

**KING COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND PARKS
WATER AND LAND RESOURCES DIVISION**

**Report to the King County Hearing Examiner for Property
Enrollment in the Public Benefit Rating System (PBRS)**

January 23, 2020 – Public Hearing

APPLICANTS: Jennifer and Erik Johnson

File No. E19CT014

A. GENERAL INFORMATION:

1. Owners: Jennifer and Erik Johnson
14025 212th Avenue SE
Issaquah, WA 98027
2. Property location: 21207 SE May Valley Road
Issaquah, WA 98027
3. Zoning: RA5
4. STR: SW-16-23-06
5. PBRS categories requested by landowner and *suggested by program staff*:

Open space resources

- *Farm and agricultural conservation land
- ***Forest stewardship land*
- *Historic landmark or archaeological site: eligible site
- *Rural open space
- *Scenic resource, viewpoint or view corridor
- Significant plant or ecological site
- **Significant wildlife and salmonid habitat*
- *Special animal site
- Surface water quality buffer
- Urban open space
- **Watershed protection area*

Bonus categories

- **Resource restoration
- Public access – none or members only
- Easement and access

NOTE: *Staff recommends credit be awarded for these PBRs categories. **Award of one of these categories is also possible, but will be dependent upon specific category requirements being met (see resource category discussion under Section E beginning on page 5).

6. Parcel:	162306-9010	162306-9085	162306-9011	162306-9086
Total acreage:	20.00	20.00	20.04	20.04
Requested PBRs:	14.65	19.85	20.00	20.00
Home site/excluded area:	3.82	0.10	0.00	0.00
Recommended PBRs:	16.18	19.90	20.04	20.04

NOTE: The attached map (2017 aerial photo) outlines in yellow the parcel boundaries and in blue the areas proposed to be *excluded* from PBRs. The portion recommended for enrollment in PBRs (76.16 acres) is the entire property (80.08 acres) less the excluded areas as measured (3.92 acres). In the event the Assessor’s official parcel size is revised, PBRs acreage should be administratively adjusted to reflect that change.

B. FACTS:

1. Zoning in the vicinity: Properties in the vicinity are zoned RA5 and RA10.
2. Development of the subject property and resource characteristics of open space area: The property contains a single-family residence, vegetable garden, driveway, landscaping, pasture, wells and plans for future barn on parcel -9010. The open space portion of the property consists of pasture, historic barn, sheds and lean-tos, as well as areas of mixed deciduous and coniferous trees and native shrubs and plants. The property also contains portions of two salmon bearing streams, McDonald Creek and its tributary.
3. Site use: The property is used as a residence and farm.
4. Access: The property is accessed from SE May Valley Road.
5. Appraised value for 2018 (Based on Assessor’s information dated 1/10/20):

<u>Parcel #162306-9010</u>	<u>Land</u>	<u>Improvements</u>	<u>Total</u>
Assessed value	\$473,000.00	\$188,000.00	\$661,000.00
Tax applied	\$5,228.10	\$2,077.98	\$7,306.08
<u>Parcel #162306-9085</u>	<u>Land</u>	<u>Improvements</u>	<u>Total</u>
Assessed value	\$445,000.00	\$0.00	\$445,000.00
Tax applied	\$4,918.62	\$0.00	\$4,918.62

<u>Parcel #162306-9011</u>	<u>Land</u>	<u>Improvements</u>	<u>Total</u>
Assessed value	\$488,000.00	\$0.00	\$551,000.00
Tax applied	\$5,393.90	\$0.00	\$5,393.90
<u>Parcel #162306-9086</u>	<u>Land</u>	<u>Improvements</u>	<u>Total</u>
Assessed value	\$488,000.00	\$0.00	\$551,000.00
Tax applied	\$5,393.90	\$0.00	\$5,393.90

NOTE: Participation in PBRs reduces the **appraised land value** for the **portion** of the property enrolled resulting in a lower taxable value.

C. REQUIREMENTS SPECIFIED BY KING COUNTY CODE (KCC):

KCC 20.36.010 Purpose and intent.

It is in the best interest of the county to maintain, preserve, conserve and otherwise continue in existence adequate open space lands for the production of food, fiber and forest crops, and to assure the use and enjoyment of natural resources and scenic beauty for the economic and social well-being of the county and its citizens.

