



**DOUGLAS COUNTY**  
**TRANSPORTATION & LAND SERVICES**

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## Open Space Public Benefit Rating System Eligibility Criteria Checklist

The following checklist includes the Priority Resources of the Douglas County Public Benefit Rating System (PBRs). The checklist provides details of each resource considered for the property tax incentive. Use this checklist to help you determine whether your property is eligible for open space classification. Submit the checklist and all professional reports with your completed application packet. Refer to Douglas County Code Chapter 3.52 for complete definitions and eligibility criteria.

### **HIGH PRIORITY OPEN SPACE RESOURCES (5 POINTS EACH)**

- Type/Category 1 Wetlands
  - a. Must be rated by a qualified wetland biologist to verify that:
    1. The parcel contains undisturbed/undeveloped areas 5,000 square feet in size and greater; and
    2. It is inundated or saturated by surface water or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions; and
    3. The wetland has a minimum buffer area of 150 feet landward from the edge of the wetland *or* such amount of the minimum buffer as contained within the parcel
  
- Type/Category 2 Wetlands within Columbia River Jurisdictional Limits of the SMP
  - a. Must be rated by a qualified wetland biologist to verify that:
    1. Parcels within the Columbia River shoreline as defined by the Douglas County Regional Shoreline Master Program (SMP) contain undisturbed/undeveloped areas 5,000 square feet in size and greater; and
    2. It is inundated or saturated by surface water or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions; and
    3. The wetland has a minimum buffer area of 150 feet landward from the edge of the wetland *or* such amount of the minimum buffer as contained within the parcel
  
- Natural Shoreline Environments
  - a. Must be rated by a qualified wetland biologist to verify that:
    1. The wetland is designated "Natural" in the SMP and adjacent to the water; and

2. It contains both Zone 1 aquatic habitat buffer and Zone 2 high quality habitat conservation buffer; and
3. It does not overlap with the “Conservancy Shoreline Environment” or other wetland categories of the PBRs; and
4. No structures or buildings are within:
  - 200 feet upland from the ordinary high water mark (OHWM); or
  - 200 feet from the edge of an associated wetland boundary; or
  - 200 feet back from the edge of the bluff in a natural shoreline environment

Privately Owned Trails and Corridors

- a. Must remain in private ownership; and
- b. Must be publicly accessible from a public road or public trail; and
- c. Must be restricted to non-motorized transportation and recreational activities (i.e. hiking, biking, walking, horseback riding and jogging)

Historic Landmarks/Archeological Sites

- a. Must be listed on the state, county or local list or register of historic places and landmarks with local regulatory protection; or
- b. Must be contributing properties within designated historic districts; or
- c. Must be qualified by an archaeologist to contain archaeological resources

**MEDIUM PRIORITY OPEN SPACE RESOURCES (3 POINTS EACH)**

Conservancy Shoreline Environments

- a. Must be rated by a qualified wetland biologist to verify that:
  1. It is designated in the SMP “Rural Conservancy” or “Urban Conservancy” including associated wetlands; and
  2. It contains Zone 1 aquatic habitat buffer and Zone 2 high quality habitat conservation buffer; and
  3. Is adjacent to the water; and
  4. No structures or buildings are within:
    - 165 feet upland from the ordinary high water mark (OHWM); or
    - 165 feet from the edge of an associated wetland boundary; or
    - 165 feet back from the edge of the bluff in a “Conservancy” shoreline environment
- b. Cannot overlap with the “Natural Shoreline Environment” or other wetland categories of the PBRs

Type/Category 2 Wetlands *not* within the Columbia River Jurisdictional Boundaries of the SMP

- a. Must be rated by a qualified wetland biologist to verify that:
  1. It contains undisturbed/undeveloped areas 20,000 square feet in size and greater; and
  2. It is inundated or saturated by surface water or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions; and
  3. It contains minimum wetland buffers as required by those provisions set forth in the SMP or DCC 19.18B

