



A-25 Forest Conversions Ordinance
& Rural Tree Protection
Planning Commission Work Session 1
June 7, 2023





Overview

1. Project Scope & Timeline
2. Forest Practices Review
3. Tree Protection Today
4. Proposed Changes
5. Questions
6. Next Steps



Overall Project Scope & Timeline

Priority 7 on Development Code Docket



*Phase 1: Managing Forest Conversions
(Spring 2022 – Winter 2023)*

**Phase 2: Studying our Forest Canopy
(Summer 2022 - Fall 2023)**

**Phase 3: Growing our Forest Canopy
(Winter 2023 – Summer 2024)**

**Phase 4: Planning for our Urban Forests
(Fall 2023 – Fall 2024)**



Phase 1 Timeline





Forest Practices

Class I – Personal Use

- Under 5,000 board feet

Class II and III and Class IV- Special Moratorium

- Forest Industry
- Harvest and Critical Areas guidelines from DNR
- Protected by Forest Practices Act

Class IV - General – Conversions

- County Adopted first ordinance 1997



Current Permits Compared

State Forest Cutting Permits

- Forestry operations
- Permits are low-cost
- Local CAO regulations do not apply
- Conditions include reforestation within 3 years
- Subject to 6-year development moratorium

County Forest Conversion Permits

- Converting property to non-forestry use
- Permit costs reflect staff review time
- Local CAO regulations apply
- Tree preservation / planting required in North County UGAs

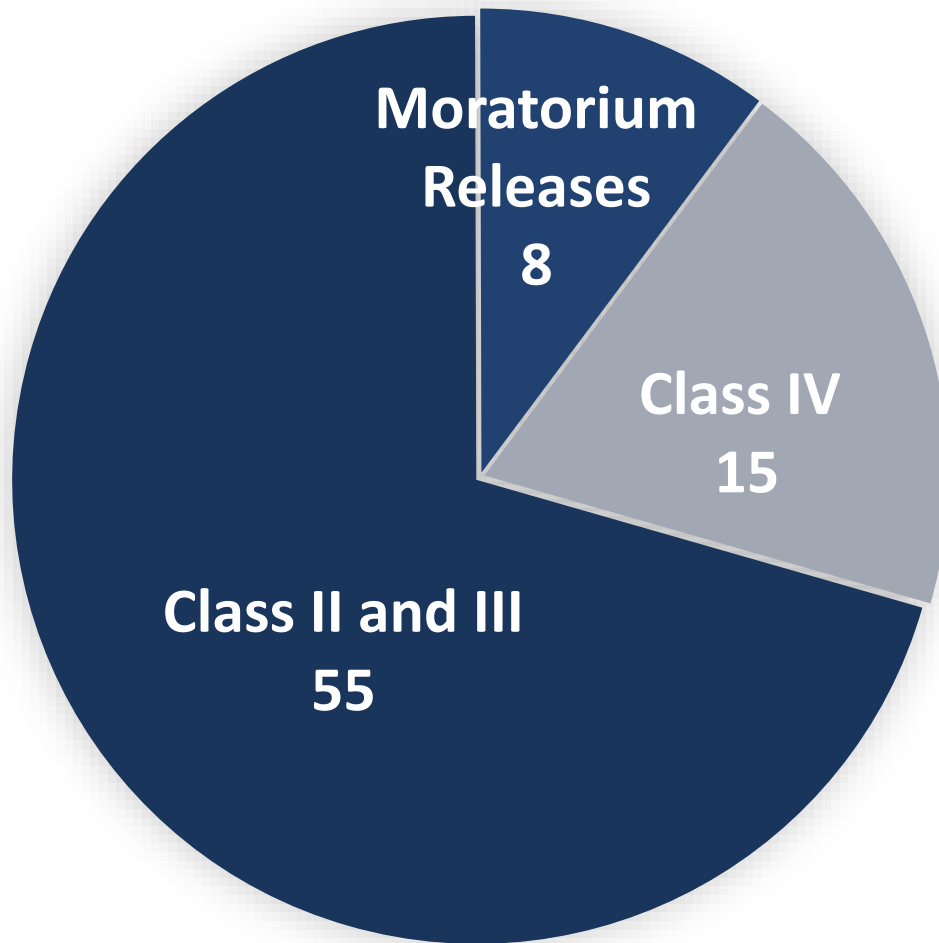


Conversion Option Harvest Plan

- Offers an alternative to moratoriums
- For applicants who are unsure about development or want to sell the land
- Requires compliance with local critical areas ordinances
- Approved by county staff and submitted to state with application for Class II or Class III permit
- Reforestation is required
- Standards require forester expertise
- 35% of the area may be harvested



