

RCW 79.17.300 Trust land transfer program. (1) The department is authorized to create and manage a trust land transfer program. Real property available for the trust land transfer program is economically underperforming state land and state forestland with high ecological or public benefit and deemed appropriate for state parks, fish and wildlife habitats, natural area preserves, natural resources conservation areas, community forests, recreation, or other public purposes.

(2) Underperforming state land and state forestland is land that the department determines has limited potential to generate income in the reasonably foreseeable future due to physical, legal, access, or other constraints. The department may use the real property transfer authorities under this chapter and chapter 79.22 RCW, as appropriate, to complete transfers under the trust land transfer program.

(3) The department shall use legislative appropriations for approved trust land transfers to acquire replacement real property that will provide long-term, sustainable revenue to the trust beneficiaries or is otherwise desirable to be added to the affected trust and to pay for the department's administrative expenses to complete the transfer, including the cost of department staff time, appraisals, surveys, environmental reviews, and other similar costs of the program.

(4) Transfers funded by legislative appropriation must be at fair market value, including the value of land, timber, other valuable materials, and improvements owned by the state. The legislative appropriation must be deposited in the natural resources real property replacement account created in RCW 79.17.210 and the parkland trust revolving fund established in RCW 43.30.385, as appropriate.

(5) The department shall prioritize the acquisition of working farms and forests when acquiring replacement real property for state lands transferred under this program when it can be demonstrated that the trust fiduciary obligations can be better fulfilled with these lands. The department shall endeavor to acquire replacement real property as quickly as practicable.

(6) The department shall only submit real properties for trust land transfers to the board or legislature through the process created in RCW 79.17.310 if at least 50 percent of all previous appropriations provided after July 23, 2023, for purchase of replacement lands for the trust land transfer program have been utilized to purchase replacement trust lands. The list of properties submitted to the board or legislature for possible trust land transfers through the process created in RCW 79.17.310 may not exceed \$30,000,000 in total property value for each year the list is submitted. [2023 c 383 § 2.]

Findings—2023 c 383: "(1) The legislature finds that some state lands and state forestlands have a low potential for natural resource management or low income-generating potential or are inefficient for the department of natural resources to manage due to geographic location or other factors.

(2) The legislature further finds that some of these lands have high ecological values and public benefits and should be maintained in public ownership as a park, open space, nature preserve, or similar designation to benefit the people of Washington.

(3) The legislature further finds that the department of natural resources needs an effective program to transfer these lands out of trust status to the natural areas program, other public agencies, or

federally recognized Indian tribes, and simultaneously acquire legislative funding to acquire productive replacement lands to improve the revenue-generating performance of the state lands and state forestlands it manages.

(4) The legislature further finds that the trust land transfer program should be established within the department of natural resources with adequate funds to cover the department's expenses for administering the program and completing trust land transfers.

(5) The legislature further finds that there exists an interest by the public and trust beneficiaries that the program be well-documented and transparent, that each potential transfer be examined by the department of natural resources to ensure it is in the best interests of the trust beneficiaries, that an external advisory committee place proposed transfers into a prioritized order using standardized criteria, that the board of natural resources approve submission of the list to the legislature, and that parcels be transferred in order of priority." [2023 c 383 § 1.]