

**WHATCOM COUNTY**  
Planning & Development Services  
5280 Northwest Drive  
Bellingham, WA 98226-9097  
360-778-5900, TTY 800-833-6384  
360-778-5901 Fax



**Mark Personius, AICP**  
Director

# **Forestry Advisory Committee** **Special Meeting**

## **LOCATION**

**Hybrid Meeting: Zoom (details below) and  
Northwest Annex Conference Room  
Whatcom County Planning and Development Services  
5280 Northwest Drive, Bellingham, WA 98226**

**Date: September 20, 2024**

**Time: 2:30 – 3:30 P.M. Pacific Time PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)**

Whatcom County PDS is inviting you to a scheduled in person or Zoom meeting.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87106867064?pwd=b0NLTIZnTTZqOHBGQk1mY2FQbWFKQT09>

Meeting ID: 871 0686 7064

Passcode: 722152

One tap mobile

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## **Forestry Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda**

September 20, 2024

2:30 – 3:30 P.M.

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1. Roll call/Determination of Quorum
2. Review/Approval of the Agenda
3. Open Public Session
4. New Business
5. Old Business
  - Discussion of the Little Lilly State Lands Timber sale
    - **ACTION ITEM:** Discuss and consider recommendation to County Council. Draft letter provided by the Chair (attached).
6. Adjournment

### Attachments:

- Little Lily Brief Sheet
- letter from the MBSD to the County Council
- Draft letter from FAC to County Council

*Individuals who require special assistance to participate in the meetings are asked to contact us at least 96 hours in advance. The staff contact at Whatcom County Planning and Development Services is Cliff Strong, [cstrong@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:cstrong@co.whatcom.wa.us), 360-778-5942.*



**HILARY S. FRANZ**  
COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC LANDS

# LITTLE LILLY TIMBER SALE

Region: **Northwest**

County: **Whatcom**

District: **Baker**

Unit: **Hamilton**

Planned BNR meeting: **September 2024**

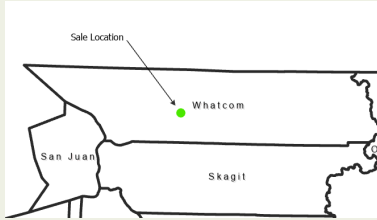
Planned auction date: **October 30, 2024**

FPA Classification: **III**

Status of timber sale: FPA Approved

## Product Sales and Leasing Division

### General Location



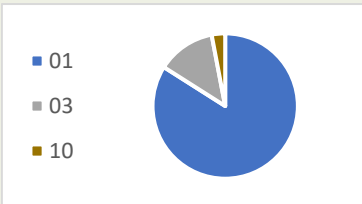
### Sale Specifics

HCP Planning Unit: **North Puget Planning Unit**

Management Block: **Van Zandt Dike**

Sale Type: **Lump Sum**  
Volume: **4,005 MBF**

### Trust Distribution



### Conservation Facts

Original planned area: **140 ac**

Final harvest area: **89.2 ac**

Long-term forest cover acres:

**50.8 ac**

Percent contributed to Long-term forest cover: **36%**

### Notable Protected Features

Streams, Wetlands, Legacy Trees, FP rule-identified landforms, MM Occupied Site, Old Growth Forest, Eagle Roost Site

### Certifications

Sustainable Forestry Initiative

## HARVEST UNIT DETAILS

Unit	Acres	Harvest Type	Stand Origin	Stand Dev. Stage
1	2.9	VRH	Post 1950 70 years old	Maturation I
2	24.1	VRH	Post 1910 109 years old	Maturation I
3	13.9	VRH	Post 1910 109 years old	Maturation I
4	45.2	VRH	Post 1850 165 years old	Maturation I
ROW	3.1	ROW	Combination of stands listed above	Biomass Accumulation/Stem Exclusion

## DESCRIPTION OF SALE

Unit 1: Species composition consists almost entirely of commercially thinned Douglas-fir dominating the overstory with an abundance of advanced hemlock regeneration in the understory. The most common tree DBH range is 16 – 22 inches. There are no scattered remnants within the unit. Retention tree selection was prioritized around wet areas with western red cedar inclusions. All trees designated for retention have been marked. There are multiple forested wetlands and type 4 streams that received a 100-foot no-harvest buffer. The western boundary of the unit is immediately adjacent to a marbled murrelet occupied site buffer.

