



King County

Dow Constantine

King County Executive

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June 29, 2022

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 Forest Conversion Review Study report, as called for by the 2020 update to the 2016 King County Comprehensive Plan Update, Workplan Action 18: Greenhouse Gas Mitigation, in Ordinance 19146, Attachment A.

The report outlines changes in forest cover and the carbon sequestration implications from land use changes allowed under Class IV General Forest Practices applications and Conversion Option Harvest Plans (COHPs). This report includes a description of the current processes and standards for approving applications for forest cover alteration, an estimate of sequestered carbon lost and future sequestration potential unrealized due to permitted forest cover alterations, and pathways to enhancing forest cover and future carbon sequestration capacity.

The enclosed report demonstrates that, between 1999 and 2020, land use within the Forest Production District has not noticeably changed and forest cover has increased by over 4,200 acres. Although permits that allowed for conversion of forest cover and COHPs included actions on nearly 4,800 parcels within Rural Area and Agriculture zoned areas, forest cover was nearly stable. The only area that experienced forest loss and permanent conversion to non-forest use was within the Urban Growth Area, where nearly 900 acres of forestland were lost during the 22-year study period.

Issues of forest cover retention, forest restoration, and carbon sequestration are addressed through the many actions outlined in the Clean Water Healthy Habitat Initiative, Strategic Climate Action Plan, and 30-Year Forest Plan. These plans identify many strategies that, when implemented, will address issues of forest health, carbon sequestration and climate resilience at a meaningful scale. These plans also directly address concerns about equity and recommend additional focus on strategies to protect and enhance canopy cover in urban unincorporated King County. Additionally, as part of the 2024 update to the Comprehensive Plan, the Executive Recommended Scope of Work proposes to evaluate increasing open and green space investments in urban areas to help improve physical, emotional, and community health, as well as increase climate resilience. That work is anticipated to address some of the forest cover loss in urban areas as well.

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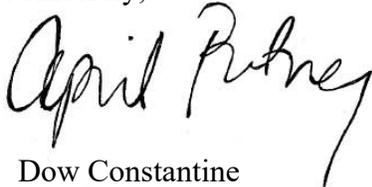
The findings outlined in the report support the King County Strategic Plan healthy environment goal and its objective to support productive farms, forests, and open spaces.

Approximately 320 staff hours were spent preparing this report for transmittal to Council, costing \$23,600 to produce, including only staff salary and benefit costs. There are no anticipated printing costs for the report.

Thank you for your consideration of this report. The work discussed in the report demonstrates that King County has been successful in meeting the goals of the Washington Growth Management Act and King County's Comprehensive Plan, by directing most development into Urban Growth Areas. However, loss of forest cover anywhere in the County has implications for forest health, climate resilience and equity, so the many actions referenced in this report that are in the Clean Water Healthy Habitat Initiative, Strategic Climate Action Plan, and 30-Year Forest Plan will help ensure that the loss of forest cover is meaningfully addressed.

If your staff have any questions, please contact Lauren Smith, Director of Regional Planning, Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget at (206) 263-9606.

Sincerely,

 for

Dow Constantine
King County Executive

Enclosure

cc: King County Councilmembers

ATTN: Stephanie Cirkovich, Chief of Staff

Melani Pedroza, Clerk of the Council

Shannon Braddock, Chief of Staff, Office of the Executive

Karan Gill, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the Executive

Mina Hashemi, Council Relations Director, Office of the Executive

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

Lauren Smith, Regional Planning Director, Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget

Christie True, Director, Department of Natural Resources and Parks