



February 18, 2025

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 Senator Yazmin Trudeau, Vice Chair, Capital  
 Senator Mike Chapman, Deputy Chair, Capital  
 Senator Mark Schoesler, Ranking Member, Capital  
 Senator Perry Dozier, Asst. Ranking Member, Capital  
**Senate Ways & Means Committee**  
 311 J.A. Cherberg Building  
 P.O. Box 40466  
 Olympia, WA 98504-0466

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 Rep. Lisa Callan, Vice Chair  
 Rep. Mike Steele, Ranking Member  
 Rep. Peter Abbarno, Asst. Ranking Member  
 Rep. Stephanie McClintock, Asst. Ranking Member  
**House Capital Budget Committee**  
 John L. O'Brien Building  
 P.O. Box 40600  
 Olympia, WA 98504-0600

**RE: Support for \$30 Million Funding Request for Trust Land Transfer Priorities**

Dear Capital Budget Leaders:

The 135 undersigned local elected officials, small business owners, conservation, recreation and wildlife organizations write to offer our support for the Washington State Department of Natural Resource’s (DNR) trust land transfer (TLT) program and urge your funding of \$30 million in the capital budget for 8 TLT projects as recommended by DNR and approved by the Board of Natural Resources (BNR). We greatly appreciated your leadership over the last two years to revitalize the TLT program with the passage of HB 1460 in 2023 and we hope you will continue to support a strong conservation focus for state trust lands in this year’s capital budget.

As you may recall, DNR manages state trust lands to generate non-tax revenue for specific trust beneficiaries such as public schools, universities, and counties. TLT works by transferring economically underperforming and ecologically valuable state trust land to entities that can better manage it for conservation and recreation. Legislative funding is used to buy replacement revenue-generating land and ensures that trust beneficiaries do not lose any revenue from lands removed from the trust. DNR often uses TLT appropriations to purchase timberland at risk of conversion, keeping working forests in production.

With your previous support of HB 1460 and significant capital investments over the last two years, you’ve made it clear that trust land transfer and conservation of state lands is a priority. This year marks the first time that you’ll consider projects that have gone through the full process set up by HB 1460, with a new application, eligibility determination analysis, and priority ranking by a public advisory committee. Of the 8 projects put forth by DNR, 6 of them have Tribes as receiving agencies, marking the first time that Tribes had a dedicated pathway to be recipients of TLT parcels. This is a result of the recent revitalization bill. Tribes have demonstrated that they can be strong stewards of ecologically and culturally significant lands.

Each trust land transfer project received significant analysis from DNR to ensure that they are in the best interest of trust beneficiaries. The parcels under consideration are difficult to manage for revenue generation for numerous reasons, such as a lack of access, isolated geographic location, or limited harvestable timber due to the state’s Habitat Conservation Plan. Without TLT funding, the parcels remain in limbo – in the trust, where they do not produce meaningful financial returns to trust beneficiaries, but without the proper management to preserve their ecological values. Replacement land funding, a unique feature of trust land transfer, is critical to ensure ongoing, non-tax revenue to beneficiaries, like local governments and public schools.

Historically, the trust land transfer program was funded from the capital budget’s State Building Construction Account and that’s the source proposed by Governor Inslee in his budget. However, starting in 2023 and again in 2024, the legislature chose to tap the Natural Climate Solutions (NCS) account from the Climate Commitment Act for TLT funding. Projects funded in this biennium will be done so exclusively through capital budget funds per the Governor’s budget request.

The following projects were prioritized by the new advisory committee and approved by BNR.

Project Name	Recipient	County	LD	Size	Estimated Value
Beckler	Tulalip Tribes	King	12 <sup>th</sup>	676 acres	\$4 million
					An isolated forested and riparian parcel, with no revenue-generating potential. Will be managed for its complex fish and wildlife habitat.
Okanogan G	Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation	Okanogan	7 <sup>th</sup>	42 acres	\$450,000
					Part of a regional riparian enhancement project for Upper Columbia steelhead and lamprey. Deemed by DNR as not suitable for trust mgmt.
Tract C East	Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation	Yakima	14 <sup>th</sup>	2,965 acres	\$4.4 million
					Parcels are within exterior boundaries of the Yakama Reservation in a checkerboard pattern, so access is very limited to non-existent. Large meadow complexes and headwaters of the Klickitat River

Tract C North	Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation	Yakima	14 <sup>th</sup>	4,566 acres	\$6.8 million
		Parcels are within exterior boundaries of the Yakama Reservation in a checkerboard pattern, so access is very limited to non-existent. Large meadow complexes and headwaters of the Klickitat River			
Tract C South	Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation	Yakima	14 <sup>th</sup>	2,405 acres	\$3.7 million
		Parcels are within exterior boundaries of the Yakama Reservation in a checkerboard pattern, so access is very limited to non-existent. Large meadow complexes and headwaters of the Klickitat River			
Babcock Bench	WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife	Grant	13 <sup>th</sup>	1,071 acres	\$850,000
		Currently leased by WDFW. Priority shrub steppe habitat for birds of prey and bats. Would provide comprehensive land management.			
South Lake Ozette	Quileute Tribe	Clallam	24 <sup>th</sup>	372 acres	\$8.9 million
		Significant old growth forest protecting salmon, marbled murrelet and spotted owl habitat. Cedar trees suitable for making canoes are of high value to the Quileute Tribe and unavailable on their reservation.			
Middle Fork Snoqualmie	DNR Natural Areas Program	King	12 <sup>th</sup>	95 acres	\$900,000
		Already within an established natural area boundary, with a diverse vegetation mosaic of low- and mid-elevation forests.			

In addition to the above projects, 21 other projects passed DNR's best interest of the trust analysis, having met the criteria set forth in HB 1460. However, RCW 79.17.300 limits DNR to request no more than \$30 million in any given year, so only the above projects have been submitted to the legislature for your consideration, based on the initial scores and subsequent ranking from the public advisory committee. The 21 projects show the significant demand for TLT, with applications from cities, counties, a parks district, WDFW, and DNR for its Natural Areas program. These projects would preserve ecological jewels in rapidly urbanizing areas, permanently protect old growth forests, and give local residents more control over public lands in their neighborhoods.

We hope you will continue to support DNR's TLT program, especially in light of the 4 projects with Tribes as recipients. Each of these Tribes has shown interest in providing stewardship for these underperforming DNR trust lands and to protect the ecological values of these parcels.

#### **Why Trust Land Transfer? It's the answer.**

- TLT is a win-win-win for conservation, trust beneficiaries, working forests, outdoor recreation and more
- TLT gives the public a say in the future of public lands.
- TLT allows DNR work with local communities and Tribes to find solutions while staying true to its mandate to generate non-tax revenue for beneficiaries.
- TLT upgrades state assets and it is one of the few tools available to expand the size of state trusts

In short, TLT addresses many of the issues legislators care about: a healthy economy, strong rural communities, outdoor recreation, clean water, wildlife and salmon habitat, working forests and more.

Please include \$30 million in your capital budget for these 8 TLT projects. If you have questions, please contact DNR or Jim Freeburg at 206-245-0059 or [jifreeburg@yahoo.com](mailto:jifreeburg@yahoo.com). We appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Heidi Eisenhour  
Commissioner, District 2  
Jefferson County Board of Commissioners

Rod Dembowski  
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Councilmember, District 4  
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Doubleclick Productions (Port Townsend)

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Halcyon Brewing Company

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Bottleworks

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CC: WA Public Lands Commissioner Dave Upthegrove  
WA Governor Bob Ferguson