



King County

Dow Constantine

King County Executive
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www.kingcounty.gov

November 24, 2021

The Honorable Claudia Balducci
Chair, King County Council
Room 1200
C O U R T H O U S E

Dear Councilmember Balducci:

This letter transmits a proposed Ordinance that, if enacted, would enable King County to make improvements to the administration and implementation of our Public Benefit Rating System (PBRs) current use assessment program described in King County Code (KCC) Chapter 20.36, Open Space, Agricultural, and Timber Lands Current Use Assessment.

Voluntary tax incentive programs are a vital tool for protecting open space, natural resources, farm, and forest lands. King County's PBRs program was adopted in 1992 per Washington State RCW 84.34.055. Enrollment in PBRs provides a property tax reduction to rural and urban landowners who voluntarily conserve important open space resources such as wetlands, waterways, wildlife habitat, groundwater, farm, forest, etc. More than 1,400 landowners and 13,000 acres are currently enrolled in King County's PBRs program. Approval of this proposed legislation would strengthen and streamline this widely used tax incentive program and help advance the County's open space, clean water, healthy habitat, and climate change goals.

The proposed Ordinance would establish a new ecological enhancement resource category in PBRs that will encourage landowners to restore natural resources on private property through actions like removal of culverts that block fish passage and bulkheads that limit habitat along saltwater shorelines. This proposed legislation would also create efficiencies by using the same public hearing process for all new applications for enrollment in PBRs, prior to full Council action. Council committee review and action would no longer be required for applications from incorporated King County; instead, the applications would go to the Hearing Examiner. Finally, this legislation makes additional PBRs program amendments to provide clarity and consistency in program implementation.

In developing the legislation, the Department of Natural Resources and Parks sought and incorporated input from local nonprofit groups, the City of Seattle, the King County Hearing Examiner's Office, King County Department of Assessments, the Permitting Division of the King County Department of Local Services, and Puget Sound Partnership. Attached are a plain

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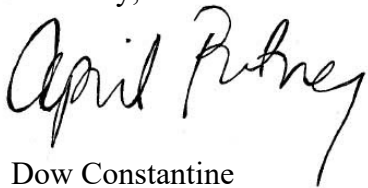
language summary required by the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) and KCC 20.18.100, an acknowledgement letter from the Washington State Department of Commerce, a public notice of intent to amend required by the GMA, a regulatory note, and a draft notice of public hearing.

The proposed legislation furthers the King County Strategic Plan goal of efficient and effective regional and local government. It also supports the King County Strategic Plan goal of preserving open space and rural character while addressing climate change. Additionally, this proposed Ordinance contributes to the Strategic Climate Action Plan goal to protect additional high-value forests and farmland, expand total area of forest cover and actively farmed land, and restore health viability and climate resilience of forests and farmland by further incentivizing property enrollment in PBRS.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposed Ordinance. This important legislation would help King County residents better understand the Public Benefit Rating System program requirements and take advantage of new opportunities to protect natural resources through enrollment of property in this tax incentive program.

If your staff have any questions, please contact Josh Baldi, Division Director of the Water and Land Resources Division in the Department of Natural Resources and Parks, at 206-477-9440.

Sincerely,

 for

Dow Constantine
King County Executive

Enclosures

cc: King County Councilmembers

ATTN: Janine Weihe, Acting Chief of Staff

Melani Pedroza, Clerk of the Council

Shannon Braddock, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the Executive

Karan Gill, Director, Council Relations, Office of the Executive

Dwight Dively, Director, Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget

Christie True, Director, Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP)

Josh Baldi, Division Director, Water and Land Resources Division, DNRP