

WHATCOM COUNTY
Parks & Recreation Commission
3373 Mount Baker Highway
Bellingham, WA 98226-9097



Sonja Max, Chair

April 21, 2022

To Whom It May Concern:

On March 17, 2022, the Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Commission unanimously voted to voice support for the Stewart Mountain Community Forest initiative. The Commission consists of Executive-appointed volunteer representatives from the various districts in Whatcom County, and was established to provide recommendations in the development and review of acquisitions, plans, programs, policies and funding for parks and open space.

The Stewart Mountain Community Forest would be a remarkable asset to the community, providing a unique combination of recreation, economic and ecological benefits.

The community forest borders Lake Whatcom Park as well as Washington State forestlands. Its proximity to these two major areas would greatly enhance trail connectivity and accessibility to the surrounding communities, especially as trails continue to be developed in lake Whatcom Park. With the influx of residents to the region and an increase in recreation, it is more important than ever that trail and open space inventory keeps pace.

In addition to meeting recreation goals, a working community forest would continue to provide an economic and ecological benefit to the region through sustainable forestry practices. With a responsible level of management and cohesion, these working forests can be better suited to improve habitats for local wildlife and address the increasing effects of climate change. The most significant of these benefits would be to restore the damaged South Fork Nooksack watershed by increasing summer water flow to the area's streams, supporting climate resilience in this important region.

The Commission hopes that with your help this initiative may succeed, to support the recreational, economic and environmental goals that we all share.

Sincerely,

Sonja Max
Chair, Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Commission