

May 18, 2026

**OFFICE OF THE HEARING EXAMINER
KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON**

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**REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION TO THE KING
COUNTY COUNCIL FOR CURRENT USE
ASSESSMENT APPLICATION**

SUBJECT: Department of Natural Resources and Parks file no. **E25CT032**
Proposed ordinance no. **2026-0078**
Parcel nos. **192306-9019, 192306-9027, and 192306-9044**

GRAEME AND LOIS LAUGHLIN

Application for Current Use Assessment under the Public Benefit Rating System

Location: 18802 SE Jones Road, Renton

Applicants: **Graeme and Lois Laughlin**
10529 Ashworth Avenue N
Seattle, WA 98133
Telephone: (206) 889-8375
Email: graemelaughlin@gmail.com

King County: Department of Natural Resources and Parks
represented by **Megan Kim**
201 S. Jackson Street Suite 5601
Seattle, WA 98104
Telephone: (206) 477-4788
Email: megan.kim@kingcounty.gov

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Department's Recommendation: Approve 17.76 acres, on three parcels, for an 80% reduction in appraised value; conditionally approve a 90% reduction if an approved forest stewardship plan is timely submitted.

Examiner's Recommendation: Approve 17.76 acres, on three parcels, for an 80% reduction in appraised value; conditionally approve a 90% reduction if an approved forest stewardship plan is timely submitted.

PROCEDURAL BACKGROUND:

Per Ch. 20.36 KCC, the Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP) transmitted the subject application along with its Report for Property Enrollment in the Public Benefit Rating System (PBRS) File No. E25CT032, to the Examiner.

The Examiner conducted a remote public hearing on the application on May 14, 2026. Megan Kim, representing DNRP, presented the application and DNRP's recommendation. Applicant Graeme Laughlin also participated.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS:

1. Except as modified herein, the facts set forth in DNRP's staff report and testimony at the May 14, 2026, public hearing are correct and incorporated here by reference. We will provide copies of this report and DNRP's staff report to the King County Council for final action.
2. The property at issue is at 18802 SE Jones Road, Renton, Parcel Nos. 192306-9019, 192306-9027 and 192306-9044, owned by the Applicants Graeme and Lois Laughlin.
3. The Applicants timely filed an application with King County for current use assessment of the above identified property under the PBRS to begin in 2026.
4. Timely and proper legal notice of the public hearing on the application was provided.
5. The property is currently participating in PBRS (File No. E01CT050). The landowner has reapplied to improve their participation status. The new open space taxation agreement should supersede the existing agreement for this property's PBRS participation.
6. A list of the PBRS Open Space Resource categories identified by DNRP as relevant to the property are provided below. Categories that DNRP determined were eligible (or eligible with contingencies) for credit are assigned the applicable number of points.

PBRS categories:	Aquifer protection area	5
	Buffer to public or current use classified land	3
	Forest stewardship land	*
	Significant wildlife or fish habitat	5
	Special animal site	3
	Surface water quality buffer	10
	Watershed protection area	5
Total points awarded		31

The DNRP-recommended score of 31 points results in an 80% reduction in the appraised value of the enrolled portion of the property. Award of an additional 5 points for the “forest stewardship category” would increase the eligible taxation reduction to 90%. Each category where points are recommended is discussed below.