It is difficult to assign a Van Pelt score to the stand with it being a previously thinned Douglas fir stand. It could be in the maturation 1 phase but was attained at an early age (stand is approximately 70 years old) due to its accelerated development from a commercial thinning treatment occurring approximately 20 years ago. Stand types adjacent to this unit consist of young Douglas-fir ranging from 10-25 years old.

Units 2 and 3: Species composition consists primarily of Douglas-fir dominating the overstory. The understory is comprised of moderate to



Unit 1 – Branch knots present as the dominant Douglas-fir trees are still self-pruning. Trees are very spaced out with thick hemlock regeneration in understory from the thinning treatment.



Unit 2 – Char superimposed over a springboard notch on high cut stump with stand of 100–110 year-old trees in background.



Unit 3 – A good depiction of the bole zone represented throughout the stand.

sparse advanced hemlock regeneration. The average tree DBH range is 18 – 24 inches. There are a few scattered remnants within the unit. Retention tree selection was prioritized to retain all remnants, large structurally unique trees, wet areas, and western red cedar inclusions. All trees designated for retention have been marked for retention. There are multiple adjacent type 4 streams that received a 100-foot no-harvest buffer. Portions of the sale boundary in both units are immediately adjacent to a marbled murrelet occupied site buffer. Also, an unverified bald eagle roost site is located near Unit 3.

Using the Van Pelt key, the stand keyed out to Maturation 1 with it having a very distinct bole zone throughout. According to field data, the oldest trees within the stand are approximately 109 years old. Stand types adjacent to these units consist of young Douglas-fir ranging from 10-25 years old, mature stands of similar age and structure to those within these units, and a newly identified old growth stand immediately adjacent Unit 2.

Unit 4: Species composition consists of Douglas-fir and western hemlock dominating the overstory, while there is little to no advanced regeneration in the understory. DBH's in this stand range widely from 10 to 18 inches on the ridges/thinner soils and 18 to 45 inches in the lower elevations. There are several scattered remnants within the unit. Retention tree selection was prioritized to retain all remnants, other larger structurally unique trees, wet areas and western red cedar inclusions. All trees over 60" dbh have been marked for retention and designated for retention in the timber sale contract. There are multiple adjacent type 4 streams that received a 100-foot no-harvest buffer. There is little to no coarse woody debris on the forest floor.

According to the Van Pelt key, this stand is still in the Maturation 1 phase despite its older age of approximately 165 years, according to field data. The poorer site conditions of this stand have slowed stand development, preventing it from attaining the structural complexity you would normally see from other stands of this age with better site conditions. Stand types adjacent to these units consist of young Douglas-fir ranging from 10-25 years old, mature stands of similar age and structure to those within these units, and a newly delineated old growth stand immediately adjacent Unit 2.

### OLD GROWTH ASSESSMENT/CONSERVATION AREAS

Three separate old growth assessments were completed due to three separate WOGHI hits adjacent to Units 2 and 3, and within Unit 4. These were classified as moderate, high, and moderate likelihood respectively.

**Unit 2 Adjacent Assessment:** The protocol assessment area showed indicators and stand characteristics of late Maturation 1 phase of stand development and can be briefly described as a mature Douglas-fir dominated stand with the occasional scattered remnant. The dominant Douglas-fir has tight, moderately furrowed bark with no char and little to no epicormic branching in the crown. The remnants had loose deeply furrowed bark with char and gnarly epicormic branching in the crown. Small canopy gaps allowed for a presence of understory shade tolerant species. Patches of younger trees with cut stumps suggested that selective logging had occurred within the stand, probably sometime in the early to mid-1900's. Initial coring efforts yielded approximate stand ages equating to 10-15 years of an 1850 origin date and warranted a secondary, more intensive tree coring grid. Based on the supplemental tree coring efforts, ring counts determined that the stand had originated in, or just prior to 1850. **Unit 2 boundaries were adjusted to remove this stand from the sale entirely.**



Unit 4 – A good example of the furrowed yet tight bark characteristics from the co-dominant Douglas firs within the stand. Also note the scant understory.



