

## O'Donnell, Mary Beth

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**From:** Cnty Board of County Councilors General Delivery  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 05, 2015 10:01 AM  
**To:** McCauley, Mark  
**Cc:** Swanson, Axel; Orjiako, Oliver; O'Donnell, Mary Beth; Tilton, Rebecca  
**Subject:** Write your Councilor



fyi - sent to BOCC direct from Val.

**First Name:** Val  
**Last Name:** Alexander  
**Phone:** 360-263-2521  
**Email:** coyoteridge@tds.net  
**Address:** 2404 NW Coyote Ridge Rd.  
**City:** La Center  
**State:** WA  
**Subject:** 98629  
**Message:** Hi:

If you are like me, you get complaints from some local governments that public land somehow harms their economy. Our Legislature's Joint Legislative Joint Legislative Audit & Review Committee (JLARC) recently completed a Preliminary Report: Economic Impact of Public Natural Resource Lands. That report found the following [what follows is a direct quote from the webpage below]:

In general, the percentage of public natural resource lands in Washington counties did not negatively affect job, income, or population growth between 1990 and 2010 Economists from Washington State University (WSU) conducted a regression analysis of Washington's 39 counties. Regression analysis is a statistical process that estimates the relationships between a factor and an outcome while controlling for other factors. (Learn more in Technical Appendix.) Overall percent of public natural resource land is not a major driver of county job, income, and population growth The economists analyzed the relationship between the percent of public lands in each county and job, income, and population growth.

- \* For this study, public lands are defined as state and federal recreation, habitat, conservation, and trust lands.
- \* The analysis focused on job, income, and population growth because these are common measures of economic vitality in the academic literature.
- \* The economists looked at percent change in job, income, and net population between 1990-2000 and between 2000-2010 for each county in Washington. This approach captures periods of economic growth and decline.

The analysis found no strong relationship between the percent of public lands and these county economic vitality measures.

- \* This means that a change in the percentage of publicly owned land in a county is not expected to strongly affect county economic vitality in a positive or negative manner.
- \* The regression controlled for population density, interstate highway density, land topography, and other county characteristics.

A subset of lands managed for conservation, habitat, or passive recreation has a small positive relationship to income and job growth. The economists identified a slightly different result for a subset of lands that are primarily managed for conservation, habitat, or passive recreation (e.g., wildlife viewing) purposes. The subset excluded lands managed for revenue generation and developed recreation. The economists found a small positive relationship between the percent of these lands in a county and income and job growth.

- \* The results indicate that a 1 percent increase in the percentage of conservation, habitat, or passive recreation lands in a county may be related to a 0.28 percent increase in income growth and a 0.15 percent increase in job growth.

- \* These lands frequently attract visitors for hiking, fishing, wildlife viewing, and other recreational activities. Visitors may generate business for local restaurants, hotels, gas stations, and recreational industry stores. These lands might also attract new businesses or residents to the local area, which can lead to county-level job and income growth.

Given the small relationship, the economists expect that recent acquisitions of these lands are unlikely to have generated a noticeable change in a county's income or jobs.

Results of this study for Washington are consistent with academic literature. The economists' review of similar academic studies published over the last 25 years found no consistent evidence to suggest a negative relationship between the presence of public lands and local economies. In general, these studies:

- \* Either do not demonstrate a statistically significant relationship or show a positive relationship between the presence of public lands and regional income.

- \* Do not indicate that public lands have substantial effects on job or wage growth.

- \* Suggest that population growth and increased property values are related to the amenities provided by the presence of public lands such as nature preserves, open space, parks, and forests.

Regression results indicate the effect of public lands in general, not specific sites. The regression analysis included all public natural resource lands collectively in Washington's 39 counties. The results indicate that, in general, the proportion of these lands did not have a major effect on county economies between 1990 and 2010. However, this does not rule out the possibility that specific sites within a county may have a positive or negative impact on the local economy, as described in the next section.

You can find out more here: <http://leg.wa.gov/jlarc/reports/2015/PublicLandsEcon/p/default.htm>

You can find a staff presentation here: <http://leg.wa.gov/jlarc/Pages/default.aspx>

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