



Comprehensive Plan Update  
Element B.2 Land Use and Rural

# **NATURAL RESOURCE LAND DESIGNATION REVIEW**

County Council April 20, 2021

Department of Community Development

Adam Zack, Planner III

# PURPOSE

To provide the initial briefing on the Natural Resource Land Designation Review analysis.

April 2, 2021 Staff Memo to Planning Commission:

<https://www.sanjuanco.com/DocumentCenter/View/22652>



# PROCESS

**April 16, 2021**, Staff briefed Planning Commission on the Natural Resource Land Designation Review Report (*Report*);

**April 2 to May 21**, comment period on the contents of the *Report*;

**May 21, 2021**, the Planning Commission will discuss and provide comments on the topics starting on page 36 of the *Report*; and

**Summer 2021**, Additional public input during workshops, work sessions, and public hearings.

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The *Report* analysis focuses on whether natural resource land designations are consistent with the SJC Comprehensive Plan (*Plan*).
- In general, the analysis has confirmed that the natural resource land designations are consistent with the *Plan*.
- In May, Planning Commission will be asked to give feedback on the land use review requests discussed in the *Report*.

# ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF RESOURCE LANDS

- Acreage farmed and average size of farm is falling;
- Number of farms and farm employment are increasing;
- Many farmers rely on non-farm income such as that from providing services for visitors; and
- Agriculture is economically challenging but locally important.

# ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF RESOURCE LANDS

- Employment in forestry is projected to decline slightly and then remain relatively flat;
- The volume of timber harvested per acre is below the state average; and
- Difficult transport of timber off-island is a significant challenge.

# **NATURAL RESOURCE LAND DESIGNATIONS**

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**The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires that the County designate urban growth areas, rural lands, and natural resource lands.**

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**Natural resource land (NRL) designations should maintain and enhance natural resource industries.**

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**The designations and corresponding regulations are intended to protect these lands from developing with permanent and incompatible land uses.**

# **NRL AND GMA**

## **Three Primary GMA Requirements:**

- **Lands are not ‘characterized by urban growth’;**
- **The land has long-term commercial significance for resource production; and**
- **The land is used or capable of being used for producing natural resource production**

# NRL DESIGNATION REVIEW

## Why review NRL designations?

- The GMA requires the review of natural resource land designations during the Comprehensive Plan (*Plan*) periodic review.
- The purpose of the review is to ensure that these designations meet the County *Plan* criteria.



**The review should be limited to the question of consistency with the comprehensive plan, rather than revisiting the entire prior designation and regulation process (WAC 365-196-480(2)(e)).**



# ***PLAN* CRITERIA**

**Existing *Plan*:** criteria are unclear.

- Because the *Plan AG* designation criteria are too general, many parcels that are probably not commercially significant nonetheless meet the *Plan* designation criteria.
- The Forest Resource designation criteria are too specific, they run the risk of excluding lands that have more long-term commercial significance.

**During Update:** new designation policies to clarify the criteria and ensure that the designation criteria can accurately identify commercially significant NRL.

# METHODOLOGY

We are Here



☑ Phase One: Analyze all parcels for how they might meet the GMA designation criteria.

☑ Phase Two: Analyze all parcels for how they might meet the *Plan* designation criteria.

Phase Three: Obtain public input on potential designation changes.

Phase Four: Conduct in-depth analysis of potential re-designations and prepare Official Map alternatives.

# PHASE ONE: LCS I

During Phase One, all parcels are analyzed for how they meet the long-term commercial significance criteria in the GMA.

The Long-Term Commercial Significance Index (LCSI) was calculated to quantify how much each parcel meets the GMA Long-Term Commercial criteria.

Points were assigned for each criterion from the GMA.

The total score for each parcel is the LCSI.

# PHASE ONE: LCSI

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Calculated for both AG and Forestry for every parcel.

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Fifty point maximum.

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Higher LCSI = more commercially significant.

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LCSI greater than 38 is commercially significant.

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Parcels scoring more than 38 are the top 5% of all parcels.

