

Planning Commission Workshop



Community Development • 125 NW Chehalis Avenue, Chehalis, WA 98532 • Phone: (360) 740-1146

STAFF REPORT

Public Benefit Rating System

Date: February 10, 2025
Staff: Mindy Brooks, Community Development
Ross Nielson, County Assessor
Attachment: Qualifying Criteria and Scoring Sheet

On February 3, staff provided a memo to the Lewis County Planning Commission with recommendations of the Public Benefits Rating System Committee. The memo included two attachments: PBRS Point Totals and an Open Space Taxation Act summary. The Planning Commission was asked to provide questions to staff by 5:00pm on February 7. This memo is a response to the questions received.

Question 1 – Page 2 of the summary, 6.a, please clarify the land classification threshold.

This section refers to incidental use. It should read 20% of the land. For example, if someone has 20 acres of land classified as Agricultural Resource Land (ARL) and 2 acres of this land is a staging area for equipment, storage, or other uses, those would be incidental and take up less than 20% of the land. This can also refer to a creek buffer; but is limited to a percentage of the total land.

Question 2 – Page 6 of the summary, please explain the 7 years of additional tax and interest.

The 7 years is a compensating tax. When a parcel has land in the program, the land has both a market land value and a lower (usually) taxable value based on being in the program. The reduced value is based on continuing in the program. If land is removed from the program, the difference in taxes between the lower tax value and the market value is to be paid for the last seven years as part of the removal process. If someone sells property that is in program, the new owner must either sign on to continue in the program, or the compensating tax must be paid to transfer the property.

Question 3 – What are the rating factors used to determine the point totals?

Attached, please find the qualifying criteria and scoring sheet.

Qualifying Criteria and Scoring Sheet for Open Space Land

Applicant _____

Applications must include a management plan identifying the measures that will be taken to ensure the land is preserved in its current use. Agricultural conservation plans must identify steps that will be taken to preserve the land for a return to commercial agriculture. Applicants must select the preservation category or categories for which they are applying and score a minimum of three points in one category to qualify. Qualifying criteria chosen under one category may not be duplicated under a second category. Each point represents a 10% reduction from market value of the land with a maximum award of 8 points, if the application is approved.

Application is made for Open Space Land because, preserved in its current use, the land would:
(THIS SECTION IS FOR OPEN SPACE LAND ONLY – NOT FOR OPEN SPACE FARM & AGRICULTURE CONSERVATION LAND)

Conserve and enhance natural or scenic resources.

- Land is zoned for open space or identified as a natural resource area by a comprehensive official land use plan adopted by the county or city.
- Land is adjacent to a scenic highway or scenic vista and preserves views visually significant to the aesthetic character of the county, such as commercial forest and agricultural land or seasonal farm activities.
- Land prevents encroachment of urban development into commercial forest and agricultural areas.
- Land provides an unrestricted view of a mountain, river, lake, dam reservoir, or designated wetland.
- Land provides habitat for unique or critical wildlife or native plants.
- Land is located in a big game animal migration corridor and provides essential wildlife habitat.
- Land preserved in its natural state provides an intervening space for a regulated wetland with an open water component, and provides plant and wildlife habitat.
- A wildlife habitat management plan has been prepared by a qualified critical area professional pursuant to Chapter 17.35 LCC.
- Limited public access is provided.

Total Points

Protect streams or water supply, including stream corridors, aquifers and aquifer recharge areas.

- Land is zoned for open space or identified as a natural resource area by a comprehensive official land use plan adopted by the county or city.
- All or a majority of the land provides an area of flood storage during a flood.
- Land preserved in its natural state provides a riparian buffer pursuant Chapter 17.35 LCC along a river or stream.
- Land abuts a stream or river where a change in land use could cause damage from run-off, siltation, infiltration, or other developments potentially jeopardizing surface or ground water quality.
- Land provides habitat for unique or critical wildlife or native plants.
- Land provides unique opportunities to study and conserve natural areas for floodplain management.
- Land preserved in its natural state provides an intervening space for a regulated wetland with an open water component, and provides plant and wildlife habitat.
- Limited public access is provided.

