1.1.6 Maintain CUT/PBRS program capacity to manage current program and explore opportunities to enhance existing current use programs to further reduce taxation-driven forestland conversion rates.	DNRP has supported 2 FTEs dedicated to CUT/PBRS as well as a partial FTE to manage the program. Staff is able to manage current workload.
	1.1.7 Ensure sufficient staff resources to meet LCI expectation for greater CUT/PBRS contribution and explore new approaches to expanding CUT/PBRS programs.	The CUT/PBRS team will need additional resources to market program to owners of LCI priority forestland while continuing to support the baseline level of program enrollments.
	1.1.8 Evaluate forest cover and condition for land identified as high conservation value in the LCI.	

	Objective 1.2: Improve access to needed technical assistance to enable private forest landowners to retain forest cover and enhance forest health.	Accomplishments
	1.2.1 Provide support for and increase the capacity of state and local service providers to deliver forest stewardship technical assistance and advice to small forest landowners.	King County and a number of agencies and organizations provide technical assistance to forest landowners and, while demand is great, there is reasonable capacity to meet the demand.
	1.2.2 Identify and remove barriers for forestry-related businesses to ensure reasonable access to forestry contracting and consulting services.	

CONTINUED ACTION PROGRESS

- Significant and sustainable progress
- Progress made but more to be done
- No significant progress

NEW ACTION PRIORITY RANKING

- NOW
- SOON
- LATER

	Objective 1.2: Improve access to needed technical assistance to enable private forest landowners to retain forest cover and enhance forest health.	**Accomplishments**
	1.2.3 Research best available science to better understand the linkage between forest protection/ management and stormwater management as well as other ecosystem services and develop and implement science-based policies and practices to manage and conserve these ecosystem services; support delivery of forestry programs aligned with water quality and stormwater runoff management priorities.	

	Objective 1.3: Encourage forest stewardship through education, planning, active forest management, and partnerships.	**Accomplishments**
	1.3.1 Advise landowners about programs that support forest stewardship on private land.	All agencies and organizations that provide technical support to forest landowners educate landowners about programs that provide cost-share support for stewardship activities.
	1.3.2 Collaborate with KCD to expand capacity for increased delivery of technical and financial assistance services to forest landowners through KCD Rural Forest Stewardship, Wildfire Resiliency, and Landowner Incentive programs.	Although there is need for greater funding of stewardship incentive programs, KCD receives broad support for their programs and King County specifically acknowledged the value of KCD forestry programs during recent discussions around renewal of their rates and charges.
	1.3.3 Collaborate with KCD and WSU Cooperative Extension Forestry to expand capacity for increased delivery of education (especially coached stewardship planning) and educational resources that enable forest landowners to meet both personal and King County management objectives.	King County, KCD, and WSU Extension annually collaborate on a series of in-person and virtual coached stewardship planning courses that continue to be in high demand. COVID-19 forced a transition to 100% virtual workshops, but the response was positive and holding more of the workshops virtually is a viable option to accommodate additional workshops.

CONTINUED ACTION PROGRESS	NEW ACTION PRIORITY RANKING
Significant and sustainable progress	NOW
Progress made but more to be done	SOON
No significant progress	LATER

	Objective 1.3: Encourage forest stewardship through education, planning, active forest management, and partnerships.	Accomplishments
	1.3.4 When developing stewardship plans, include consideration of activities ongoing or planned for adjacent properties (both public and private) to leverage resources, enhance benefits, scale-up contractor and consultant services, and avoid unintended consequences.	
	1.3.5 Investigate and, if appropriate, establish a County-owned and -managed "demonstration forest" to serve as an example of forest management for landowners and an outdoor classroom that demonstrates various sustainable forest practices for students and King County residents; develop management and monitoring plans and secure project funding to begin active management by 2025.	

	Objective 1.4: Increase the availability and access to financial incentive programs to support implementation of forest stewardship practices by small forest landowners.	Accomplishments
	1.4.1 Increase capacity for cost-share funding to forest landowners implementing on-the-ground forest stewardship practices.	There are a number of programs that provide financial support to forest landowners but demand far exceeds available funding.
	1.4.2 Partner with DNR and Washington State Conservation Commission to increase capacity to deliver financial incentives to forest landowners.	

	Objective 1.5: Promote understanding of the benefits of commercial timber production in King County and support increased production of locally produced forest products.	Accomplishments
	1.5.1 Explore opportunities to provide incentives for using locally sourced lumber and other forest products, starting with King County government projects.	
	1.5.2 Support small forest landowners maintaining working forests in King County by providing tax incentives for local sawmills.	

