MEMORANDUM

TO: Thurston County Planning Commission
FROM: Christy Osborn, Associate Planner
DATE: November 28, 2012
SUBJECT: Long Term Agriculture Reconsideration Comments Received from November 7, 2012 to the Present

PUBLIC COMMENTS:
The Planning Commission received written comments at the public hearing on November 7, 2012. These comments have been attached for your review. In addition, please find comments received from the Washington State Department of Commerce and other comments received since November 7, 2012. A summary of the comments are outlined below.

Schader Crown Ranch
Judy Rogers Schader, November 7, 2012

- The applicant indicated that they could soil test the land out of the LTA designation if it did not contain 20 inches of topsoil. She indicated that the land does not have top soil so they completed soil testing designed by Pacific Rim Soil and Water to the County’s specifications. In 2009, they submitted an application for reconsideration and during that time waiting for a hearing they were approached by NRCS about selling their grassland property into the Federal Grassland Reserve Program. The applicant put 330 acres of land into this program. The majority of the remaining property is in two forested parcels. When the soil study was peer reviewed the applicant was shocked that the findings were for the land to remain in LTA due to not enough soil samples being completed. The peer review states that the field report was prepared by a qualified soil scientist and provides compelling reasons consistent with Field Methodology for making non-LTA determinations for both parcels and supports changing the planning designation of 2 of the 11 parcels, 2320000 and 2432000. The property was put into open space agriculture because taxes were very high and taxes remained higher in LTA. The forested properties can’t be used for agricultural purposes due to steep slopes, ground is wet or very rocky, and it cannot be drained. The on-site environmental benefits of agricultural lands do not surpass those of forestland. The applicant also indicated that she feels that she and her
brother have been harshly dealt with by the County and the process has been adversarial in nature.

Rick Johnson, November 7, 2012

- Mr. Johnson indicated that for a number of years he was contracted by the Schader farm to upgrade access roads and drainage improvements to the farm. He indicated that the soils that he encountered were poor ranging from large boulders to clay and extensive hardpan, with many of these areas resulting in wetlands. The only topsoil encountered was near the farm house in the garden site which is believed to be imported.

Judy Rogers Schader, November 20, 2012

- The applicant inquired on the status of additional public hearings. She indicated that she is struggling with the soil test being defiant because it was done be a registered soil contractor using a methodology that its president created. The standard of performance for the property owner far exceeds that of the County. The property was placed in LTA without any on-site investigation.

Judy Rogers Schader, November 25, 2012

- The applicant indicated that there is confusion regarding the December 5, 2012 Planning Commission meeting and would appreciate more detail.

Petra Lewin

No additional written comments received.

Weyerhaeuser 1

Marlene Voss, Weyerhaeuser Assistant Project Manager, November 7, 2012

- The applicant indicated that they accept the staff recommendation to leave this parcel in the LTA designation but do not agree with the recommendation based on wetland and buffer areas covering almost the entire site. The County wants to protect wetlands and any type of agricultural activity will put non-native waste and/or chemicals into the wetlands. Access is via a private road with no public road access. If access is provided off of Mountain Vista Drive SE, it would have to go through a wetland. She also indicated that there are hydric soils with shallow ground waters of less than 20 inches.

Weyerhaeuser 2

Marlene Voss, Weyerhaeuser Assistant Project Manager, November 7, 2012

- The applicant indicated that they accept the staff recommendation to remove this parcel from the LTA designation.
AGENCY COMMENTS:

The Washington State Department of Commerce, November 13, 2012

- The Department of Commerce indicated that it is their understanding that the request to reconsider the long term commercial agriculture designations are based on a one time provision provided by the county to include consideration of soil depth information and reviewed by a third party with soil expertise for consistency with the adopted provisions. They offered no specific comments on the application requests.