

STATE REPRESENTATIVE
19th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT
JIM WALSH

State of
Washington
House of
Representatives



BUSINESS & FINANCIAL SERVICES
(ASST RANKING MINORITY MEMBER)
AGRICULTURE & NATURAL
RESOURCES
CAPITAL BUDGET

October 9th, 2018

Hilary Franz, Commissioner of Public Lands
Department of Natural Resources
MS 47001
Olympia, WA 98504-7001

Commissioner Franz:

I am writing to express my concern about the lack of substantive fiscal and socioeconomic impact information provided by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) associated with the Revised Draft Environmental Impact Statement (RDEIS) for the Marbled Murrelet Long Term Conservation Strategy (LTCS). This information is fundamental to the ability of those who will be most impacted by the LTCS to provide meaningful comment on the RDEIS, including local governments, other trust beneficiaries, and other impacted stakeholders. The success of stakeholder processes currently operating in response to ESHB 2285 and through the Encumbered Lands Steering Group also depends on this data. DNR should take immediate steps to release this information to beneficiaries and the public, while also providing an extension of the comment period on the RDEIS so this fiscal and socioeconomic information can be adequately reviewed.

On September 7, DNR and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) formally released the RDEIS, which added another two alternatives for consideration -- bringing the total number of alternatives in the RDEIS to eight. While the RDEIS represents a massive document with considerable information about the alternatives being considered, the document does not provide projections of the likely impacts of the LTCS alternatives to local employment levels or to trust revenues received by the beneficiaries. These trust beneficiaries include counties, school districts, universities, hospitals, and other public entities that provide critical services to our constituents.

These public entities and members of the public are unable to provide meaningful comment on the RDEIS without understanding how the alternatives would affect local employment and the revenue available for critical public services that effect key elements of the environment as defined by WAC 197-11-444 – including transportation, public services and utilities, schools, parks, and police. DNR should provide estimated fiscal impact information for each beneficiary, including the junior taxing districts.

Not only is substantive fiscal and socioeconomic information critical to the public’s ability to understand and comment on the likely impacts of the LTCS, this information is also essential to meeting the reporting requirements of ESHB 2285, including “strategies to ensure no net loss of revenues to the trust beneficiaries” and “actions that support maintaining or increasing family-wage timber and related jobs” as required by Section 2 of the legislation.

As you know, there was considerable debate in the 2018 Legislature about the LTCS, including proviso language in the 2018 Supplemental Operating Budget reaffirming DNR’s fiduciary obligations to the beneficiaries. I urge you to make this critical information available as soon as possible and provide an extension so the public can provide meaningful comment on the RDEIS and the MMLTCS, which could have a significant impact on the communities I represent.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jim Walsh', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

Representative Jim Walsh

Legislative District 19