

KING COUNTY CONSERVATION FUTURES CITIZENS COMMITTEE AND OPEN SPACE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Background on Conservation Futures Tax Levy:

Conservation Futures Tax (CFT) levy funds are collected from property taxes levied throughout King County and dedicated to the acquisition of open space in cities and rural areas. The Conservation Futures Citizens Committee (Committee) makes annual recommendations of the project funding allocations to King County based on review of project applications and site visits. This year's recommendations are for projects totaling \$8.5 million for projects throughout King County.

Conservation Futures Citizens Committee Recommendations Process:

In the Spring and early summer of 2003 the Committee meets and conducts field trips to develop their recommendation. The Committee reviewed the projects using King County's adopted conservation futures criteria, which the Committee developed at the request of the King County Council in the fall of 2001. Applications and notice of availability of these funds are mailed out to parks and natural resource directors of King County and its cities in the spring.

Factors Affecting This Recommendation:

The Committee has tried to present a balanced recommendation that recognizes the importance of various allowable uses of CFT funds and considers the likelihood of the success of the projects. The Committee first looks at the quality of the open space resources of projects and then considers the risk of loss of those resources or other timely opportunities, such as matching dollars, a landowners offer to sell a property or strong community interest. Some projects have regional importance, while other projects make incremental, but important contributions to greenways, salmon habitat protection efforts or additions to existing parks.

Many of the projects recommended are part of sustained multiple year efforts, some of which stretch back over ten years. For example the city of Kent's Clark Lake Project was first proposed in the 1989 Open Space Bond Program. Bellevue's Meydenbaur Bay Park project was first funded in the 1993 Conservation Futures Bond program. Other projects have been identified in adopted plans for up to 10 years. These projects enhance the livability of densely developed urban neighborhoods while supporting their communities. By encouraging in-city growth, they also help relieve development pressure on green spaces in other communities.

Conservation Futures Funding Supports Major Acquisition of Snoqualmie Tree Farm Development Rights:

In addition to the projects recommended by the Committee, the County also uses CFT levy funding to support debt service for major open space acquisitions. In 2004 the County was offered the opportunity to acquire 90,000 acres of development rights to the Snoqualmie Tree Farm. This represented one of the largest acquisitions of development rights in an urban county and the nation. The acquisition is for development rights to a piece of land nearly twice the size of the City of Seattle and five times the size of Bellevue that will always be part of the rural character of East King County. The acquisition will reinforce the wall against urban sprawl. This acquisition was made possible through the use of CFT levy funding to support debt service payments that will start in 2007.