Unit 4 – A look at the crowns of the larger co-dominant Douglas-fir within the stand. Note the absence of epicormic branching.



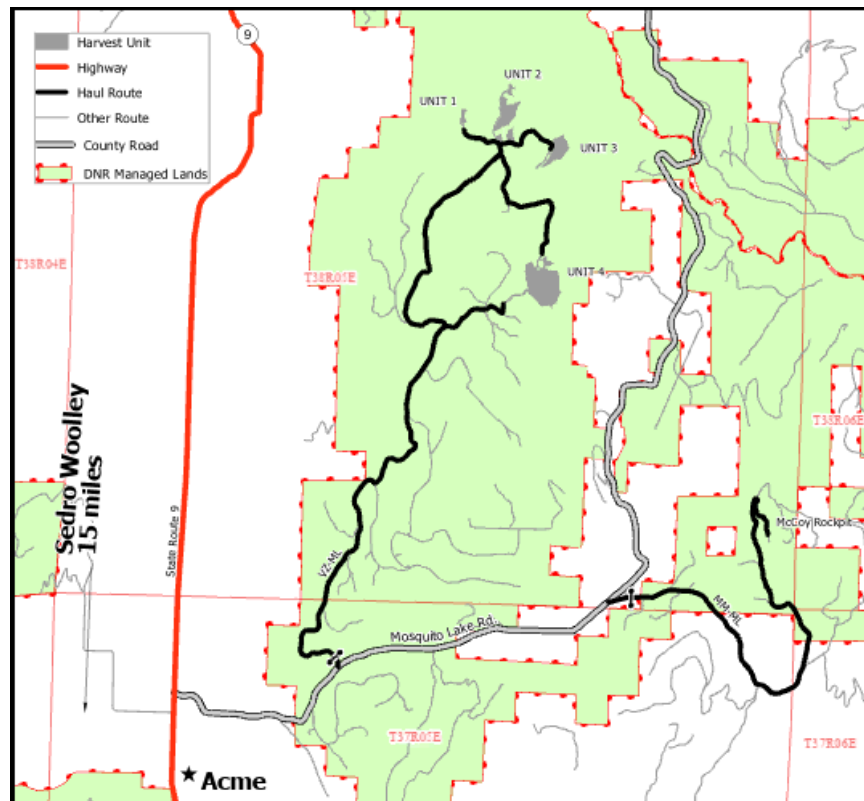
Unit 4 – An old remnant Douglas-fir marked for retention within a stand of approximately 150-165 year old trees.

**The stand type within Unit 2 is much younger and is described above.**

**Unit 3 Adjacent Assessment:** The protocol assessment area showed indicators and stand characteristics of early Maturation 1 phase of stand development and can also be briefly described as a mature Douglas-fir dominated stand with the occasional scattered remnant. The dominant Douglas-fir has tight, moderately furrowed bark with no char no epicormic branching in the crown, and even knots present further down in the bole zone. The remnants were obvious, having loose deeply furrowed bark with char and gnarly epicormic branching in the crown. Initial coring efforts yielded approximate stand ages of 100-109 years old, making any secondary coring efforts unnecessary. **This stand is included in portions of Unit 3. A small cluster of remnants were concentrated near and within an adjacent type 4 stream buffer but were not distributed wide enough to make a 5-acre polygon. All remnants within the sale area are marked for retention as described above.**

**Unit 4 Assessment:** This assessment area underwent a similar process to the assessment done adjacent to Unit 2 because the stands had similar dominant tree characteristics. The main differences were that the stand in Unit 4 had much less of an understory component resulting in a lack of structural complexity, as well as slightly lower ring counts following the secondary coring grid. The lack of structure could be attributed to the poorer site conditions and lack of human or natural disturbance, which was evident in Unit 2. **With the lack of structure and the highest ring count equating to an origin date of 1858, the stand was included in the proposed harvest boundary for Unit 4.**

