Creating Solutions for Our Future

MEMORANDUM

TO: Thurston County Planning Commission
FROM: Christy Osborn, Associate Planner
DATE: July 26, 2012
SUBJECT: Agricultural Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance

BACKGROUND

Resolution No. 14180 adopted December 29, 2008 amended the Natural Resource chapter of the Thurston County Comprehensive Plan and established revised criteria to be used to designate long term commercially significant agricultural lands. The Resolution also designated additional lands as agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance. The criteria that were established did not excluded agricultural lands designated based on soil depth. In response to this omission, applicants were allowed to request reconsideration of their designation of Long Term Agriculture (LTA). The requests would change the land use and zoning designations from LTA. The review of these applications has previously been on hold pending the completion of the adoption of revised critical areas regulations and staff availability.

DESIGNATION CRITERIA

RCW 36.70A, the Growth Management Act requires local governments to maintain and enhance natural resource based industries, including agricultural lands by the conservation of productive agricultural lands and to discourage incompatible uses. This goal is implemented through the provisions contained in WAC 365-190 that establishes the minimum guidelines for classifying and designating agricultural resource lands and criteria established by local government.
Chapter Three of the Thurston County Comprehensive Plan contains the designation criteria used by the County to designate agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance and include:

1. Soil Type  
2. The Availability of Public Facilities and Services  
3. Land Capability and Tax Status  
4. Relationship or Proximity to Urban Growth Areas  
5. Predominant Parcel Size  
6. Land Use Settlement Patterns and Their Compatibility with Agricultural Practices  
7. Proximity of Markets  
8. Agricultural Diversity  
9. Environmental Considerations

The Comprehensive Plan also establishes criteria for the redesignation of agricultural lands. These criteria are:

A. Changes in surrounding land use severely inhibit or severely interfere with continued agricultural use;
B. Changes in market conditions severely reduce the economic viability of agriculture use; or
C. Changes in regulatory requirements severely reduce economic viability of agriculture use; or
D. Site specific evidence conclusively indicates the land does not meet the criteria for designation as agricultural land.

Chapter 20.08A of the Thurston County Zoning Ordinance contains provisions that guide the use, subdivision standards and design standards for lands zoned LTA.

APPLICANTS REQUESTING CONSIDERATION

Four applicants have requested consideration of property designated as long-term agricultural lands. They are:

Weyerhaeuser #1 – End of Mountain Vista Drive, Assessor’s Parcel # 22611110200, approximately 40 acres in size.
Weyerhaeuser #2 – End of Mountain Vista Drive, Assessor’s Parcel # 22611110600, approximately 40 acres in size.
Lewin – 9005 Prather Road, 98531 Assessor’s Parcel # 13521230000 and 13521230100, approximately 40 acres in size.
Schrader Crown Ranch - 20015 128th Avenue SE 98597, Assessor’s Parcel #22602420000 (Total of seven parcels), approximately 338 acres in size.
Please review the attached application materials in preparation of the August 1, 2012 Planning Commission meeting and come prepared with questions to be considered in the staff reports for the requested land use considerations.

**ATTACHMENTS:**
- Weyerhaeuser #1 Application File
- Weyerhaeuser #2 Application File
- Lewin Application File
- Schrader Crown Ranch Application File