



Legislation Text

File #: 2002-0332, **Version:** 2

Clerk 07/25/2002

A MOTION acknowledging that the Evergreen Forest Trust's acquisition, management and use of certain forestland located within King County will help lessen the burdens of King County government.

WHEREAS, the Evergreen Forest Trust, a Washington nonprofit corporation organized under chapter 24.03 RCW ("Evergreen"), has entered into an agreement to purchase approximately ninety-nine thousand four hundred fifteen acres of a large tract of forestland, known as the Snoqualmie forest, and the timber on another approximately five thousand acres of adjacent forestland (collectively, the "Snoqualmie forest"), and

WHEREAS, the Snoqualmie forest is located within King County ("county"), and

WHEREAS, the Snoqualmie forest has been managed as a working forest for nearly one hundred years, and

WHEREAS, the Snoqualmie forest is a substantial portion of a larger, contiguous piece of undeveloped forestland, which principally includes the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie forest and its Alpine Lakes wilderness area on the east, the state-owned Mt. Si natural resource conservation area on the south and the Markworth state forest on the west, and

WHEREAS, the Snoqualmie forest surrounds the city of Seattle Tolt watershed, which provides drinking water for the residents of the city of Seattle; and

WHEREAS, the Snoqualmie forest is located within the ranges of the northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet, and contains habitat for numerous salmon species and other wildlife species afforded protection under state law and the Endangered Species Act, and

WHEREAS, the Snoqualmie forest contains extensive shoreline environments, including over eight thousand acres of riparian habitat and over one thousand one hundred acres of wetlands and lakes, and including major rivers such as the north fork of the Snoqualmie and Tolt rivers, and

WHEREAS, portions of the Snoqualmie forest are visible from Interstate 90, Highways 202 and 203 and downtown Seattle and Bellevue, and

WHEREAS, the Evergreen Forest Trust will subject the Snoqualmie forest to one or more permanent conservation easements that will maintain the forestland forever in its present primarily undeveloped condition, to facilitate the continued use of the property as a working forest managed at a sustainable level of harvest, to either conserve or enhance, or both, fish and wildlife habitats, shoreline protection, open space, water quality and public recreational and education opportunities of the forestland for present and future generations and to prevent any use of the forestland that will significantly impair or interfere with its conservation values, and

WHEREAS, Evergreen's purchase and management of the Snoqualmie forest are designed to ensure that there will always be large tracts of forestland or green-belt in the Puget Sound basin and to prevent environmentally unsound uses of the land, and

WHEREAS, the county has a vital interest in the future of the Snoqualmie forest given this working forestland's critical location as an urban buffer, and

WHEREAS, Evergreen's proposed use and management of the Snoqualmie forest are consistent with and in furtherance of the county's Comprehensive Plan, and

WHEREAS, Evergreen's proposed timber harvest plan will foster local community stability, alleviate the need for costly forest worker and business retraining programs and provide tax revenues and jobs to local forest-dependent communities that have been negatively impacted by reductions in the federal timber supply, and

WHEREAS, Evergreen's proposed forest management practices will maintain and restore habitat for threatened and endangered species, and

WHEREAS, the county council's burden of being responsive to disparate groups interested in the management and use of the Snoqualmie forest will be lessened by the fact that Evergreen's board of directors includes environmental, industry and community leaders, thus creating a forum for collaborative decision-making representing diverse interests, and

WHEREAS, two county council members currently serve on Evergreen's board of directors, thereby helping to ensure that Evergreen continues to be operated in a manner consistent with the county's priorities, and

WHEREAS, if Evergreen does not purchase and manage the Snoqualmie forest, the county would need to incur approximately one hundred eighty-five million dollars of its own indebtedness and acquire and manage the forest itself to achieve the purposes of this acquisition and accrue to the county the land use, environmental, economic recreational and educational benefits that it desires, which would be extremely difficult in these economic times, and would overextend the financial capacity of the county, and

WHEREAS, the council adopted Motion 11381, introduced February 11, 2002, which urged the United States Congress to enact the Community Forestry and Agriculture Conservation Act of 2001 to make it easier for communities to issue tax-exempt revenue bonds on behalf of private nonprofit corporations to purchase tracts of forest land, such as the Snoqualmie forest, for continuation of sustainable timber harvesting and protection from development;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

The King County council hereby acknowledges that:

1. The Evergreen Forest Trust is acting in full cooperation with the county and in furtherance of the county's land use and financial objectives by taking on the Snoqualmie forest project;
2. The limited, sustainable harvesting of timber on the Snoqualmie forest is necessary to achieve the public benefit objectives of the county; and

3. The Evergreen Forest Trust's acquisition, management and use of the Snoqualmie forest will help lessen the burdens and support the overall mission of King County government.