It is the intent of this chapter to implement RCW Chapter 84.34, as amended, by establishing procedures, rules and fees for the consideration of applications for public benefit rating system assessed valuation on "open space land" and for current use assessment on "farm and agricultural land" and "timber land" as those lands are defined in RCW 84.34.020. The provisions of RCW chapter 84.34, and the regulations adopted thereunder shall govern the matters not expressly covered in this chapter.

KCC 20.36.100 Public benefit rating system for open space land – definitions and eligibility.

- A. To be eligible for open space classification under the public benefit rating system, property must contain one or more qualifying open space resources and have at least five points as determined under this section. The department will review each application and recommend award of credit for current use of property that is the subject of the application. In making such recommendation, the department will utilize the point system described in section B. and C. below.
- B. The following open space resources are each eligible for the points indicated:
 - 1. Public recreation area – five points
 - 2. Aquifer protection area – five points
 - 3. Buffer to public or current use classified land – three points
 - 4. Equestrian-pedestrian-bicycle trail linkage – thirty-five points
 - 5. Active trail linkage – fifteen or twenty-five points
 - 6. Farm and agricultural conservation land – five points
 - 7. Forest stewardship land – five points

8. Historic landmark or archaeological site: buffer to a designated site – three points
9. Historic landmark or archaeological site: designated site – five points
10. Historic landmark or archaeological site: eligible site – three points
11. Rural open space – five points
12. Rural stewardship land – five points
13. Scenic resource, viewpoint, or view corridor – five points
14. Significant plant or ecological site – five points
15. Significant wildlife or salmonid habitat – five points
16. Special animal site – three points
17. Surface water quality buffer – five points
18. Urban open space – five points
19. Watershed protection area – five points

C. Property qualifying for an open space category in subsection B. of this section may receive credit for additional points as follows:

1. Resource restoration - five points
2. Additional surface water quality buffer - three or five points
3. Contiguous parcels under separate ownership - two points
4. Conservation easement of historic easement – fifteen points
5. Public access - points dependent on level of access
 - a. Unlimited public access - five points
 - b. Limited public access - sensitive areas - five points
 - c. Environmental education access – three points
 - d. Seasonal limited public access - three points
 - e. None or members only – zero points
6. Easement and access – thirty-five points

D. 2016 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN POLICIES AND TEXT:

E-101 In addition to its regulatory authority, King County should use incentives to protect and restore the natural environment whenever practicable. Incentives shall be monitored and periodically reviewed to determine their effectiveness in terms of protecting natural resources.

NOTE: Monitoring of participating lands is the responsibility of both department PBRS staff and the landowner. This issue is addressed in the Resource Information document (page 4) and detailed below in Recommendation #B13.

E-112a The protection of lands where development would pose hazards to health, property, important ecological functions or environmental quality shall be achieved through acquisition, enhancement, incentive programs and appropriate regulations. The following critical areas are particularly susceptible and shall be protected in King County:

- a. Floodways of 100-year floodplains;

- b. Slopes with a grade of 40% or more or landslide hazards that cannot be mitigated;
- c. Wetlands and their protective buffers;
- d. Aquatic areas, including streams, lakes, marine shorelines and their protective buffers;
- e. Channel migration hazard areas;
- f. Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas;
- g. Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas; and
- h. Volcanic hazard areas.

E-421 Terrestrial and aquatic habitats should be conserved and enhanced to protect and improve conditions for fish and wildlife.

NOTE: PBRS is an incentive program provided to encourage voluntary protection of open space resources and maintain high quality resource lands.

E-429 King County should provide incentives for private landowners who are seeking to remove invasive plants and noxious weeds and replace them with native plants, such as providing technical assistance or access to appropriate native plants.

NOTE: Participation in PBRS requires landowners address invasive plant and noxious weed control and removal within enrolled portions of a property. Replacement with native vegetation is also encouraged via the implementation of approved forest stewardship, rural stewardship or resource restoration plans.

E-443 King County should promote voluntary wildlife habitat enhancement projects by private individuals and businesses through educational, active stewardship, and incentive programs.

E-476 King County should identify upland areas of native vegetation that connect wetlands to upland habitats and that connect upland habitats to each other. The county should seek protection of these areas through acquisition, stewardship plans, and incentive programs such as the Public Benefit Rating System and the Transfer of Development Rights Program.

E-504 King County should protect native plant communities by encouraging management and control of nonnative invasive plants, including aquatic plants. Environmentally sound methods of vegetation control should be used to control noxious weeds.

