Dear Craig, Steve and Jerry,

I will be trying to join this Friday's meeting by cell phone and knowing the problems that sometimes arise, please alert members of the Avoided Conversion Group, as well as members of the full committee, of CLC's request as outlined below.

Generally, CLC is pleased with the innovative and creative strategies that the Forest Sector Work Group seems likely to reach consensus on. CLC remains concerned, however, that the proposals do not adequately provide options to address the rate of conversion of forest lands to other uses. Consider data from Pierce, King, Kittitas and Snohomish counties, as reported in the Cascade Agenda's 2008 Progress Report http://www.cascadeagenda.com/files/CLC_Book_COMPILED_FINAL_04.pdf:

- Between 2003 and 2006, King, Pierce and Snohomish counties issued permits for 9,800 new units on rural and resource lands. While the rate may have slowed, the data show that 12% of new houses were built in rural areas.
- Current policies guiding growth in rural areas require single family home construction on large (5, 20 and even 80 acre) lots. This pattern of growth takes large swaths of land out of open, agricultural or forestry use, inefficiently uses public infrastructure resources for roads, adds to traffic and, over time, diminishes the ability to sustain healthy watersheds, native ecosystems, working forest and farmlands, our region's rural quality of life.
- We cannot afford to buy the real estate value: Across the Cascade Agenda region there are ~140,000 rural and resource zone development rights "on the books" with an aggregate value of ~$3.5 billion.
- We cannot afford to pay for sprawl: A national study indicates that sprawling residential development costs $13,000 more per unit than compact development. That means that even if only half the units were permitted, our communities would face a nearly $1 billion price tag for additional roads and other public service costs compared to compact development.
- Between 1991 and 2001, impervious surface in the Puget Sound area increased by 10.4%, increasing storm water runoff issues. (Furthermore, scientific studies indicate watershed function impairment when a sub-basin reaches 7-15% impervious surface, depending on local conditions.) We are reducing the options we may have in maintaining the health of Puget Sound.
- Real estate values are 10 to 100 times greater than the value of timberland, and the consequences of that value differential are dramatic. Since 2005, our region lost 29,605 acres, or 3.6% of private working forest land (in the resource zones).

CLC believes there are alternative strategies to accommodate growth in the non-urban lands in a manner that (1) leads to permanent conservation of rural, forest and farm lands, and (2) minimizes impact from impervious surfaces, at a scale sufficient to address the state's goals. We recognize that the forest sector workgroup will not offer consensus recommendations to address these issues at scale, but also appreciate the willingness of the group to engage in some thoughtful dialogue on these cross-cutting challenges.

Accordingly, while we accept the recommendations emerging from the workgroup, we would like to offer some language for the report to draw further attention to the urgent issue of forest conversion. CLC is committed to working with stakeholders to develop a range of alternative strategies for managing how growth occurs in rural and resource lands; we hope members of the group will join us in this commitment.

We suggest the report identify topics the group has discussed over the course of its work that are beyond its time and scope. In that context we suggest the following remarks:

> *The Group agrees that conversion of rural and resource zoned forestland will have a detrimental impact to achieving the state's goals for greenhouse gas emissions and restoration of Puget Sound. The Group also recognizes that while reduction of emissions may be an important outcome of conservation of forestland, carbon is not the driver behind the state's rural and resource land use policies. Due to these complexities, the Group concluded that it is beyond the time and scope of the committee to fully address this topic, and that other stakeholders need to be involved through another venue. Therefore, the Group would like to call attention to the rapid conversion of rural and resource zoned forest land. The Group agrees that it would be worthwhile to examine policy options for guiding growth in rural and resource lands to better achieve the state's goals. Accordingly, the Group urges a team be convened as quickly as possible to begin work on this issue.*

Thank you for consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Michelle Connor

Michelle Connor
Sr. Vice President, Policy
Cascade Land Conservancy