

The Lewis County Public Benefit Rating System is a valuation schedule and rating system for land in the county that is classified as open space. The system is based on a process that considers various factors.

How the system is created

The county legislative authority directs the county planning commission to establish the rating system

The planning commission holds a public hearing and adopts the rating system

The assessor develops an assessed valuation schedule based on the rating system

What the system includes

Criteria for determining land eligibility

A process for establishing the rating system

An assessed valuation schedule that reduces the true and fair value of land based on the rating system

Purpose of the system

The system helps the county manage open space lands and maintain their rural character. The system also helps the county determine the eligibility of land for open space programs.

Related RCW

The Lewis County Public Benefit Rating System Ordinance is based on Chapter 84.34 RCW.

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17.30.380 Nonregulatory incentives.

The following nonregulatory incentives shall apply to all resource lands:

(1) Assessment Relief.

(a) The Lewis County assessor shall consider the resource lands regulations contained in this chapter when determining the fair market value of land.

(b) Any owner of a resource land who has dedicated a conservation easement to or entered into a perpetual conservation restriction with a department of the local, state, or federal government or to a nonprofit organization to permanently control some or all of the uses and activities within this area may request that the Lewis County assessor reevaluate that specific area with those restrictions.

(c) The administrator shall notify the assessor's office of any application of this chapter which results in building restrictions on a particular site.

(2) Open Space. Subject to the criteria established by law, any person who owns a resource land area as identified by this chapter may apply for current use assessment pursuant to Chapter [84.34](#) RCW. The Open Space Tax Act allows Lewis County to designate lands which should be taxed at their current use value. The county has programs for agricultural lands, small forest lands less than 20 acres in size, and other open spaces. **Lewis County has adopted a public benefit rating system, which classifies properties on the basis of their relative importance of natural and cultural resources, the availability of public access, and the presence of a conservation easement. These features are given a point value, and the total point value determines the property tax reduction. Lands with an important habitat or species would commonly qualify for this voluntary program. Applications are approved by the board of county commissioners following a public hearing.**