NOTE: Lands participating in PBRS provide valuable resource protection and promote the preservation or enhancement of native vegetation. Addressing nonnative vegetation (invasive plant species), through control and eradication is a PBRS requirement.

E-449 King County shall promote retention of forest cover and significant trees using a mix of regulations, incentives, and technical assistance.

R-605 Forestry and agriculture best management practices are encouraged because of their multiple benefits, including natural resource preservation and protection.

NOTE: The implementation of an approved forest stewardship, farm management or rural stewardship plan benefits natural resources, such as wildlife habitat, stream buffers and groundwater protection, as well as fosters the preservation of sustainable resources.

E. PBRs CATEGORIES REQUESTED and DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION:

Open space resources.

- Farm and agricultural conservation land
The property contains more than forty five acres of traditional farmland that is being managed according to an approved King Conservation District farm management plan. Credit for this category is recommended.
- Forest stewardship land
Although credit for this category was not requested, the property contains more than thirty acres of contiguous forest. The owner may be interested in developing a forest stewardship plan to improve on the health and diversity of the property. At this time, credit for this category cannot be recommended because a plan has not been provided. However, if a forest stewardship plan is **provided by December 1, 2020, and approved by the department on or before December 31, 2020**, then credit for this category should be awarded administratively. Award of this category may allow forestry activities to occur in the participating open space area. It is the landowner's responsibility to apply for and receive the necessary approvals from the applicable state and local governmental agencies for forestry activities that require a permit or approval, such as clearing and grading. Credit for this category cannot overlap with the resource restoration category.
- Historic landmark or archaeological site: eligible site
The barn on parcel -9010 is recognized by the King County Historic Preservation Program staff as an eligible landmark site (old J.B. Speerstra Farmstead). Credit for this category is recommended.
- Rural open space
The property is in the rural area and contains more than thirty acres of natively vegetated contiguous open space, which is more than the category's required ten acre minimum. Credit for this category is recommended.
- Scenic resource, viewpoint or view corridor
In order to be eligible for this category, a property must be either a) a scenic natural resource significant to the character of the county, b) provide a viewpoint accessible to the public or c) contribute to a recognized county view corridor. In order to be eligible for the scenic resource the property must be significant to the identity of the local area, must be of sufficient size, visible from public rights of way and enrolling at least 10 acres. The

property consists of greater than thirty acres of native forest, contains an eligible historic landmark, is visible from May Valley road, and contributes to the aesthetic character of the local area. Credit as a scenic resource is recommended.

- Significant plant or ecological site

A portion of the property is natively vegetated. However, qualification for this category requires the existence of a rare plant species or ecosystem identified by the Washington Department of Natural Resources' Natural Heritage Program, existence of which must be confirmed by an expert. A further study by the owners is not expected. Credit for this category cannot be recommended.

- Significant wildlife and salmonid habitat

The property contains habitat for numerous wildlife species, including foraging and nesting habitat for the pileated woodpecker, which is listed as a state candidate species of concern by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. During a site visit to the property PBRS staff saw evidence of pileated woodpecker activity on the property. Award of this category is consistent with habitat as defined by KCC 20.36.100, section B.15.a (1). Credit for this category is recommended.

- Special animal site

Award of credit for this category requires the property to include or be adjacent to a portion of the county's designated wildlife habitat network or be identified as an urban natural area by the State's priority habitat and species project. Although the county's recognized wildlife habitat network is identified to be on the property, it is located on the farmed portion of the property which is not natively vegetated. However, the State's priority habitat coverage is located on the entire property and over thirty acres are natively vegetated (NOTE: the State urban natural areas designations are now known as biodiversity areas and corridors). Credit for this category is recommended.

- Surface water quality buffer

There are two Type F creeks on this property. McDonald Creek flows west to east across the southern third of parcels -9010 and -9085. A tributary to McDonald Creek flows northeasterly on -9011 and crosses under a culvert near the western property line of -9086 where it bisects the northwest corner of -9086 and continues until it intersects with McDonald Creek. The buffer width required on a Type F creek is 165 feet. In order to be eligible for this category, the owner must provide a buffer of native vegetation of at least fifty percent greater than required (247.50 feet). Presently there is not a buffer of native vegetation on either creek therefore credit for this category cannot be recommended. However, if the landowners update their farm management plan, the buffer width required for this creek may be reduced to 25 feet. If the required buffer is reduced to 25 feet then owners will have to provide an additional fifty percent, or 37.5 feet in this case. If the owners complete an update to their farm management plan that reduces the required minimum buffer to 25 feet and they plant a buffer of at least 37.5 ft on average on either creek, then credit for this category can be awarded administratively.

