



THURSTON COUNTY  
WASHINGTON  
SINCE 1852

## THURSTON COUNTY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

# OPEN SPACE TAX PROGRAM

## APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS OPEN SPACE CLASSIFICATION

Preparing an Open Space application will take some effort. The documents described in the list that follows are required for the review of your application by the Thurston County staff, the Thurston County Planning Commission, and the Thurston County Board of Commissioners. Sorry, but incomplete or inaccurate applications will be returned to the applicant.

### **PRELIMINARY MEETINGS**

Be sure to discuss your intentions with County staff at Development Services and the Assessor's Office. These discussions may alter your decision to submit an application. If you have any questions about the program requirements or application procedure, feel free to ask the staff.

### **LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

Your application must contain a complete and accurate description of the property that you wish to classify as open space. Assessor tax statement descriptions are not adequate. Attach either a copy of the full description from your ownership document (for example, a quit-claim deed), or a description supplied by a licensed surveyor or title company.

If your property contains a residence, or any non-eligible structure, you must indicate the residential area on a map so it can be excluded from the application. The amount of area excluded for a residence must be at least one (1) acre. If additional area does not meet eligibility criteria, it too may need to be excluded from classification.

Individual applications will be required for two or more parcels of land which do not touch, or when requesting different current use classifications for different portions of a parcel. A legal description for each parcel must be identified separately.

### **ASSESSOR'S SECTION MAP** (1 copy):

A current print of an 8 1/2" x 11" Assessor's section map must be provided to identify the property you wish to classify as open space. The correct map will show the entire square-mile section that your property lies within on an 8 1/2 x 11" sheet. You'll need the section, range and township numbers for your property to obtain the section map. Development Services or Assessor's Office staff can help you identify those numbers. (Maps are available for a small fee from the Assessor's Office. Call 786-5410 for information.) Once you have obtained a section map, add the following information:

- a. Outline each property in your classification request in red.
- b. Label each parcel or portion of a parcel that you wish to classify as open space. Specify dimensions where you propose to enroll a portion of a property.
- c. Draw in improvements (house, barn, well, septic drainfield, etc.) streams, roads and other distinguishing physical characteristics (such as gullies, rocky areas, surface water, etc.).

### **AERIAL PHOTO:**

In order to see your property and its relation to the surrounding area, an aerial photo that shows the entire section(s) is required. These are available for a small fee from the Thurston County Geodata. You'll need the section, range and township numbers to obtain the photo. Development Services staff can help you identify those numbers. (For aerial photo information call (360) 754-4594.) You can also visit [www.geodata.org](http://www.geodata.org).

### **CONSERVATION PROPOSAL**

On a separate page, please describe how your property conserves or enhances the priority resources for which you are claiming points. This is an important element of your application for demonstrating your commitment to preserving the resource. (For a description of the Priority Resources and the point system, refer to the Public Benefit Rating System sheet and the Eligibility Criteria Checklist) Include a statement about the long-term viability of the resource on your property, taking into account any damaging impacts from neighboring properties.

Here is an example: (Priority Resource Identified as Significant Wildlife Habitat)

"Our 21 acres lay adjacent to Henderson Inlet, with approximately 10 acres in mixed woodland/wetland waterfront land, and approximately 11 acres of forested upland where our home is. The 10 acres of waterfront land is used by blue herons for rearing of offspring (15 individual nests). This rookery has been verified by the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife. See attached letter. The Department has recommended that, in order to preserve the rookery, we leave undeveloped the 10 acres that encompasses nearly all our upland property. Long-Term Viability: The heron rookery and related habitat have good long-term viability because they are fairly isolated from other properties and potential off site development that might disturb it. In conserving our property, the long-term viability of the rookery will be maintained."

### **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:**

You must assemble and submit all of the documents needed to show that the property you wish to enroll meets the eligibility criteria for each Priority Resource category under which you are

claiming points. Refer to the "Eligibility Criteria Checklist" for the documents required for each Priority Resource. Development Services staff can help you locate agencies or consultants that can determine eligibility and provide the needed documentation. Also refer to the Help List.

If you have a conservation or historic easement on the property, submit a copy with your application. You may also submit photographs, petitions, natural history journals, or any other relevant information to support your application.

### **TAXES AND JUDGMENTS DUE COUNTY:**

Thurston County Policy requires that you pay all taxes and judgments due to the County prior to current use classification in the Open Space Tax Program. Staff will verify with the appropriate county departments that all taxes, judgments and court fines have been paid. In addition, properties with outstanding violations will not be permitted to enroll in the program.

### **APPLICATION FORM**

Application forms are available from Thurston County Development Services. Assembling the documents described above may help you to respond to some of the questions on the form. If you have any questions about the form, contact Development Services staff at 360-754-5490.

Be sure to read the statement about tax penalties in the Application before signing the form. If there is anything you don't understand, contact Development Services staff.

- ◆ All owners must sign the application form, and all signatures must be notarized. If the named owner is married, both spouses must sign.
- ◆ An application is not complete unless accompanied by the required fee and necessary documents.
- ◆ Incomplete applications cannot be processed and will be returned to the applicant.

Submit your complete application to Thurston County Development Services. The application may be filed in person or by mail (use the complete address shown below). A filing fee of for each application is due at the time the application is filed. (This fee is subject to change; check current fee schedule.) This fee should be paid with a check or money order made out to the Thurston County.

### **MAILING ADDRESS:**

Attn: Open Space Tax Program  
Thurston County Development Services  
The Atrium  
3000 Pacific Ave. SE, Suite 100  
Olympia WA 98501