January 29, 2020

The Honorable Claudia Balducci

Chair, King County Council

Room 1200

C O U R T H O U S E

Dear Councilmember Balducci:

This letter transmits a proposed ordinance that would enable King County to make changes to the administration and implementation of its current use assessment programs described in King County Code Title 20.36, [Open Space, Agricultural, and Timber Lands Current Use Assessment](#_Toc321731427).

This proposed ordinance terminates the County’s Timberland classification and merges it into the Designated Forestland program as authorized by passage of Washington State Senate Bill 6180 in 2014.

Specifically, this ordinance will accomplish the following:

* Eliminate the Timberland classification, which will create administrative efficiencies and prevent confusion for the general public without affecting the existing tax incentive to manage private lands for timber production.
* Place administrative responsibility of property formerly classified as Timberland with the Department of Assessments (DOA) under its Designated Forestland program
* Eliminate the need for Council to act on and approve property enrollment in the Timberland program. DOA staff administratively approves enrollment in the Designated Forestland program.

The legislation furthers the goals of key County plans and initiatives as follows:

* The legislation furthers the King County Strategic Plan goals of building on service excellence through improvements to the effectiveness and efficiency of the County’s current use assessment.
* The legislation improves upon the County’s current use assessment programs, which benefit all residents of unincorporated King County who are interested in protecting natural resources on their property.

In developing the legislation, the Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP) engaged DOA current use taxation staff by holding multiple meetings to discuss and obtain input on the proposed merge. DNRP worked to incorporate the input into the legislation, and the DOA has indicated that it supports the legislation and acknowledges the merge will have no fiscal impact to its administration of property formally classified as Timberland.

Thank you for considering this ordinance. This important legislation will help King County residents benefit from increased administrative efficiencies.

If your staff have any questions about this ordinance, please contact Josh Baldi, Division Director of the Water and Land Resources Division in the Department of Natural Resources and Parks, at 206-477-9440.

Sincerely,

Dow Constantine

King County Executive

Enclosures

cc: King County Councilmembers

 ATTN: Carolyn Busch, Chief of Staff

 Melani Pedroza, Clerk of the Council

 Dwight Dively, Director, Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget

John Wilson, King County Assessor, Department of Assessments

Al Dams, Chief Deputy Assessor, Department of Assessments

Mindy Tiangson, Division Director, Accounting, Department of Assessments

 Christie True, Director, Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP)

 Josh Baldi, Division Director, Water and Land Resources Division, DNRP