WAC 365-190-050(3)(c)

(c) The land has long-term commercial significance for agriculture. In determining this factor, counties and cities should consider the following nonexclusive criteria, as applicable:

(i) The classification of prime and unique farmland soils as mapped by the Natural Resources Conservation Service;

(ii) The availability of public facilities, including roads used in transporting agricultural products;

**Parcels with more prime and unique farmland soils get a higher AG LCSI score**

(iii) Tax status, including whether lands are enrolled under the county use tax assessment under chapter 84.34 RCW and whether the optional permanent rights;

**Parcels adjacent to or near to public roads get a higher AG LCSI score because they have a greater availability of public facilities used in transporting agricultural**

**Parcels on ferry served islands with UGAs have greater access to markets and get a higher AG LCSI score.**

**or's use code (i.e. open space, agricultural or open space taxation) get a higher AG LCSI score**

**et a higher AG LCSI**

practices;

(v) **Parcels surrounded by larger parcels (less intense land use)**

(ix) History **Parcel sets (lot patterns) get a higher AG**

(x) Land value

(xi) Proximity to markets.

**xi is factored with viii. x is not factored into the LCSI because land values are assumed to be higher under alternative, more intense uses.**

**WAC 365-190-060(2)(c)**

The land has long-term commercial significance. [...] Counties and cities should use the private forest land grades of the department of revenue (WAC 458-40-530). This system incorporates consideration of growing capacity, productivity, and soil composition of the land. Forest land of long-term commercial significance will generally have a predominance of the higher private forest land grades. However, the presence of lower private forest land grades within the areas of predominantly higher grades need not preclude designation as forest land.



**Parcels with a higher PFLG get a better FO LCSI score. The PFLG is a scale from 1-5, with 1 being the highest grade and five being the most challenging areas for forestry.**

**WAC 365-190-060**

[...]

(4) Counties and cities must also consider the effects of proximity to population areas and the possibility of more intense uses of the land as indicated by the following criteria as applicable:

(a) The availability of public services and facilities conducive to the conversion of forest land;

(b) The **Parcels that are not served by water and sewer get a higher FO LCS I score** forest lands of long-term commercial significance are located outside the urban and suburban areas and rural settlements;

(c) The size **Parcels enrolled in the Designated Forest Land or Current Use Timberland tax programs get a higher FO LCS I score**

(d) The com long-te **Parcels on ferry served islands with better access to markets for timber products get a higher FO LCS I score**

(e) Pro 84.34 F **Parcels with neighboring parcels with forestry, op, space, or undeveloped Assessor's use codes get a higher FO LCS I score.**

(f) Loca and **arm commercial production;**

(g) History of land development permits issued nearby.

# PHASE TWO: *PLAN* CRITERIA

Parcels were analyzed for whether they meet the *Plan* criteria.

Analysis included both existing and proposed *Plan* criteria.

Two of the proposed *Plan* criteria were not included.

Phase Two helps determine the central question: “Are the existing natural resource land designations consistent with the Comprehensive Plan?”