Average Permits Per Year 2006-2022



Current Policies & Codes

Thurston County Comprehensive Plan contains policies for:

- Protecting rural land uses and preserving natural vegetation
- Improving community resilience to climate change
- Enhancing tree canopy across urban and rural areas

Thurston County Development Code contains provisions for:

- *Converting forestlands to non-forestry use*
- Open Space, landscaping and planting standards
- Tree retention / replanting in sensitive environmental areas
- Protections for oak woodlands

DDECM (Drainage Manual) contains:

- Best management practices for stormwater management and low impact development
- Incentives for tree preservation during development / redevelopment



Forest Conversion Regulations **Inside North County UGAs**

- Tree removal permits exempt:
 - on developed properties
 - On undeveloped when <5,000 sf is disturbed
- Concurrent development application
- Tree protections required

Forest Conversion Regulations

Outside North County UGAs

- Tree removal permits exempt for removing <5,000 board feet in 12-month period or on properties <2 acres in size
- No development application required
- No replanting required

Moratorium Releases

- Waiver

- Single-family home on lots >20 acres
- Home site limited to 2 acres
- Harvesting / reforestation complies with State forest practices act

- Administrative Release from Moratorium

- Single-family home on lots <20 acres
- Applicant did not attempt to avoid county forest conversion requirements
- Critical Areas / Shorelines not damaged during harvest or such damage can be restored

- Hearing Examiner Release from Moratorium

- Non-single-family homes
- Applicant did not attempt to avoid county forest conversion requirements
- Critical Areas / Shorelines not damaged during harvest or such damage can be restored

6-year development moratorium applies to any state forest cutting permits or unauthorized clearing



What do other counties do?

Forest Conversions

- Same for inside / outside UGA
- Concurrent development applications
- Protections for significant trees
- Requirements for tree replanting