CONTINUED ACTION PROGRESS

- Significant and sustainable progress
- Progress made but more to be done
- No significant progress

NEW ACTION PRIORITY RANKING

- NOW
- SOON
- LATER

	Objective 1.5: Promote understanding of the benefits of commercial timber production in King County and support increased production of locally produced forest products.	**Accomplishments**
	1.5.3 Research strategies to incentivize greater use of locally sourced forest products that have been employed elsewhere and pursue adoption of appropriate strategies in King County.	
	1.5.4 Support efforts to develop markets for pulpwood.	
	1.5.5 Support DLS to ensure wood recycling operations remain viable and accessible and meet industry standards for operation.	
	1.5.6 Explore opportunities to use pulpwood and wood waste in cogeneration plants.	
	1.5.7 Collaborate within King County departments (DNRP and DLS) to support the establishment of permanent and mobile mills and kilns.	
	1.5.8 Support businesses focused on using local products (e.g., cross-laminated timber).	

	Objective 1.6: Reduce operating and permitting costs for forestry activities and remove permitting and other roadblocks to forestry practices.	**Accomplishments**
	1.6.1 Clarify permitting process and fee structure for forestry activities not governed by FPA.	King County Regulatory/Permitting Specialist has been working with RFC to identify permitting challenges and to effect changes (e.g., increasing exempt forestry structure size).
	1.6.2 Eliminate the need for King County Clearing and Grading permit for fire risk reduction activities within 150 feet of home.	DNRP staff have been working with DLS permitting staff to identify a pathway to simplify/eliminate permitting requirements.

CONTINUED ACTION PROGRESS

- Significant and sustainable progress
- Progress made but more to be done
- No significant progress

NEW ACTION PRIORITY RANKING

- NOW
- SOON
- LATER

	Objective 1.6: Reduce operating and permitting costs for forestry activities and remove permitting and other roadblocks to forestry practices.	**Accomplishments**
	1.6.3 Ensure there is adequate forestry expertise on DNRP/DLS-PD permit team.	DNRP Regulatory/Permitting Specialist is a trained forester with extensive commercial forestry experience that coordinates permit team meetings. Team meeting agendas are shared with KCD so they can contribute forestry expertise when appropriate.
	1.6.4 Revise and update Forest Stewardship Plan Public Rule to establish framework for stewardship plans and ensure plans include actions to address climate change and increased wildfire risk.	Updates to the Forest Stewardship Public Rule are under consideration by DLS. More substantial changes have been proposed but will be pursued via standard Code change pathway.
	1.6.5 Advocate for changes to County Code and Comprehensive Plan to ensure landowners are able to manage forestland and avoid loss of forest cover and to ensure other segments of forest industry are retained, including support for small mills and kilns.	DNRP staff worked with RFC to review current code as it pertains to operations of small mills and kilns. Several code changes were recommended and will be pursued.
	1.6.6 Cap costs of permits for forest practices as has been done with agriculture.	
	1.6.7 Revise King County Code so that permits are not granted to applicants with outstanding compliance issues on the same or other applicant-owned property.	
	1.6.8 Revise King County Code to ensure that restoration activities are not treated the same as conversion/development (e.g., alternative permitting pathway).	
	1.6.9 Minimize regulatory burden for construction and maintenance activities related to forest management; eliminate duplication with state and County regulations.	
	1.6.10 Repair rural bridges to comply with loading and code requirements that accommodate log hauling and transportation of other forest products associated with noncommercial and commercial forest management activities.	

CONTINUED ACTION PROGRESS

- Significant and sustainable progress
- Progress made but more to be done
- No significant progress

NEW ACTION PRIORITY RANKING

- NOW
- SOON
- LATER

	Objective 1.7: Explore opportunities to expand programs that monetize ecosystem services on private and public land.	Accomplishments
	1.7.1 Expand King County's Forest Carbon Program to enable enrollment of privately-owned forestland.	King County launched the Rural Forest Carbon Program in December 2020. The program may be expanded in 2022 to include non-County properties (including privately-owned forestland).
	1.7.2 Educate forest landowners with holdings that do not meet King County LCI protection criteria about forest protection options, including CUT, PBRS, and alternative incentives for forestland protection such as the Rural Forest Carbon Program and TDR.	
	1.7.3 Increase program marketing to educate landowners about CUT, PBRS, TDR, and other program availability, targeting owners of LCI priority properties.	