- Urban open space

In order to be eligible for this category, the property must be located within the boundaries of a city or within the urban growth area, the property is located in neither. Credit for this category is not recommended.

- Watershed protection area
In order to be eligible for this category, the enrolling area must be contiguous, consist of additional native forest cover beyond that required and be at least 65% of the property acreage. For this property, at least 52.05 contiguous forested acres are required to participate for credit to be awarded. The landowners do plan to enroll 76.16 acres of their property, but 45.18 acres are maintained farmland. Credit for this category cannot be recommended.

Bonus categories

- Resource restoration
The landowners are working with King County on an Agricultural Drainage Assistance Project (ADAP) on McDonald Creek. Once the dredging is complete, the landowners are required to plant two rows of native vegetation. Due to this work being required to participate in that program, credit for the category is not recommended because the landowners aren't planning to plant beyond the ADAP requirements. However, if the landowners decide not to pursue the forest stewardship category and they instead submit an approved resource restoration plan by **December 31, 2020** and the plantings are sufficiently beyond what is required to PBRS staff then credit for this category could be awarded administratively. Award of this category may allow restoration activities to occur in the participating open space area. It is the landowner's responsibility to apply for and receive the necessary approvals from the applicable state and local governmental agencies for activities that may require a permit or approval, such as clearing and grading. It should be noted that this planting activity must be completed within a three-year period. Credit for this category cannot overlap with the forest stewardship land category.
- Public access: none or members only
The landowners do not currently or plan to allow public access on their property.
- Easement and access
In order to be eligible for this category the property needs at least one qualifying open space resource, unlimited public access or limited public access due to resource sensitivity, and a conservation easement or historic preservation easement. Although the owners qualify for at least one open space resource, they do not allow either public access requirements nor do they have a conservation easement or historic preservation easement. Credit for this category is not recommended.

NOTE: It is important to note that enrollment in the PBRS program requires the control and removal of invasive plant species. This issue is addressed in the Resource Information document (page 3) and below in Recommendation #B7.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. CONCLUSIONS:

1. Approval of the subject request would be consistent with the specific purpose and intent of KCC 20.36.010.
2. Approval of the subject request would be consistent with policy E-101 of the King County Comprehensive Plan.
3. Of the points recommended, the subject request meets the mandatory criteria of KCC 20.36.100 as indicated:

Open space resources

• Farm and agricultural conservation land	5
• Forest stewardship land	*
• Historic landmark or archaeological site: eligible site	3
• Rural open space	5
• Scenic resource, viewpoint or view corridor	5
• Significant plant or ecological site	0
• Significant wildlife and salmonid habitat	5
• Special animal site	3
• Surface water quality buffer	**
• Urban open space	0
• Watershed protection area	0

Bonus categories

• Resource restoration	*
• Public access – none or members only	0
• Easement and access	0

TOTAL 26 points

NOTE: *Credit can only be awarded for one of these categories. If credit is awarded for either the forest stewardship land category or the resource restoration category, the point total would further increase to 31 and the reduction in land assessed value for the portion enrolled would remain at 80%. An approved forest stewardship plan may provide flexibility to allow forestry activities to occur in the participating open space area.

**Additionally, if either a forest plan or restoration plan is submitted detailing native buffers plantings along either creek that are at least 37.50 feet in width then the point total would further increase to 36. The reduction in land assessed value for the portion enrolled would increase to 90%.

PUBLIC BENEFIT RATING

For the purpose of taxation, 26 points result in 20% of assessed value and a 80% reduction in taxable value for the portion of land enrolled.