## LANDSCAPE VIEW



**Board of Directors**

Jason Bloodgood  
 Danielle Gray  
 Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt  
 Edward Fox  
 Brenna Reaugh

**District Administration**

**Superintendent**

Philip Brockman  
 360.383.2000

**Director of HR and Operations**

Nick Perigo  
 360.617.4643

**Director of Special Programs**

Ian Linterman  
 360.383.2012

**Director of Finance**

Brian Fraser  
 360.617.4604

**Director of Curriculum and Instruction**

Bridget Rossman  
 360.383.2013

**MOUNT BAKER SCHOOL DISTRICT**

September 12, 2024

Whatcom County Council  
 311 Grand Avenue, Suite 105  
 Bellingham, WA 98225-4038

Dear Chair Buchanan and Council Members,

State Forest timber revenue is very important to Mount Baker. We are the largest local recipient of State Forest revenue in Whatcom County.

From 2015 to 2022 we averaged about \$1.2 million per year in timber revenue. Due to pauses, delays, and cancellations of our timber sales, our revenue has come almost to a screeching halt. Last year we received only \$107,000, less than 10% of our average amount.

**Mount Baker School District State Forest Revenue 2015 - 2023**

School Year	General Fund	Capital Projects Fund	Total
2022-23	\$80,784	\$26,408	\$107,192
2021-22	\$589,202	\$205,410	\$794,612
2020-21	\$726,299	\$272,040	\$998,339
2019-20	\$1,283,444	\$617,399	\$1,900,843
2018-19	\$236,585	\$140,103	\$376,688
2017-18	\$1,528,217	\$321,325	\$1,849,542
2016-17	\$736,267	\$168,974	\$905,241
2015-16	\$1,296,734	\$288,626	\$1,585,360
Total	\$6,477,532	\$2,040,285	\$8,517,817

Mount Baker is currently operating under binding conditions from OSPI, because our district budget is in deficit. The drop in State Forest revenue is a major cause of our deficit. We have reduced 23 teachers and support staff and increased our class sizes. We have nothing left to



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cut without further harm to our students. Delays in our timber sales have real consequences for our students.


The DNR's harvest plan for this year would bring about \$700,000 to Mount Baker. We will only realize that revenue if the timber sales are not delayed. We understand that Whatcom County Council has been asked to request a delay for Little Lilly timber sale. Little Lilly has been extensively reviewed by DNR staff and meets all the requirements for auction. Little Lilly is located in the portion of the State Forest that is designated for revenue generation through timber sales. Little Lilly timber sale will bring Mount Baker almost \$300,000. Further delay will harm Mount Baker students. It is important to us that Little Lilly and the remainder of the DNR's planned sales not be subject to further delays.

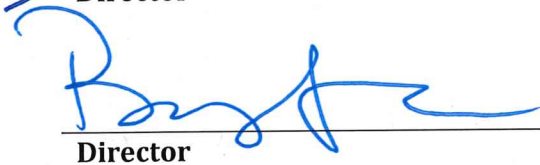
Sincerely,

  
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Director

  
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Director

  
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ATTEST  
Nicholas Perigo, Secretary

Cc: Satpal Sidhu, Whatcom County Executive  
Hilary Franz, Commissioner of Public Lands  
Board of Natural Resources  
Jay Guthrie, NW Region Manager, DNR  
Laurie Bergvall, Assistant Region Manager, DNR  
Chris Hankey, Baker District Manager, DNR  
John Gold, Chair, Whatcom County Forestry Advisory Committee

Whatcom County Forestry Advisory Committee  
5280 Northwest Drive  
Bellingham, WA 98226

September XXX, 2024

Whatcom County Council  
311 Grand Avenue, Suite 105  
Bellingham, WA 98225

Whatcom County Executive's Office  
311 Grand Avenue, Suite 108  
Bellingham, WA 98225

**RE: proposed WDNR timber sale "Little Lilly"**

Dear Chair Buchanan, Councilmembers, and Executive Sidhu:

The Whatcom Forestry Advisory Committee (FAC) offers this memorandum regarding the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) "Little Lilly" timber sale that is being considered for approval by the Board of Natural Resources on October 1<sup>st</sup>. The sale is located on the Van Zandt Dike and comprises 89 acres of variable retention harvesting of 4 MMBF of merchantable timber. Based on the minimum bid DNR has established, Whatcom County and other beneficiaries would receive \$ 1.34 million of the sale proceeds. Note that the bids at the most recent DNR auction averaged 155 % of minimum so this figure is likely conservative. During project planning and permit review, some community members have raised concerns about whether environmental values have been adequately considered and protected.

