



## THE JEFFERSON COUNTY FIRE CHIEF'S ASSOCIATION

August 8, 2023

Kate Dean, District No. 1  
Heidi Eisenhour, District No. 2  
Greg Brotherton, Chair, District No. 3  
Jefferson County Board of Commissioners  
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Dear Commissioners Kate Dean, Heidi Eisenhour, and Greg Brotherton,

We are writing in response to your letter dated June 27, 2023, expressing your support for the proposal by Commissioner Hilary Franz of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

While it is commendable, we must express our opposition to some aspects of your letter concerning implementing the new Natural Climate Solutions (NCS) investments and the Trust Land Transfer program. The goal of increasing operable timberlands with potential revenue generation for the County and junior taxing districts is admirable. But the below concerns arise because the conservation transfers and timberland purchases proposed appear to result in swapping parcels that are ready for near-term harvest for parcels that may not be harvestable for decades, leaving a funding shortfall that will last well into this century. Because DNR operates under harvest restriction policies that do not all apply to private forestland, it is also unclear whether the replacement parcels will be encumbered and considered unproductive in future years just as some of the current DNR parcels may be. And considering that private timber lands generate excise tax revenue for the County and junior taxing districts, the total pool of trust land revenue and private forestland revenue will certainly be decreasing.

Here are some concerns we have:

1. **Lack of Balance:** While investing in natural climate solutions and forest conservation is essential, we must also consider a balanced approach that addresses other pressing needs of the community. Directing significant funding toward conservation efforts might lead to a lack of resources for other critical areas, such as infrastructure, public safety, and social services.
2. **Impact on Local Economy:** It is essential to recognize that allocating funds to acquire private forestlands may adversely affect the local economy. The expansion of publicly managed lands could potentially lead to job losses in the private sector, particularly in the forestry industry. A comprehensive analysis of the economic impact of such acquisitions should be conducted before proceeding.
3. **Transparency and Stakeholder Involvement:** While your efforts to collaborate with the DNR are commendable, it is crucial to ensure that all stakeholders, including local communities and

businesses, have a voice in the decision-making process. Transparent discussions and consultations should be conducted to address potential concerns and identify the most beneficial projects for the entire region. Junior taxing districts within the County, such as ours, have previously requested that we be consulted and involved in decision-making on proposed transfers, and it is disappointing that this did not happen before your letter was penned.

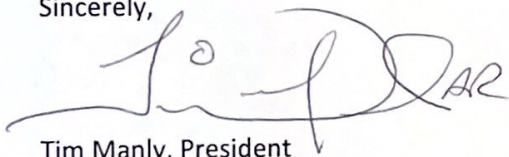
4. **Funding Allocation:** The allocation of the \$70 million for replacement lands and other conservation efforts must be scrutinized to ensure that it is distributed fairly and effectively. Prioritizing specific projects without comprehensively evaluating their impact may lead to inefficient resource utilization.
5. **Focus on Fire Departments and Schools:** As elected representatives of Jefferson County, you of course would agree that your primary responsibility is to address the needs of your constituents. While environmental considerations are essential, they should not overshadow the pressing issues faced by fire departments and schools in the region. I urge you to prioritize funding for these critical services when allocating resources to other projects.

The leadership in some other counties, such as Whatcom County, have committed to making whole the junior taxing districts within their county for any financial losses suffered through the County's participation in the subject conservation programs. Will Jefferson County Commissioners commit to doing the same for our junior taxing districts?

In conclusion, we appreciate your dedication to the community and your efforts to collaborate with the DNR on conservation projects. However, we believe that a more balanced and transparent approach is necessary to ensure the well-being of all Jefferson County residents. Let us work together to find solutions that address the immediate needs of fire departments and schools while responsibly investing in environmental conservation.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tim Manly', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tim Manly, President  
Jefferson County Fire Chief's Association