B. RECOMMENDATION:

APPROVE the request for current use taxation "Open space" classification with a Public Benefit Rating of 26 points, subject to the following requirements:

**Requirements for Property Enrolled in the
Public Benefit Rating System Current Use Taxation Program**

1. Compliance with these requirements is necessary to continue to receive the tax benefits from the King County Public Benefit Rating System (PBRS) current use taxation program for the property enrolled in the program (Property). Failure to abide by these requirements can result in removal of current use designation and subject the property owner (Owner) to the penalty, tax, and interest provisions of RCW 84.34 and assessment at true and fair value. The King County Department of Assessments (DoA) and the Water and Land Resources Division, Director's Office, Agriculture, Forestry and Incentives Unit (AFI) or its successor may re-evaluate the Property to determine whether removal of the open space designation is appropriate. Removal shall follow the process in RCW 84.34.108.
2. Revisions to these requirements may only occur upon mutual written approval of the Owner and granting authority. These conditions shall apply so long as the Property retains its open space designation. If a conservation easement acceptable to and approved by King County is granted by the Owner or the Owner's successors in interest to the Department of Natural Resources and Parks, King County or a grantee approved by King County, these requirements may be superseded by the terms of such easement, upon written approval by King County.
3. The open space classification for this Property will continue so long as it meets the open space purposes for which it was initially approved. Classification as open space will be removed upon a determination by King County that the Property no longer meets the open space purposes for which it was initially approved. A change in circumstances which diminishes the extent of public benefit from that approved by the King County Council in the open space taxation agreement will be cause for removal of the current use assessment classification. It is the Owner's responsibility to notify the DoA and the AFI Unit or its successor of a change in circumstance with regard to the Property.
4. When a portion of the open space Property is withdrawn or removed from the program, the AFI Unit or its successor and the DoA shall re-evaluate the remaining Property to determine whether it may continue to qualify under the program. If the remaining

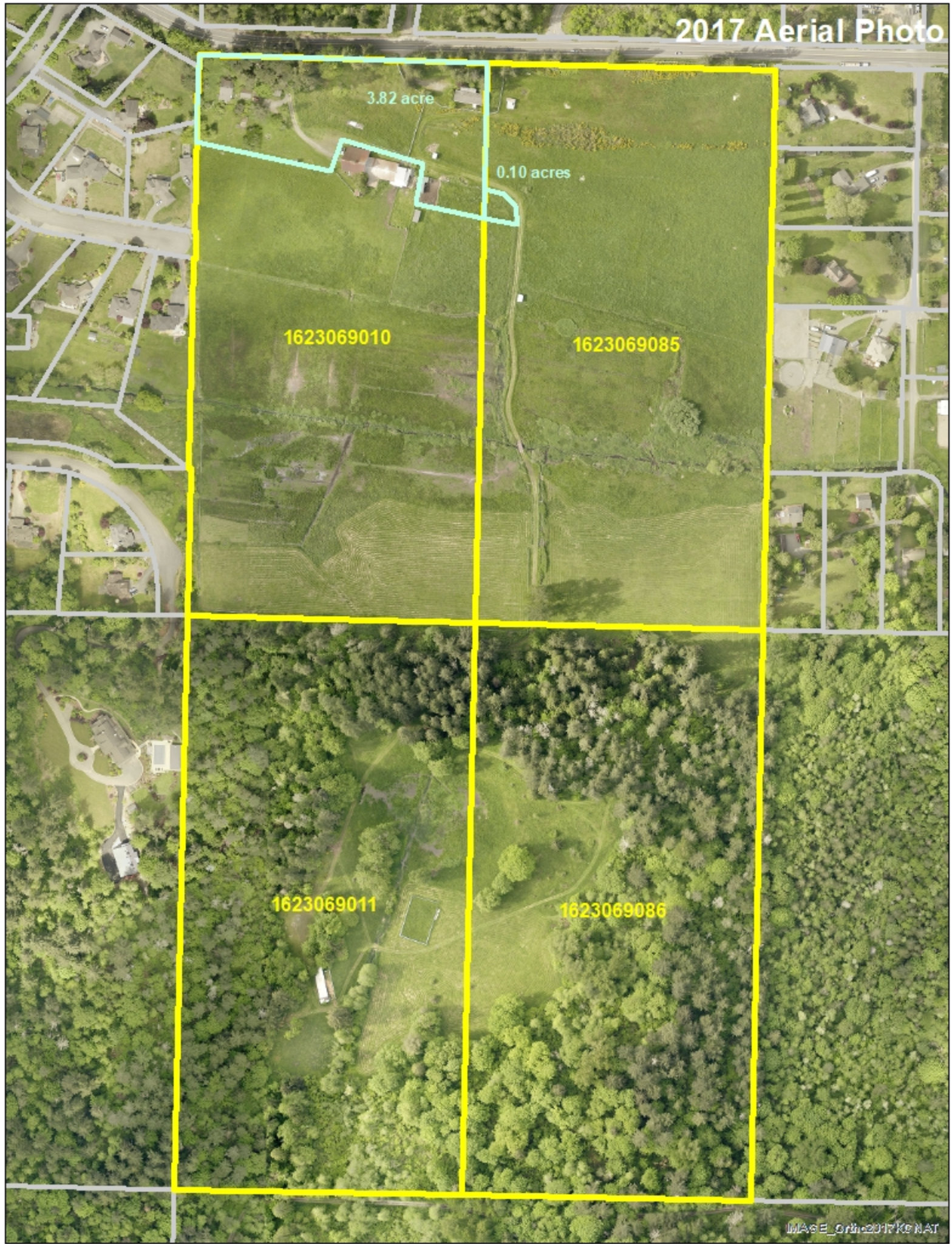
portion meets the criteria for priority resources, it may continue under current use taxation.

