

PENINSULA DAILY NEWS

Dabob Bay gains protection after Legislature funds land transfer

By [Peninsula Daily News](#)

Sunday, May 19, 2019 5:31pm [NEWS](#) [JEFFERSON COUNTY](#)



Photo shows the north of the Dabob Bay Natural Area. (Northwest Watershed Institute)

QUILCENE — The state Legislature has funded a \$6.3 million land transfer that will put some 900 acres of land near Quilcene under conservation protection.

The state-owned timber lands within the Dabob Bay Natural Area in east Jefferson County will be permanently preserved after the state Legislature funded the land transfer during its recently completed 2019 session following a request from the state

Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Northwest Watershed Institute (NWI) of Port Townsend announced.

The transfer will protect priority conservation areas while allowing DNR to continue to generate revenue from other lands for county services and K-12 school construction across the state, according to a press release from NWI.

“This is great news for Dabob Bay and Jefferson County, and it is happening thanks to the sustained efforts of our elected officials at the county and state level, and a broad coalition of organizations, landowners, and shellfish businesses,” said Peter Bahls, director of NWI, which has focused on protecting the bay since 2002.

“We are grateful for the support of the Jefferson County Commissioners, the county’s fire chiefs, and our legislators – Reps. Mike Chapman and Steve Tharinger, and Sen. Kevin Van De Wege.”

The three Democrats represent District 24, which covers Jefferson and Clallam counties and part of Grays Harbor County.

Bahls said that hundreds of Jefferson County residents contacted legislators and 25 local and statewide conservation organizations signed a joint letter of support for the project to the Legislature during the recent session.

DNR had requested \$27.15 million in funding for 10 trust land transfer projects across the state. Of these, only two projects were funded – Dabob Bay and Middle Fork Snoqualmie (\$100,000).

In 2016, following a hearing in Quilcene, DNR expanded the Dabob Bay Natural Area’s potential boundaries from approximately 6,000 to 10,000 acres to include priority conservation areas, including steep shoreline slopes along Dabob Bay, lower Thorndyke Creek and its wetlands, a globally rare forest type, and a wildlife corridor connecting the Dabob and Thorndyke areas, NWI said.

Joan Lemonds, who has lived on Dabob Bay for 42 years, told NWI that he is relieved the 80 acres of state lands along Lemonds Creek will be preserved as part of the transfer.

“The last time some private land on these steep slopes was logged it flooded my house and buried the property in mud,” the institute quoted Lemonds as saying.

“The neighbors and I are thrilled to see this beautiful old forest along the creek protected.”

The newly approved trust land transfer funding means that DNR will be able to protect state lands within the Natural Area boundary and compensate the trusts for the lands that had previously been managed for potential timber harvest, NWI said.

DNR is also seeking to purchase private lands within the boundary from willing landowners.

“Trust land transfer is a critical tool for DNR, allowing us to permanently protect land while still supporting schools and critical services across Washington,” said Brock Milliern, DNR division manager for Conservation, Recreation, and Transactions.

“This transfer preserves the unique characteristics of the land around Dabob Bay, protecting that habitat for future generations.”

“The Dabob Bay protection is good news for water quality and the long-term viability of our shellfish operations,” said Bill Taylor, vice-president of Taylor Shellfish Company, which operates one of the largest shellfish hatcheries in the world on Dabob Bay.



Shorelines of Dabob Bay within the state’s Dabob Bay Natural Area. (Northwest Watershed Institute)



Lemons Forest, a rare example of a globally imperiled type of old forest, will be preserved as part of the Dabob Bay Natural Area. (Keith Lazelle Nature Photography)