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History of state lands managed by DNR

Original upland and aquatic lands grants

On November 11, 1889, Congress admitted Washington as the 42nd state of the United States. To encourage settlement in the west, the state was given land from the "land rich-cash poor" federal government. More than 3 million acres were transferred or promised to the state in the original grants. These included forests, prairies and grasslands all across the territory.

Unlike many states, Washington kept most of the granted trust lands to continue generating income over time. The income goes to specific public purposes such as construction of schools, universities, prisons, institutions and Capitol buildings.

In addition, with statehood Washington became the owner of about 2.6 million acres of aquatic lands - tidelands and the submerged lands under Puget Sound, navigable lakes and rivers. These lands are managed as a "public trust," that is, for all the people of Washington. Revenues from leases and permits pay for the stewardship of the aquatic lands, for grants for local projects that provide public access to the water of the state, and for aquatic habitat restoration.

Adding forest trust lands

Beginning in the 1930s, the state acquired about 620,000 acres of forestlands. These had been privately owned, but most had been logged and abandoned, and reverted to county ownership for non-payment of taxes. Some other logged-over lands were bought by the state for as little as 50 cents per acre.

The counties had no one to manage the land, fight fires, and plant new tree seedlings and cut back competing vegetation that would kill the young trees. The lands were deeded to the state to remain forever as forest, and in return, the counties receive part of the revenue from the lands.

These Forest Board lands are managed as two separate state trusts. DNR

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and its predecessors reforested these lands. Today, commodity sales from them provide income for public services in the counties in which the lands are located. Services include roads, schools, hospitals, libraries and fire districts in the 19 Forest Board counties. The lands also provide income for the state general fund.

A "permanent endowment" for all generations of Washingtonians

Trust and other state lands are managed for all generations of people of Washington. As steward of the resources, DNR takes care that the resources are sustainable and that the present generation does not receive more benefits at the expense of future generations. While protecting public resources such as fish and wildlife, water quality and quantity, and slope stability, DNR earns substantial funds.

For example, during the past 10 years, all of the state lands managed by DNR - upland trusts and aquatic lands - earn an average of about \$250 million per year for the beneficiaries and the public. Projects and services are paid for with this money - money that does not come from taxes.

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