

Blanchard Overview and Planning Process

Skagit and Whatcom counties have experienced significant population growth and change in recent years. This growth has placed a variety of demands on the management of the roughly 4,800 acres of Blanchard Forest state-owned trust lands in northwestern Skagit County. As trust land managers, DNR has a clear fiduciary responsibility to produce long-term income for the trust beneficiaries. But DNR manages all state trust lands to balance economic, environmental, recreational and other social values.

Planning Project Goal*

To develop a set of management strategies for Blanchard Forest, which recognizes the opportunity to meet multiple objectives and values from state-owned trust lands — including amenity as well as financial trust values — by applying management tools that are available to DNR in combinations tailored to the area's distinctive conditions.

*At a later date, specific plans – such as trail development, timber sales, etc. – will be developed following adopted management strategies.

Assumptions: Starting Points For Management Strategies

DNR views the following as a foundation for beginning the planning process for Blanchard Forest:

1. State trust land management policy guidance is currently flexible enough to accommodate multiple values, pursuant to RCW 79.10. If providing for recreation or other secondary uses substantially curtails forest management activities that produce trust revenue, options exist to seek financial compensation to the trust beneficiaries for those non-revenue generating uses.
2. Management strategies will reflect current policy direction aimed at providing a sustainable balance of environmental, economic, and social values, within current legal requirements.
3. The social aspects (including recreation use), ecological functions of forest lands, and production of trust revenue are critical values for this area, and may be emphasized differently in the management of various portions of the Blanchard.
4. The public expects DNR to successfully provide for recreational use, ecological functions, trust revenue, and economic opportunity.

Ecologically sensitive areas may require protection under DNR's normal management direction.

Collaboration

DNR will collaborate with interested parties to identify issues, values and concerns related to its management of Blanchard Forest. DNR will seek the advice of a variety of interested parties including environmental organizations (Northwest Ecosystem Alliance, Sierra Club), trust beneficiaries (Skagit County, Burlington School District), land trust organizations in Skagit and Whatcom counties, recreation user groups (Backcountry Horsemen, hang gliders, Chuckanut Mountain trails management group including both Skagit and Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Departments, State Parks, etc.) forest industry; and neighbors. Broader inclusiveness and accountability will be ensured through a public review process. Local elected officials and media will be kept informed.

DNR will maintain open communication with the various interest groups and individuals, with the following objectives in mind:

1. That all interested parties will gain a common understanding of the issues, values and concerns expressed by all the other interested parties.
2. That all interested parties shall freely share information, and provide advice and ideas on the existing environment (natural and built) with the other interest groups to ensure that the management strategies will be as effective as possible.
3. That the set of management objectives and strategies will be economically feasible in both the near term and the long term, and will have the broadest support possible given DNR's management responsibilities.
4. That the general public will have opportunities to comment on and be informed about draft management strategies through a number of processes, including public meetings.
5. That any set of management objectives and strategies decided on by DNR must be consistent with all applicable laws and policies and are subject to the review of the Board of Natural Resources.

(See timeline)