Over the past few years Council has requested that DNR increase engagement with the County regarding its proposed projects. To that end, Chris Hankey, DNR Baker District Manager, appeared before the FAC September 3 to review the Little Lilly proposal and field questions. Mr. Hankey also had appeared before FAC May 7 to preview all DNR "Planned Timber Sales in Whatcom County for Fiscal Year 2025." Enclosed with this memorandum is a fact sheet prepared by DNR giving a summary of Little Lilly planning considerations.

FAC concludes the following:

- **Little Lilly protects old growth forests.** Of the 140 acres originally considered for harvest, 51 acres are protected in buffers, including all areas field verified to constitute contiguous areas of old growth under DNRs written policies. Individual remnant old growth trees within the sale boundary are marked for retention to maintain structural diversity following harvest. In addition, regardless of age, all trees greater than 60 inch diameter which do not pose a safety hazard will remain unharvested.
- **Little Lilly protects marbled murrelets.** The sale area has been delineated to exclude field-verified nesting habitat for this threatened seabird and a buffer to mitigate for windthrow, microclimate effects, and predation has been applied. During the development of DNRs 2019 Long Term Conservation Strategy for Marbled Murrelet (a landscape level effort approved by US Fish & Wildlife Service and Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife and evaluated under an Environmental Impact Statement) the Little Lilly planning area was determined to be non-critical

for the long term viability of the species.

- **Little Lilly is not a rare or imperiled forest type.** Although a fraction of the timber sale area contains trees originating between 1858 and 1915, the ecologically significant forests in these age classes have been identified and are already protected from harvest. Of the DNR managed lands throughout western Washington, 93 % of pre-1900 and 79 % of pre-1945 forests are protected from harvest. Of the approximately one million forested acres across all ownerships in Whatcom County, 75 % are restricted from timber harvest.
- **Little Lilly protects environmental values.** The proposal was evaluated by a full suite of agencies and organizations (including Washington Department of Ecology, Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, Lummi Nation Natural Resources, and Nooksack Indian Tribe Natural Resources) for potential adverse effects to water quality, endangered species, biodiversity, and other elements of the environment. Following review under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), a determination of non-significance was issued.
- **Little Lilly is appropriate from a carbon management perspective.** Although the project area undoubtedly has a large pool of stored carbon, retaining these acres uncut for the next 100 years will result in lower sequestered carbon than if harvested, replanted, and harvested again. In contrast, preserving such areas unharvested contradicts the recommendation of the United Nations COP28 UAE conference:

*Recognizing that wood from sustainably managed forests provides climate solutions within the construction sector...advancing policies and approaches that support low carbon construction and increase the use of wood from sustainably managed forests...will result in reduced GHG emissions and an increase in stored carbon.*

In the opinion of this Committee, DNR has carefully considered and mitigated for any adverse environmental effects. The Committee recommends that you formally and publicly support the Little Lilly timber sale. As designed, the proposed harvest aligns with the goals outlined in the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan by "... providing for and encouraging the long-term productivity, commercial management and sustained use of forest resources ... while maintaining water quality and soil productivity." Supporting the "Little Lilly" timber sale is an opportunity to maintain the integrity of this policy and support carbon-positive forest management.

Thank you for your consideration. The Committee would be willing to discuss these points with you, or answer any questions you may have at the September 24<sup>th</sup> Council meeting or at another time of your choosing.

Respectfully,

John Gold, Chair

Acting on resolution of the Whatcom County Forestry Advisory Committee, September 20, 2024: XXX yea, XXX oppose, XXX abstentions