- Urban Growth Area Open Space
  - a. Must be five or more acres of eligible land; and
  - b. Must be open to the public; and
  - c. Must be located within the boundaries of an Urban Growth Area (UGA)

*Note: Land shall be considered open to the public if it qualifies for receiving any points for public access as defined in Douglas County Code Chapter 3.52.*

- Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas
  - a. Must contain a federal or state threatened, endangered, or sensitive species den, nesting, or breeding site, migration corridors or feeding areas of terrestrial species; or
  - b. Must be parcels that are encumbered by at least 50% of a fish and wildlife habitat conservation area as defined in *Douglas County Code Chapter 3.52*

### **LOW PRIORITY OPEN SPACE RESOURCES (1 POINT EACH)**

- Type/Category 3 and Type/Category 4 Wetlands
  - a. Must be rated by a qualified wetland biologist to verify that:
    1. It contains undisturbed/undeveloped area one acre (43,560 square feet) in size or greater; and
    2. Is inundated or saturated by surface water or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions; and
    3. A minimum buffer area, as required in the SMP, is contained within the parcel.
- Scenic Natural Resources, Viewpoints, and View Corridors
  - a. Must be parcels of ten or more acres in size with natural features that are visually significant to the aesthetic character of the county; or
  - b. Must be parcels that provide a view of an area which is visually significant to the aesthetic character of the county and which provides unlimited public access identified by a permanent sign readily visible from a road or other right-of-way; or
  - c. Must be an area of adjoining parcels which individually may be less than one acre but which, when combined, total at least one acre and create a view corridor critical to maintaining a view of a scenic resource area of other visually significant area.

*Note: Parcels that have been subject to commercial logging or mineral extraction within 25 years of the date of the open space classification application are ineligible under the PBRS*

- Flood Hazard Areas
  - a. Must be parcels with more than 50% of their area located within a regulatory floodplain designated in an "A" category; and
  - b. Be subject to a 1% or greater chance of flooding in any given year; and
  - c. Must not contain any residential structures or critical facilities in the regulatory floodplain

- Geologic Hazard Areas
  - a. Must be rated by a licensed professional geologist or engineering geologist to verify that:
    1. At least 50% of the parcel is encumbered by the geologic hazard; and
    2. It is not suited to the siting of commercial, residential, or industrial development; and
    3. It contains areas of undisturbed vegetation located within geologically hazardous areas potentially subject to landslides based on a combination of geologic, topographic, and hydrologic factors, which include areas susceptible because of any combination of bedrock, soil, slope (gradient), slope aspect, structure, hydrology, or other factors

*Examples* of these may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Areas of historic failures, such as areas designated as quaternary slumps, earthflows, mudflows, lahars, or landslides on maps published as the United States Geological Survey or Department of Natural Resources division of geology and earth resources;
- Slopes having gradients steeper than 80% subject to rockfall during seismic shaking;
- Areas located in a canyon or on an active alluvial fan, presently or potentially subject to inundation by debris flows or catastrophic flooding;
- Any area with a slope of 45% percent or steeper and with a vertical relief of ten or more feet except areas composed of consolidated rock.

### **BONUS SYSTEM (17 BONUS POINTS MAXIMUM)**

Additional point values may be applied for the following eligible lands:

(Lands not containing a listed *Priority Resource* are ineligible under the PBRs)

- Enhanced Surface Water Quality Buffer – 1, 3, or 5 points
  - a. Parcels which provide an additional buffer which is preserved from clearing, grading, agricultural activities and livestock intrusion. (Refer to *Douglas County Code Chapter 3.52* for eligibility calculations); and
  - b. Provides property use and access restrictions beyond those specified in Douglas County Code, SMP and other surface water protection regulations
  
