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January 31, 2019

Proposed Squeaky Timber Sale Update

Thank you for sharing your interest and concern regarding the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) proposed Squeaky Timber Sale. We are aware this proposal has generated significant interest from residents around Livingston Mountain and throughout Clark County.

After careful consideration and nearly two years of dialogue with community members, we have decided to remove the Squeaky Timber Sale from the planned timber sale schedule. At this time, DNR is not proposing any harvest on the parcels in the Squeaky Timber Sale proposal in the near future, and the project is not included in the current five-year harvest schedule.

Since hosting a public meeting to discuss the timber sale in the spring of 2017, DNR has continued to evaluate opportunities to address public concerns, acquire access to harvest units, and understand the sale's connection to other projects, all while continuing to meet DNR's fiduciary responsibilities. Because the parcels included in the proposed Squeaky Timber Sale are on DNR-managed trust lands, the department has a continued responsibility to consider future opportunities including, but not limited to, timber harvesting.

For more information about this proposal, DNR's obligations for managing trust lands and the rationale for removing Squeaky Timber Sale from DNR's current harvest schedule, we have broken out our decision-making process below.

DNR Trust Land Management

The Department of Natural Resources manages more than 3 million acres of state trust lands in Washington. Trust lands are distinctive in that they are managed under a fiduciary responsibility to produce revenue for specific beneficiaries.

Just before Washington became a state in 1889, Congress passed the Omnibus Enabling Act of 1889, which granted the new state millions of acres of land to support public institutions. Today, these trust lands are an ongoing source of non-tax financial support to the various beneficiaries, including kindergarten through Grade 12 (K-12) public schools, state universities, and other government services. By far the largest of these federally granted trusts is the Common School trust, with approximately 1.8 million acres of forestland, agricultural lands and other properties. Revenue generated on these lands helps fund K-12 school construction projects across the state.

State Forest trust lands are another category of state trust lands managed by the department. Most of these lands were originally privately owned forest lands forfeited to counties in the 1920s and 1930s due to unpaid property taxes. These lands were subsequently transferred to the state. DNR manages State Forest trust lands for the benefit of the county in which the lands are located.

For the proposed Squeaky Timber Sale parcels, both State Forest trust land that benefits Clark County taxing entities and the K-12 Common School trust are the underlying beneficiaries.

Public Input

DNR held a public meeting on April 19, 2017, and also informed adjacent landowners about the Squeaky Timber Sale by letter as it prepared the sale's initial design. The questions and concerns from residents from the initial outreach and subsequent interactions gave valuable information to the department, helping DNR staff evaluate what concerns could be mitigated and what would be more difficult to address. We initially modified our original harvest plan in response to community feedback, then considered that input when we decided to remove the timber sale from the current five-year harvest schedule.

Specific Community Concerns and Response

- 1) Heavy vehicle traffic from other commercial operations currently happens daily around Livingston Mountain, leading to congestion and safety concerns. While timber harvests are short-term projects, increased traffic is unavoidable, even if the department were to limit the amount of log trucks as a condition of the sale.
- 2) The department recognizes commercial rock operations have led to concerns from residents and interested parties in the Livingston Mountain vicinity. While this update is not specific to Livingston Quarry, the department is working diligently to ensure the timely and sound reclamation of Livingston Quarry. This work is ongoing, with the ultimate goal of long-term productive lands. At this time, adding to the overall complexity with an additional timber harvest project in the vicinity of Livingston Mountain may not be in the best interest of the State or community.

- 3) The department has received numerous responses related to forest management activities on and around Livingston Mountain, including concerns related to noise, changing landscape views, water quality, slope stability, and wildlife. While we feel strongly that laws, policies, procedures, and additional mitigation efforts address these concerns, we do understand that managing trust lands around Livingston Mountain presents unique challenges.

Future Management

Although the department has removed the Squeaky Timber Sale from consideration, these parcels are still DNR-managed trust lands. While there are several ways through which the department can transfer trust lands, which require approval from the Board of Natural Resources, there are no plans for ownership changes to these lands at this time.

DNR does not intend to move forward with timber harvests or mining in the Livingston Mountain area in the near future. Further mining is unlikely to be considered as Clark County's surface mining overlay does not allow for additional rock removal projects. However, other land management proposals, such as easement or communication site opportunities, will continue to be evaluated as opportunities arise. Public outreach and communication will take place prior to future planned activities.

During the 2018 legislative session, DNR received direction to undertake a review of assets managed by the department, referred to as the Trust Land Performance Assessment. This effort will provide a strategic assessment of DNR's portfolio, helping the department to make the most of innovation, partnerships, and new business opportunities in managing the resources under the department's care. While this effort is not intended to provide planning inputs for specific parcels, it is intended to provide a context to our decisions through time. As we consider future plans at Livingston Mountain, we are evaluating options available now, as well as opportunities that could become available in the future.

DNR is dedicated to partnerships with citizens and governments to ensure environmental protection, public safety, and perpetual funding for schools and communities. Community input about managing our public lands is valuable information to the department, helping us to reach those shared goals.

We hope you will share this message with your family, friends and others interested in the formerly planned Squeaky Timber Sale.

Sincerely,



Steve Ogden
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Washington State Department of Natural Resources