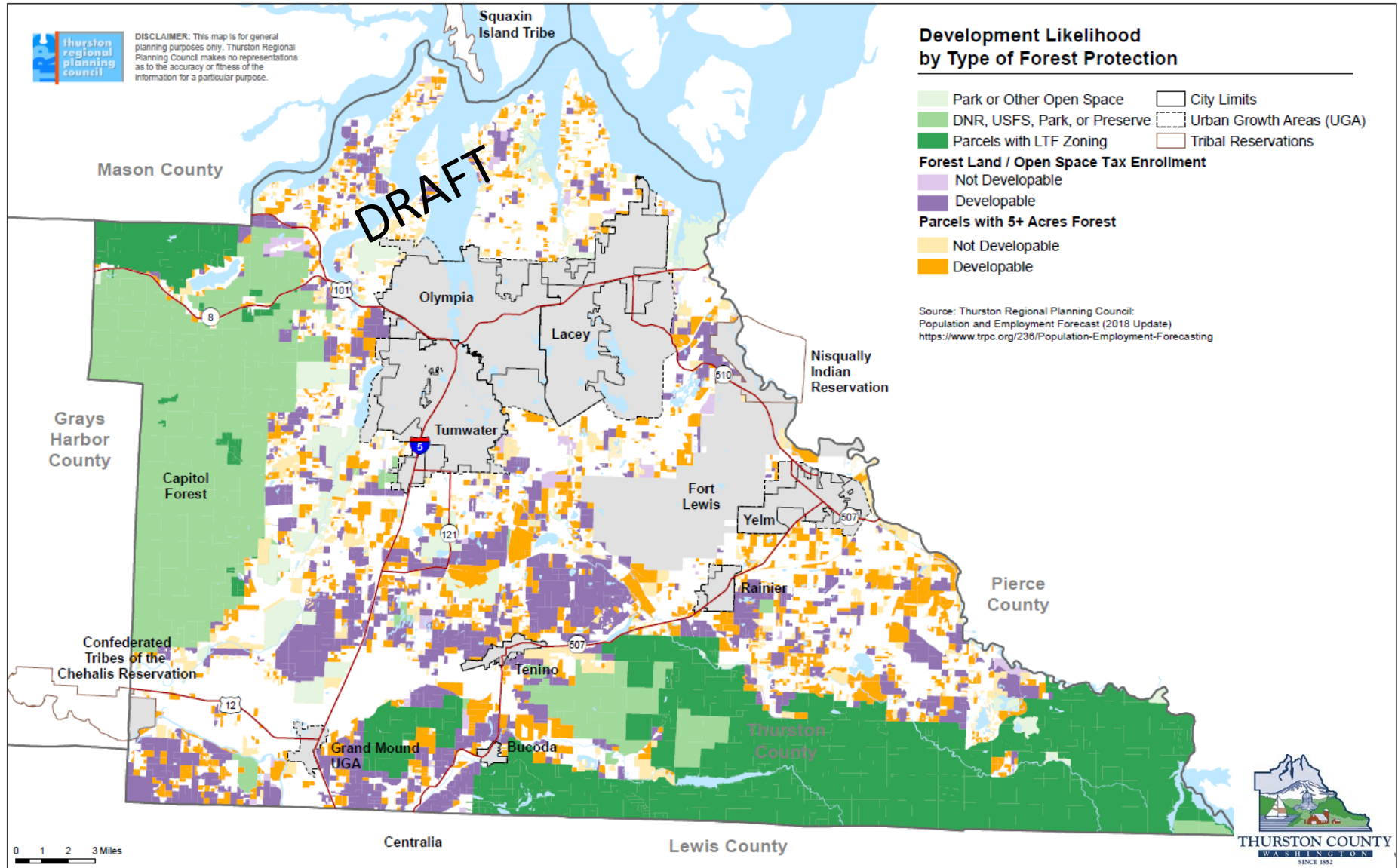
Moratorium Releases

- No moratorium waivers
- Restrict eligibility – min. 3-year waiting period; releases granted only for public facilities or single-family homes
- Requirements for reforestation
- Restrictions for homesite size





DISCLAIMER: This map is for general planning purposes only. Thurston Regional Planning Council makes no representations as to the accuracy or fitness of the information for a particular purpose.



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Who do changes affect?

Single family home developers in rural county

- Tree retention or replanting limited to single family homes
- Moratorium releases limited to single family homes

Single family home developers in UGAs

- Regulations are similar as north county UGA standards

Multifamily, industrial and commercial developers

- Exempt from updated tree retention standards
- Still subject to other standards for tree protections

Other Partners

WSU Extension

Thurston Conservation District

Lake Management Districts

Public Works

Capitol Land Trust

Washington Farm Forestry
Association

Northwest Natural Resource Group

Olympia Master Builders

Department of Natural Resources



Stakeholder Themes



Concerned about the cost and time taken for permit review



Larger trees should be prioritized for protection



Development should occur with tree conservation in mind



Concerned about the enforcement on current regulations

Proposed Changes

Conversion Requirements

- Simplify standards - same for inside / outside UGA
- Require concurrent development application
- Tree protections in place for significant trees and/or mature stands
- Require replanting for any protected trees that are removed
- Provide alternative through revised COHP standards

Moratorium Releases

- Limit eligibility to single-family homes after 3-years, once DNR permit is closed



Ongoing Outreach Plans

- Website information updated with draft and documents for review
- Links sent by email to anyone who has engaged in the process so far
- Gather formal public comments throughout
- Return to planning commission after hearing with feedback about updates



Next Steps

Phase 2: Studying our Forest Canopy

Gathering baseline data to account for working lands harvest cycles and privately owned forest resources

Phase 3: Growing our Forest Canopy

Using canopy data from Phase 2 to inform policy changes to subdivision and zoning codes and comprehensive plan updates

Phase 4: Planning for our Urban Forests

Working with cities to update UGA areas



Questions or Discussion?

Draft Motion:

- Move to set a public hearing on A-25, Forest Lands Conversion Ordinance and Review Rural Tree Protections, on July 19, 2023.

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