FOCUS AREA 2: ACQUISITION, RESTORATION, AND STEWARDSHIP OF COUNTY-OWNED FORESTLAND

Goal Statement: Secure sufficient funding to achieve the forestland preservation goals described in the Land Conservation Initiative and provide managers with sufficient resources to implement forest stewardship plans. County-owned forestland should be examples of multiple use management that protects biodiversity, enhances carbon sequestration, provides recreation opportunities, and demonstrates ecologically sustainable and economically viable timber production.

	Objective 2.1: Strengthen stewardship planning protocols for King County forestland.	Accomplishments
	2.1.1 Include forest stewardship policies that highlight restoration of natural forest composition and structure in the next version of the Parks Division Open Space Plan.	The Open Space Plan will be revised in 2022.
	2.1.2 Ensure that stewardship of all forestland acquisitions is guided by approved plans. Brief, early action plans are required prior to any acquisition, and formal forest stewardship plans should be completed for all large properties within 6-12 months of acquisition.	Early action plans have not been developed.

CONTINUED ACTION PROGRESS

- Significant and sustainable progress
- Progress made but more to be done
- No significant progress

NEW ACTION PRIORITY RANKING

- NOW
- SOON
- LATER

	Objective 2.1: Strengthen stewardship planning protocols for King County forestland.	Accomplishments
	2.1.3 Develop standard template for Forest Stewardship Plans for units of 200 acres or more.	Plan template developed but is undergoing review and revision.
	2.1.4 Complete Forest Stewardship Plans for all Parks Division forest units of 200 acres or more by 2025; plans clearly state desired future conditions and/or desired services to be provided/generated.	Forest stewardship plans are being developed for all Parks Division forest units that are at least 200 acres in size.
	2.1.5 Support coordination among agencies, especially where ownerships are adjacent (e.g., USFS, DNR, SPU) to ensure that off-site impacts are minimized and resource benefits can be taken to scale.	Although agencies collaborate frequently, additional coordination is needed during plan development and strategy implementation.
	2.1.6 Develop and implement streamlined planning process for smaller units.	
	2.1.7 Work with local, state, and federal partners to accelerate the rate of forestland acquisition to meet LCI goals.	

	Objective 2.2: Implement and monitor stewardship plans for all Parks Division forest units of 200 acres or more.	Accomplishments
	2.2.1 Complete development of 5- to 10-year forest stewardship operating plans for King County-owned forestland that aggregate all high-priority stewardship actions for all units, regardless of size, with initial focus on units of 200 acres or more.	Initial near-term forest stewardship operating plan to be finished in 2022 and will be updated annually.

CONTINUED ACTION PROGRESS

- Significant and sustainable progress
- Progress made but more to be done
- No significant progress

NEW ACTION PRIORITY RANKING

- NOW
- SOON
- LATER

	Objective 2.2: Implement and monitor stewardship plans for all Parks Division forest units of 200 acres or more.	Accomplishments
	2.2.2 Explore additional opportunities to ensure adequate resources are available for restoration and management of County forestland and consider stewardship needs of all newly acquired properties.	Additional resources needed to meet accelerated rate of restoration.
	2.2.3 Dedicate at least one forester FTE to Parks Division for forest stewardship work.	

	Objective 2.3: Identify opportunities to monetize ecosystem services to fund forestland acquisition and management.	Accomplishments
	2.3.1 Expand King County Rural Forest Carbon Project to support County land acquisition program.	Forest Carbon Program launched in 2020 and revenue will be dedicated to acquisition of additional forest properties.

FOCUS AREA 3: WILDFIRE HAZARD REDUCTION

Goal Statement: Develop and implement comprehensive wildfire plans that address issues related to wildfire risk reduction, wildfire response, and wildfire recovery. Improve forest resilience to climate change and implement preparedness plans to reduce forestland acres that experience uncontrolled burning.

	Objective 3.1: Expand delivery of community and landowner wildfire risk management and safety planning services.	Accomplishments
	3.1.1 Increase cost-share funds to support wildfire risk reduction strategies, including construction of interior access roads.	Landowners are made aware of availability of cost-share programs (e.g., KCD, NRCS), but funding is not adequate to meet demand.