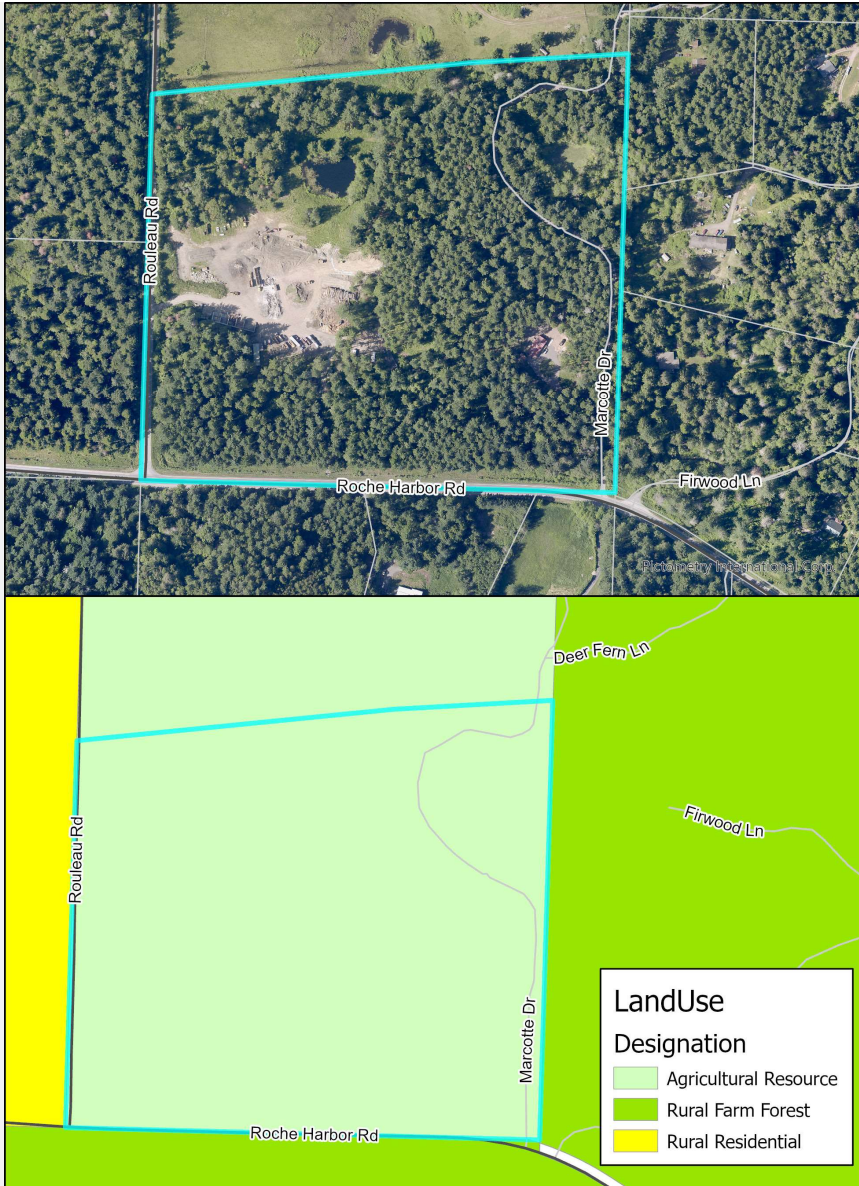
# MAP WALKTHROUGH

Review the maps provided  
in *Report Appendix B*.

A person wearing light-colored work gloves is using a hand saw to cut through a large log in a forest. The background is filled with fallen leaves and tree trunks, suggesting an autumn or winter setting. The saw is positioned diagonally across the frame, with the person's hands visible on the left side.

# LAND USE REVIEW REQUESTS

Overview of requests submitted by property owners, staff analysis, and recommendations



18-0017 TPN 361931001000 Report pg. 37

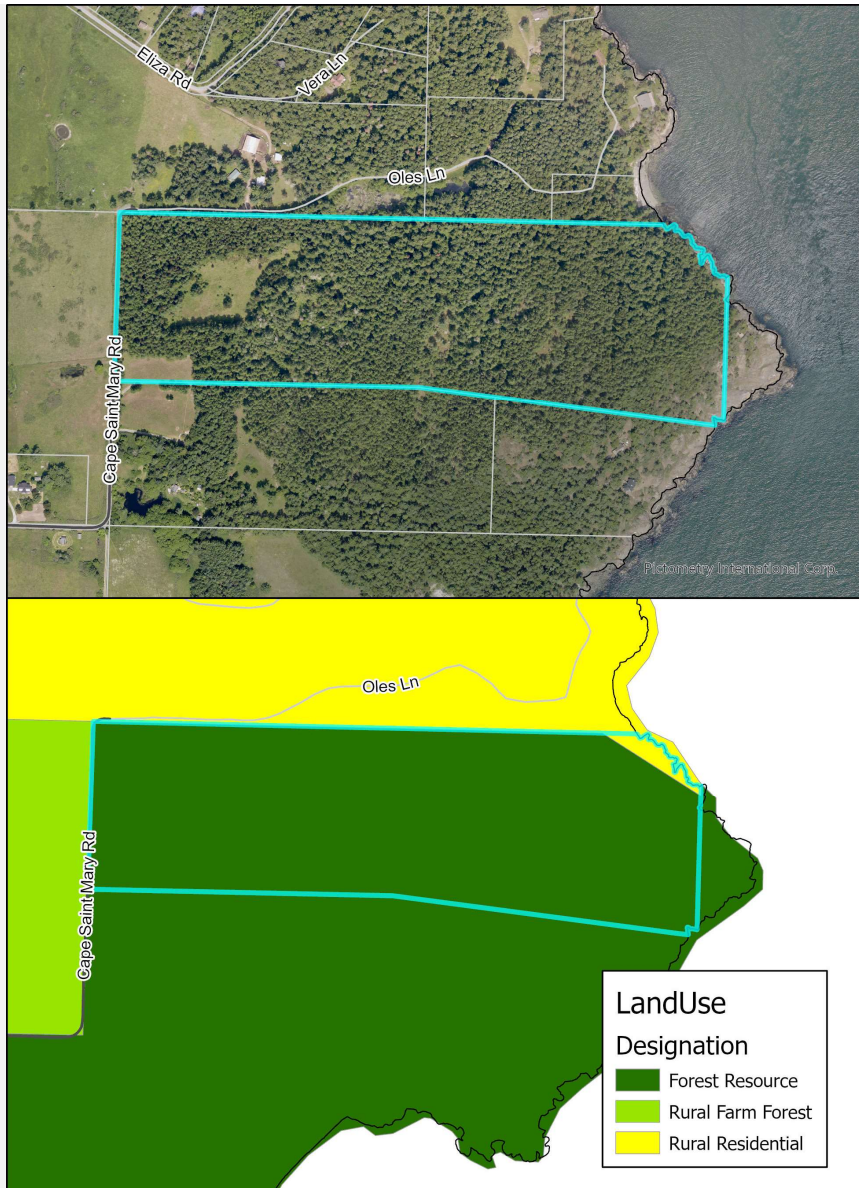
**Request:** de-designate a 34.76-acre parcel, from Agricultural Resource (AG) and designate as Rural General Use (RGU).