5. Except as provided for in sections 6, 7, 10, 11 and 12 below, no alteration of the open space land or resources shall occur without prior approval by the King County Rural and Regional Services Section or its successor. **Any unapproved alteration may constitute a departure from an approved open space use and be deemed a change of use, and subject the Property to the additional tax, interest, and penalty provisions of RCW 84.34.080.** "Alteration" means any human-induced action that adversely impacts the existing condition of the open space Property or resources including but not limited to the following: (*Walking, horseback riding, passive recreation or actions taken in conjunction with a resource restoration plan, or other similar approved activities are permitted.*)
 - a. erecting structures;
 - b. grading;
 - c. filling;
 - d. dredging;
 - e. channelizing;
 - f. modifying land or hydrology for surface water management purposes;
 - g. cutting, pruning, limbing or topping, clearing, planting, introducing, relocating or removing vegetation, however, selective cutting may be permitted for firewood;
 - h. applying herbicides or pesticides or any hazardous or toxic substance;
 - i. discharging pollutants excepting stormwater;
 - j. paving, construction, application of gravel;
 - k. storing of equipment, household supplies, play equipment, or compost;
 - l. engaging in any other activity that adversely impacts the existing vegetation, hydrology, wildlife, wildlife habitat, or other open space resources.
6. Notwithstanding the provisions of Section 5 trees posing a hazard to structures or major roads may be removed. Any trees removed must be replaced.
7. If an area of the Property becomes or has become infested with noxious weeds, the Owner may be required to submit a control and enhancement plan to the AFI Unit or its successor in order to remove such weeds. If an area of the Property becomes or has become invaded by non-native species, the Owner may be required to submit, or may voluntarily submit, an enhancement plan to the AFI Unit or its successor, in order to replace such species with native species or other appropriate vegetation.
8. There shall be no motorized vehicle driving or parking allowed on the open space Property, except for areas of the Property being used as farm and agricultural conservation land and/or forest stewardship land.
9. Grazing of livestock is prohibited on the open space Property, except for areas of the Property being used as farm and agricultural conservation land.

10. For land designated as farm and agricultural conservation land, activities that are consistent with farm or agriculture uses and that are consistent with the approved farm management plan shall be permitted as long as those activities do not cause a significant adverse impact to the resource values of other awarded categories.
11. For land designated as forest stewardship land, activities that are consistent with forestry uses and that are consistent with an approved Forest Stewardship Plan for the Property shall be permitted as long as those activities do not cause a significant adverse impact to the resource values of other awarded categories.
12. Resource restoration must be implemented in a timely manner in accordance with any Resource Restoration Plan that applies to the Property and that has been approved by the PBRS Staff. During plan implementation and for the first 5 years of enrollment, the Owner must submit a yearly monitoring report to PBRS Staff describing the progress and success of the restoration, including photographs. An environmental consultant need not prepare the report.
13. An owner of property receiving credit for farm and agricultural conservation land, forest stewardship land, or rural stewardship land, all of which require a stewardship or management plan, must annually provide a monitoring report that describes progress of implementing the plan. The owner must submit this report, which must include a brief description of activities taken to implement the plan and photographs from established points on the property, to the department by email or by other mutually agreed upon method. An environmental consultant need not prepare this report.
14. Enrollment in PBRS *does not* exempt the Owner from obtaining any required permit or approval for activity or use on the Property.

TRANSMITTED to the parties listed hereafter:

Office of the King County Hearing Examiner
Jennifer and Erik Johnson, applicants
Debra Clark, King County Department of Assessments
Wendy Sammarco, King County Forester



3.82 acre

0.10 acres

1623069010

1623069085

1623069011

1623069086