MEMORANDUM

TO: Thurston County Planning Commission

FROM: Olivia Story, Assistant Planner

MEETING DATE: November 7, 2012

SUBJECT: GMHB Compliance Order - Mineral Lands

During the Planning Commission meeting held on October 17, 2012, a request for more information was made regarding the overall impact mining may have in forested areas. This memo is in response to that request.

Staff has been in contact with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) regarding the reclamation process of mined properties. According to DNR, there are an estimated six sites where forestry was a subsequent use to mining. Unfortunately, the terminology has not been consistent through the history of the reclamation process. Tracking and recording systems and the data from DNR is inaccurate. The data given was the best the department could offer the County. However, it was noted that five of the six forestry subsequent uses were on the west side of the state, and one of the five was in Thurston County.

Additionally, Nadine Romero from Water Resources was consulted regarding the quantity of gravel resources in the county and specifically in forested areas. She suggested that the development of sand and gravel mines in forested areas are likely to be smaller ‘pits’ and is unaware of forested deposits that are voluminous for gravel mining potential versus those found in recessional outwash areas, glacial flood outburst deposits and associated prairie areas of the county.

While the removal and stockpiling of soils for the purpose of mining may indeed be harmful to the sequestration of carbon, it appears there are few areas in the County where a gravel mine may be located. Mining in forested areas may not have a significant impact on the forest lands.

NEXT STEPS:
A Public hearing will be held on November 14, 2012. A follow up work session will be held immediately after the hearing and a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners may be made at that time.