**Analysis:** Parcel meets GMA and *Plan* designation criteria:

- Commercially significant;
- Capable of being used for agriculture;
- Not characterized by urban growth; and
- In an area with at least 200 contiguous acres of farmland and residential density is less than one dwelling/10 acres.

**Recommendation:** Do not de-designate this parcel because it meets both state and local designation criteria.





19-0004 TPN 141611001000 Report pg. 43

**Request:** De-designate TPN 141611001000, a 43.47-acre parcel, from Forest Resource (FOR) and change it to Rural Farm Forest (RFF).

**Analysis:** Parcel meets GMA and *Plan* designation criteria:

- Commercially significant;
- Capable of being used for forestry;
- Not characterized by urban growth; and
- In an area with over 500 contiguous acres of forest land and residential density is less than one dwelling/15 acres.

**Recommendation:** Do not de-designate this parcel. It meets both GMA and *Plan* natural resource land designation criteria.



20-0002 TPN 173533001000 Report pg. 46

**Request:** De-designate TPN 173533001000 from Forest Resource (FOR) to Rural Farm Forest (RFF).

**Analysis:** Parcel is not commercially significant and does not meet *Plan* designation criteria. See *Report* for details.

**Recommendation:** De-designate this parcel and the four other five-acre parcels to the south because they are not commercially significant and do not meet the *Plan* Forest Resource land designation criteria.

# NEXT STEPS

- Discuss the response to the land use review requests;
- Incorporate response with other Official Map changes;
- Get public comment during Official Map public workshops and work sessions;
- Staff conducts in-depth analysis for Phase Four of the Methodology; and
- Planning Commission makes recommendation to Council after a public hearing.

# METHODOLOGY

✓ **Phase One:** Analyze all parcels for how they might meet the GMA designation criteria.

✓ **Phase Two:** Analyze all parcels for how they

**More analysis still  
to come**

on criteria.

**Phase Three:** Obtain public input on potential designation changes.

**Phase Four:** Conduct in-depth analysis of potential re-designations and prepare Official Map alternatives.

# UPCOMING DISCUSSION



- **Planning Commission meeting May 21**
- **Can continue to June 18 meeting**
- **Public workshops and Planning Commission public work sessions to follow**

# PUBLIC COMMENTS

**Comment Period: April 2 through May 21**

**Please send public comments to**

**[compplancomments@sanjuanco.com](mailto:compplancomments@sanjuanco.com)**

# QUESTIONS?



**Adam Zack**

**Planner III, Department of Community  
Development**

**(360) 370-7580**

**[adamz@sanjuanco.com](mailto:adamz@sanjuanco.com)**