

# PENINSULA DAILY NEWS



The Duckabush elk herd lives on “Canal 40,” a parcel of trust land the Department of Natural Resources had intended to sell. Letters of protest led to a reversal of that plan. (Photo courtesy of Tim Sullivan)

## Two forest parcels taken off bidding sheet

**Department of Natural Resources decides not to sell elk habitat**

- By [Diane Urbani de la Paz](#)
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- [NEWS JEFFERSON COUNTY](#)

PORT TOWNSEND — Eighty acres of Jefferson County forest land will not be sold to the highest bidder, said Peter Bahls of the Northwest Watershed Institute.

That had been the state Department of Natural Resources plan.

“Canal 40,” a DNR-managed swath along the lower Duckabush River, where an elk herd lives, plus another piece, “Paradise 40” north of Port Ludlow, were to be put up for sale.

DNR is seeking to consolidate its holdings and sell property that’s “difficult to manage for natural resource or income production,” according to a statement from state Public Lands Commissioner Hilary Franz.

DNR manages more than 3 million acres of state trust lands, and it uses revenue earned from the sale of timber and other materials to fund schools, universities, state institutions and essential local services in many counties.

Those lands also are wildlife habitat and, especially since the pandemic began, provide people with a place to recreate.

When Bahls learned more than a year ago of the intent to auction Canal 40 and Paradise 40, he and representatives of local tribes, Jefferson County and regional conservation groups protested together.

They sent letters to DNR noting the two parcels’ value as forest habitat, both now and into the future.

DNR listened. The two parcels were pulled from the planned sale, and Bahls, who is based in Port Townsend, joined last Tuesday’s online public hearing to express gratitude.

“I want to thank Commissioner Franz for listening to public comment,” he said.

Among the commenters: the Jefferson County Board of Commissioners, the Point No Point Treaty Council representing the Jamestown and Port Gamble S’Klallam tribes, the Jefferson Land Trust, the Olympic Forest Coalition and the state Department of Fish and Wildlife.

All called on DNR to keep the pair of parcels intact as forest. Both are productive timberland, Bahls wrote in his Northwest Watershed Institute letter, and both are situated in key areas.

Selling Canal 40, he noted, could mean the loss of core Duckabush elk habitat, reduced hunting opportunities and increased human-elk conflict.

He noted too that Paradise 40 could be combined with the 655-acre Teal Lake East parcel of forest land near Port Ludlow.

That community faces increasing development pressure, Bahls wrote; keeping the nearby open space is critical.

In her letter, Olympic Forest Coalition President Connie Gallant likewise asked Franz to take the long view.

“In an era of rapid climate change, habitat loss and degradation, and rising public concern about these problems, selling off large and valuable forest parcels to ‘consolidate’ does not contribute to the public good,” she wrote.

“It ultimately means reducing the amount of forest and forest protection at a time when it is needed more than ever.”

Finishing his comments at Tuesday’s meeting, Bahls asked Franz to also consider the state Trust Land Transfer program, which he described as DNR’s tool for holding parcels as natural areas and not necessarily for timber harvest.

Franz responded that such programs “desperately” need more funding — and interest — from state lawmakers.

“I would love to work with you and with the Legislature,” she said.

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