



COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

John Hutchings

District One

Gary Edwards

District Two

Bud Blake

District Three

**COMMUNITY PLANNING &
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

Creating Solutions for Our Future

Joshua Cummings, Director

March 21, 2018

Thurston County Board of Commissioners
2000 Lakeridge Drive SW
Olympia, WA 98502

**SUBJECT: Planning Commission recommendation on Mineral Lands Designation
Scope of Criteria, part of the Comprehensive Plan Update**

Dear Commissioners,

The Thurston County Planning Commission has completed their review of proposed criteria for designating Mineral Lands of Long Term Commercial Significance. This review is a subtask within the Scope of Work for the Comprehensive Plan Update, Item #1 on the 2018/2019 Comprehensive Plan Amendment Docket.

Under the Growth Management Act, Thurston County is required to designate mineral resource lands of long-term commercial significance as part of its Comprehensive Plan (RCW 36.70A.170). Mineral resource lands include areas where geology and other factors may support the commercial extraction of minerals, including sand, gravel, and metals. The criteria for designating Mineral Lands adopted into Chapter 3 (Natural Resources) of the Comprehensive Plan will provide the basis for a map of designated Mineral Lands. Additional policies related to Mineral Lands will be considered as part of the Planning Commission's review of Chapter 3 later in 2018.

The Planning Commission was initially briefed by staff on June 21, 2017, and held a total of eight work sessions on this topic. In response to the diversity of public opinion expressed by participants in the Mineral Lands Focus Group, staff requested a recommendation from the Planning Commission on the scope of the Mineral Lands Designation Criteria and associated Map on October 18, 2018, and the Planning Commission decided to hold a public hearing on Mineral Lands Designation Options. Legal notice scheduling a public hearing was published on February 9, 2018. A public hearing was conducted on March 7, 2018. A post-hearing work session was held immediately following the public hearing, and continued on March 21.

**CPA Docket item 1: Comprehensive Plan Update (Subtask, Mineral Lands Update)
The Planning Commission recommends that the Board approve Option #1A for Mineral
Lands Designation.** Option #1A applies the currently adopted criteria for Mineral Lands in



COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

John Hutchings

District One

Gary Edwards

District Two

Bud Blake

District Three

**COMMUNITY PLANNING &
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

Creating Solutions for Our Future

Joshua Cummings, Director

Chapter 3 of the Comprehensive Plan, modifying those criteria to allow mineral lands to be designated at a countywide scale, and allow for the co-designation of Long-Term Agriculture. A motion was made and seconded to recommend approval of Option #1A proposed to the Planning Commission from options provided by staff. The motion was passed by a majority of the Planning Commissioners present, with Commissioners DeLeon, Nickerson, and Jackson absent (5-1). The majority of the Planning Commission found that applying these criteria, including co-designation with areas of Long-Term Agriculture, was in the best interests of the county, makes the best use of available data, would allow agricultural land owners the greatest flexibility of options for commercial use of their land, and that site-specific protection of critical areas and other resources would be adequately handled at the permitting stage.

Dissenting opinion

The Planning Commission received a large amount of written and oral testimony concerned with both the amount of land proposed for designation, and against co-designation with long term agriculture. Mineral lands guidelines clearly allow Thurston County to weigh our local values in designating mineral lands. The data shows we have an abundance of mineral resources. We do not have an abundance of long-term agricultural lands. Once lost, these lands are unlikely to be recovered for agricultural production. In addition, we have extensive knowledge of where very sensitive critical areas are that are obviously incompatible with mining. Our data on critical areas will improve with time, but it seems prudent now to at least exclude from designation known areas where groundwater resources and habitat for threatened and endangered species exist. For these reasons, and with respect to the many concerned citizens we heard from, I strongly disagree with the majority vote.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this important issue. If you have questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Davis, Chair

Attachment: Planning Commission Recommendation Mineral Lands Designation Option