



THURSTON COUNTY
 WASHINGTON
 SINCE 1852

Open Space FAQs

Washington's State Legislature adopted an Open Space Taxation Act in 1970 (RCW 84.34) requiring county governments to conserve open space lands.



Q. What Properties Are Eligible?

- ❖ Timber Lands
- ❖ Recreation Lands
- ❖ Habitat Areas

**The Assessors Office has a separate program for Forest & Farm/Ag. Open Space.*

Q. What Are the Open Space Resource Categories and What Are They Valued at?

Resource Category	Value
High Priority: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Archaeological Sites ○ Fish-Rearing Habitat - Ponds and Streams ○ Geologic and Shoreline Features ○ Historical Sites ○ Private Recreation Areas ○ Rural Open Space Close to Urban Growth Areas ○ Significant Wildlife Habitat Areas ○ Special Plant Sites ○ Urban Growth Area Open Space 	3 points
Medium Priority: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Public Lands Buffers ○ Scenic Vista or Resources 	2 points
Low Priority: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Resource Enhancement 	1 point

Q. What Are the Minimum Requirements to Participate?

The minimum parcel size is generally five acres, excluding home sites or other non-eligible areas (see Guidebook, section E). Landowners must have at least one priority resource and 3 points.



Q. Is an Entire Property Eligible For Enrollment Into the Open Space Tax Program?

No. This program and the tax reduction it **provides** applies to land only. Many categories of Open Space require the subtraction of one acre (at a minimum) if the property contains a residence.



Q. How Is the Tax Reduction Applied to a Property?

Within Thurston County, current use value is expressed as a percentage reduction from market value.

The market value of your property is reduced by the following percentages based on priority resource points (from the Public Benefit Rating System):

Point Rating	% Reduction in Market Value Assessment
0-2	0
3-6	50%
7-11	70%
12-13	90%
Conservation Easement PLUS One or More Priority Resource	90%

Q. How Does the Program Affect How I Can Use a Property?

Allowed uses for your property depend on the kind of designation and priority resources listed. For example, land with significant wildlife habitat area must be managed for the benefit of the habitat onsite.

Public access is not required for most categories of open space; however, it does provide additional points for open space classification.

Q. What if I Want to Remove a Property From Open Space Designation?

You may remove your property from the program at any time. This will likely require that you repay a portion of the taxes you saved while enrolled in the program.

Q. What is the Application Process Like?

Applications may be submitted anytime between January 1 and December 31. Applications will be approved or denied the following assessment year, with tax reduction applied the year after approval. The cost to apply in 2020 is \$1,592.

Q. Who do I Contact For More Information?

For Eligibility Inquiries, Contact Marisa Whisman at (360) 867-2104.
For Property Value & Tax Questions, Contact the Thurston County Assessors Office at 360-867-2200.

thurstoncountywa.gov/planning/Pages/incentives-open-space-tax.aspx