Total Points

Promote conservation of soils, wetlands, or beaches.

- Land is zoned for open space or identified as a natural resource area by a comprehensive official land use plan adopted by the county or city.
- Preservation of the natural area protects beaches and natural shoreline area.
- The site provides unique opportunities to observe study and preserve specific natural or manmade wetland management area.
- A college or public school has contracted to use the land for promotion of land conservation principles using curriculum approved by the school.
- Land provides habitat for unique or critical wildlife or native plants.
- Limited public access is provided.

Total Points

Total Points Awarded _____ **PBRS Committee Member** _____ **Date** _____

Enhance the value to the public of neighboring parks, forests, dedicated wildlife preserves, nature sanctuaries, or other designated open space, and enhance public recreational opportunities.

- Land is zoned for open space or identified as a natural resource area by a comprehensive official land use plan adopted by the county or city.
- Land is within ¼ mile of land designated in an adopted park and recreation plan for additional recreational activities.
- Land is contiguous to an existing public park, forest, dedicated wildlife preserve, dedicated nature reservation or sanctuary, interpretive center, or visitor's center.
- Land provides intervening space between developed areas and adjacent highly used recreation areas, such as a municipal or county park or golf course.
- Land provides low intensity public recreational opportunities for non-motorized access, picnicking, and tent camping.
- Public access is provided.

Total Points

Preserve historic sites.

- Land is listed on the state and/or national historic registry.
- Land is part of an on-going archaeological research area.
- Limited public access is allowed.

Total Points

Retain in its natural state tracts of land not less than one acre situated in an urban area with limited or greater public access.

- Land is zoned for open space or identified as a natural resource area by a comprehensive official land use plan adopted by the county or city.
- Preservation of the current land use provides passive recreational uses such as bird watching, nature trails, and observation areas of other natural wildlife habitat in urban areas.
- Use of the land is open to the public with no exclusions on the basis of membership.
- Preservation of the land provides a unique opportunity for wetland management, floodplain management, and/or wildlife management in an urban setting.
- Land currently provides habitat for unique or critical wildlife or native plants.

Total Points

(THIS SECTION IS FOR OPEN SPACE FARM & AGRICULTURE CONSERVATION LAND ONLY.)

Protect traditional farm and agricultural land and soils from irrevocable conversion to non-open space program uses, and maintain the land in a condition that allows immediate resumption of commercial farm and agricultural uses. Category 1 - less than five acres in size.

- Farm and agricultural conservation land area is less than five acres, but more than two acres.
- Land is designated in the Lewis County comprehensive plan as agriculture, rural residential (RDD-1 or RDD-2), forestry open space, or is zoned AF, AG-38 or forestry recreational.
- Land and soils are mapped and defined by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services as Class 1, 2 or 3.
- The site has been classified as commercial farm and agriculture land as defined in RCW 84.34.020(2) for five or more years.

Total Points

Protect traditional farm and agricultural land and soils from irrevocable conversion to non-open space program uses, and maintain the land in a condition that allows immediate resumption of commercial farm and agricultural uses. Category 2 - five acres or larger tracts.

- The site contains more than five acres capable of being returned to commercial agricultural production.
- There are no sanitary sewer services adjacent to the land, and the property is not within an adopted sewer service area plan.
- Land and soils are mapped and defined by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service as Class 1,2,3,4 and/or 5; and the land is located outside the boundaries of any urban area identified in the Lewis County comprehensive plan, or outside any urban growth management area approved by the board and city.
- The land has a documented history of commercial agricultural production, and has potential for returning to commercial agricultural production at any time.
- A college or public school has contracted to use the land for promotion of land conservation principles, and the curriculum has been approved by the contracted school.

Total Points