7. **Aquifer protection area – 5 points.** The entire property is located in an area designated as a critical aquifer recharge area (CARA 1 and 2). The natively forested area is greater than one acre in size and meets the minimum required acreage for this category.
8. **Buffer to public or current use classified land – 3 points.** The property is abutting land participating in the PBRs program (parcel 192306-9068). The enrolling open space area is providing a buffer of native vegetation of more than fifty feet to this adjacent land, which exceeds the category’s requirement.
9. **Forest stewardship land - *5 points (contingent).** The property contains more than seventeen acres of contiguous forest, and the owners would like to obtain and implement a forest stewardship plan. The plan has not yet been submitted and approved by county forestry staff.
10. **Significant wildlife or salmonid habitat – 5 points.** A staff site visit established that the property contains foraging and nesting habitat for the pileated woodpecker, which is identified in King County’s Comprehensive Plan as a Species of Local Importance (E-328(e)). Award of this category is consistent with habitat as defined by KCC 20.36.100.B.15.a(1).
11. **Special animal site – 3 points.** The State’s priority habitat coverage (Biodiversity Areas and Corridor) applies to over seventeen acres of natively vegetated property on the subject parcels.
12. **Surface water quality buffer – 10 points.** A Type N stream runs north to south between parcels -9044 and -9027. As required by county code (KCC 21A.24.358.B), the buffer width required for Type N waters is 65 feet. The owner is providing a qualifying buffer of native vegetation to the east of this stream that averages 590 feet in width, which is more than three times the buffer required. Credit for this category is currently being awarded but is recommended to increase to a ten-point award level.
13. **Watershed protection area – 5 points.** The enrolling open space contains over seventeen acres of native forest cover which is more than 65% of the total property acreage and there are no additional forest retention regulations in place for this property.
14. **Contingencies, Conditions, and Requirements.**
 - A. An additional 5 points may be awarded administratively for the forest stewardship land category.
 - B. Qualification for this category is contingent on submittal of an approved forest stewardship plan to the department **on or before December 31, 2026. If this**

contingency is met, then credit for this category should be awarded administratively.

- C. Award of credit under this category will increase the point total by 5 points, resulting in a 90% reduction in the appraised value of the enrolled portion of the property.
 - D. The Examiner incorporates all conditions and requirements identified in the PBRS Staff Report. Ex. 1.
15. **Enrollment Acreage.** DNRP recommends 17.76 acres of the subject property be enrolled in the PBRS program. (Enrollment acreage is the entire parcel less the excluded area, as calculated by DNRP. In the event the County Assessor's official parcel size is revised, the PBRS acreage shall be administratively adjusted to reflect that change.)
16. Approval of 31 points and an 80% reduction in the appraised value of the 17.76 currently enrolled portion of the property, and conditional approval of 5 additional points for a 90% reduction in appraised value is consistent with Ch. 20.36 KCC and with the purposes and intent of King County to maintain, preserve, conserve, and otherwise continue in existence adequate open space lands and to assure the use and enjoyment of natural resources and scenic beauty for the economic and social well-being of King County and its citizens.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. APPROVE credit for the listed PBRS open space categories on 17.76 acres of parcels 192306-9019, 192306-9027, and 192306-9044 with an 80% reduction in the appraised value of the enrolled portion of the property. Approval should be subject to all conditions and requirements listed herein or incorporated from the DNRP staff report.
- 2. CONDITIONALLY APPROVE additional credit for the forest stewardship category, subject to submittal of an approved forest management plan by December 31, 2026. Award of credit under this category will increase the point total by 5 points, resulting in 90% reduction in the appraised value of the enrolled portion of the property.

DATED May 18, 2026.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'D' followed by a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Devon Shannon
Hearing Examiner

NOTICE OF RIGHT TO APPEAL

A party may appeal an Examiner report and recommendation by following the steps described in KCC 20.22.230. By **4:30 p.m.** on ***June 11, 2026***, an electronic appeal statement must be sent to Clerk.Council@kingcounty.gov, to hearingexaminer@kingcounty.gov, and to the party email addresses on the front page of this report and recommendation. Please consult KCC 20.22.230 for the exact filing requirements.

If a party fails to timely file an appeal, the Council does not have jurisdiction to consider that appeal. Conversely, if the appeal requirements of KCC 20.22.230 are met, the Examiner will notify parties and interested persons and will provide information about next steps in the appeal process.

MINUTES OF THE MAY 14, 2026, HEARING ON THE APPLICATION OF GRAEME AND LOIS LAUGHLIN, FILE NO. E25CT032

Devon Shannon was the Hearing Examiner in this matter. A verbatim recording of the hearing is available in the Hearing Examiner's Office.

The following exhibits were offered by DNRP and entered into the record:

Exhibit no. 1	DNRP staff report
Exhibit no. 2	<i>Reserved for future submission of the affidavit of hearing publication</i>
Exhibit no. 3	Legal notice and introductory ordinance to the King County Council
Exhibit no. 4	Arcview/orthophotograph and aerial map
Exhibit no. 5	Application signed and notarized