- Contiguous Parcels Under Separate Ownership - 3 points
  - a. Parcels abutting each other or abutting a publicly owned open space without significant manmade barriers restricting free movement of wildlife or interfering with the visual continuity between the two or more properties; and
  - b. Contiguous parcels with the same qualifying open space resources as defined by the PBRs system will be treated as a single parcel if open space classification is sought under the same application; and
  - c. All requirements of an application must be accepted by all property owners involved

- Conservation/Historic/Trail Easement in Perpetuity – 5 points
  - a. Any parcel that qualifies for any high, medium, or low open space resource classification; and
  - b. An easement effective during the period of classification and market value reduction that restricts further potential development or other uses of a property, and which may include a requirement for native growth protection; and
  - c. Must be in a form, and with such conditions, as are acceptable to the county

**Bonus Public Access Points:**

- Unlimited Public Access – 5 points
  - a. Year-round access to the general public be allowed without special arrangement with the property owner; and
  - b. Signage must be posted; and
  - c. Conditions and permitting of accessibility may apply; and
  - d. Hold Harmless Agreement required
- Limited Public Access/Sensitive Area – 5 points
  - a. May be documented by a qualified professional to document that access will be reasonably limited due to the sensitive nature of the eligible resource; and
  - b. Access allowed only to appropriate use groups, generally for an educational, scientific, or research purpose through special arrangement with the property owner; and
  - c. Conditions and permitting of accessibility may apply; and
  - d. Hold Harmless Agreement required
- Privately Owned Shorelands Access - 5 points
  - a. Public access to the shorelands from a public right-of-way; and
  - b. Entry points and uses may be posted so that it does not detract from the resource; and
  - c. Conditions and permitting of accessibility may apply; and
  - d. Hold Harmless Agreement required
- Limited Public Access - 3 points
  - a. Access to the public allowed with or without special arrangements with the property owner, for any period of more than six months and less than the full calendar year; or
  - b. Access to any and all of the general public during any period of the year upon special arrangements with the owner or upon the payment of a user fee, not to exceed twice the cost for members of the organization utilizing the facility
  - c. Signage must be posted; and
  - d. Conditions and permitting of accessibility may apply; and
  - e. Hold Harmless Agreement required

## **SUPER BONUS SYSTEM**

Properties with at least one (1) high priority open space resource and which allow unlimited public access, or limited public access if due to resource sensitivity, and which convey to a land trust organization or similar entity a conservation, historic, or trail easement effective during the period of classification and market value reduction, or real property title, in a form approved by the county, shall be automatically eligible for current use value at twenty-five percent (25%) of market value.

## **APPLICANT'S NARRATIVE:**

For each category you checked on your application, please provide a brief narrative answering the following questions on a separate sheet of paper:

- *How does your property meet the definition of the category?*
- *Why should the category be awarded?*
- *How many acres contain the open space resources checked on your application?*

You may submit additional documents to support your application such as: photographs, affidavits, sketches, etc. Please note additional information may be required upon review of the application.

## **APPLICATION RESOURCES:**

*Douglas County Code Chapter 3.52*

<http://www.codepublishing.com/WA/douglascounty/>

*"Open Space Taxation Act"* Washington State Department of Revenue, June 2012

[http://dor.wa.gov/docs/pubs/prop\\_tax/openspace.pdf](http://dor.wa.gov/docs/pubs/prop_tax/openspace.pdf)

Douglas County Assessor

203 S. Rainier St

Waterville, WA 98858

<http://www.douglascountywa.net/departments/assessor/default.asp>

Douglas County

Transportation and Land Services

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East Wenatchee, WA 98802

(509) 884-7173

[www.douglascounty.net](http://www.douglascounty.net)

Department of Revenue, Property Tax Division

P.O. Box 47471

Olympia, WA 98504-7471

(360) 534-1400

<http://dor.wa.gov/content/FindTaxesAndRates/PropertyTax/Default.aspx>

*This checklist shall be used in consultation with planning staff to determine the appropriate application materials. Application fees are required. Additional information and/or materials may be required.*