CONTINUED ACTION PROGRESS

- Significant and sustainable progress
- Progress made but more to be done
- No significant progress

NEW ACTION PRIORITY RANKING

- NOW
- SOON
- LATER

	Objective 3.1: Expand delivery of community and landowner wildfire risk management and safety planning services.	Accomplishments
	3.1.2 Emphasize fire plan development and implementation at the community scale and ensure that there is collaboration among all parties engaged in wildfire risk reduction to deliver services more efficiently and effectively.	King County has begun to pull partners together to develop a Countywide assessment of wildfire risk reduction, response, and recovery.
	3.1.3 Deliver wildfire safety and fire risk management services to King County forest landowners and increase capacity to deliver fire risk management and fire resiliency planning to more rural King County forest landowners in the urban/rural wildland interface.	KCD has been leading community wildfire education but numerous King County agencies are intending to ramp up investments.

	Objective 3.2: Develop comprehensive approach to rural wildfire planning.	Accomplishments
	3.2.1 Increase frequency of roadside maintenance, including mowing and control of flammable invasive species such as Scotch broom to reduce fire ignition along publicly maintained roads.	No focused conversations with DLS Roads Division held thus far.
	3.2.2 Support Office of Emergency Management coordination of comprehensive wildfire preparedness, response, and recovery plan.	
	3.2.3 Create “wildfire roundtable” that includes agencies and partner organizations focused on wildfire risk reduction in King County; meet regularly to understand roles and responsibilities, coordinate across entities to capitalize on opportunities and strengths, and share information and lessons learned.	

CONTINUED ACTION PROGRESS

- Significant and sustainable progress
- Progress made but more to be done
- No significant progress

NEW ACTION PRIORITY RANKING

- NOW
- SOON
- LATER

	Objective 3.3: Reduce risk to public forestland from park visitors.	Accomplishments
	3.3.1 Increase communications with the public about closures and burn bans; collaborate with adjacent agencies and landowners to ensure there is a common message.	Parks currently posts properties and informs neighbors when needed, but additional collaboration with other agencies is needed.

	Objective 3.4: Improve King County capacity for wildfire response and training.
	3.4.1 Deploy staff during and after high fire risk weather events for early fire detection.
	3.4.2 Explore opportunities to train staff to be prepared to respond to wildfire in some capacity.
	3.4.3 Enhance vehicle fleet to include vehicles and equipment capable of supporting early wildfire response.



CONTINUED ACTION PROGRESS	NEW ACTION PRIORITY RANKING
Significant and sustainable progress	NOW
Progress made but more to be done	SOON
No significant progress	LATER

FOCUS AREA 4: TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Goal Statement: Recognize and honor Tribal sovereignty and historic connections to forests in King County, which includes engaging with Tribes early in land use planning efforts.

	Objective 4.1: Consult with Tribal Governments about forest management and protection.	Accomplishments
	4.1.1 Explicitly recognize Tribal treaty rights and Tribal sovereignty.	King County is beginning to include explicit land acknowledgments in documents and presentations.
	4.1.2 Recognize that each Tribe is a sovereign government with their own policies and processes.	King County Tribal Relations staff provide direction and training to program/project staff.
	4.1.3 Recognize the history, culture, and tradition of Tribes who historically occupied King County and the importance of forests to those Tribes in all documents related to and events held on land historically occupied or managed by local Tribes.	King County is focusing additional resources to ensure staff understand historical and cultural significance of project sites and to ensure management actions respect that history (e.g., Cultural Resources Review on all ground-disturbing activities, 30-Year Forest Plan).

	Objective 4.2: Engage with Tribal Governments early in any forest planning process.	Accomplishments
	4.2.1 Support greater engagement with all affected Tribes to support forest management and protection at a landscape scale.	Potentially affected Tribes are contacted whenever significant forest management actions are proposed, but more needs to be done to proactively address large-scale forest management and protection plans.

Appendix F Continued

CONTINUED ACTION PROGRESS

- Significant and sustainable progress
- Progress made but more to be done
- No significant progress

NEW ACTION PRIORITY RANKING

- NOW
- SOON
- LATER

	Objective 4.2: Engage with Tribal Governments early in any forest planning process.	Accomplishments
☐	4.2.2 Ensure all County departments have pre-project planning protocols to identify and protect culturally sensitive sites prior to initiation of any construction or site management actions and inadvertent discovery plans to guide response should artifacts be discovered during construction; Tribes should review plans and protocols.	Parks Division and WLRD have dedicated Cultural Resources staff that ensure proposed activities minimize risk to known and unknown sensitive areas. Crew training is incorporated into most stewardship projects and inadvertent discovery plans are developed.





King County

Rural Forest Commission Strategic Priorities

Recommendations and Actions for Conservation of Forestland in King County

February 2022

King County
Department of
Natural Resources and Parks

Clean Water
Healthy Habitat

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