

Compromise preserves 25 acres at Wallace Falls from logging

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GOLD BAR — Snohomish County's top elected leaders endorsed a compromise Wednesday that aims to safeguard trail systems at the popular [Wallace Falls State Park](#), while providing timber revenue to local governments.

Contention over the patch of state woodland northeast of Gold Bar known as the Singletary sale has been [ongoing for almost a decade](#). The Department of Natural Resources land was set to go to auction Feb. 22. It would have included 187 acres of second-growth forest. A resolution the County Council [passed 5-0](#) would set aside 25 acres of that land. It would be protected for four years. The rest could be logged sooner. Money from the trust sale would provide funding for schools, firefighters and other local taxing districts. Environmentalists and trail advocates [worried about the impact](#) to natural habitat and the local tourism industry if the area is logged.

County Councilman Sam Low played a lead role hammering out the resolution.

"The best part about this is helping our junior taxing districts finally be made whole or begin the process of being made whole," Low said.

"I think my constituents really wanted me to find a solution that works for everybody," he said.

The county made a recommendation. The actual decision will be up to the DNR's Board of Natural Resources, which is set to [meet Tuesday](#) in Olympia. Before enlisting support for the compromise, Low met with state Commissioner of Public Lands Hilary Franz, the elected official who heads the DNR.

Franz decided to bring the issue back to the natural resources board, said Bob Redling, a spokesman for the agency.

There's significant revenue at play for local governments. The minimum bid had been set for nearly \$1.8 million, though that amount could go down with the size of the harvest.

The proposed timber harvest is a small piece of the DNR's Reiter Forest, which partially surrounds 4,700-acre Wallace Falls State Park.

Mike Town, of Duvall, is part of an advisory group helping the DNR develop the area's trail network.

"The significance of the 25 acres is that it joins a Snohomish County trailhead to trails in Wallace Falls State Park and enables hikers to access Wallace Falls from an additional trailhead that would reduce the overcrowding at the primary trailhead and will link to a trail that will loop up to the highest of the two waterfalls," Town said.

By accommodating more visitors, the potential agreement also could bolster local tourism, he said.

A lingering concern for environmentalists is that timber harvest on the Singletary site would require building roads and bridges that would open the way for more logging on nearby land.

"What it does is it opens it up for more harvesting," said Kristin Kelly, of the [Pilchuck Audubon Society](#). "It's a compromise. Certainly, we would have liked to have seen the whole timber sale stopped. There have been a lot of negotiations over the past week."

The roads and bridges would reach about 2,000 additional acres, said the DNR's Redling. About three-quarters of that land could be logged, after setting aside areas for requirements such as owl habitat, wildlife buffers and steep slopes.

County Executive Dave Somers, who previously represented Low's council district in eastern Snohomish County, also supported the give-and-take approach.

"When we can build strong partnerships across the region and state, the public benefits," Somers said in a prepared statement. "This proposed compromise gives us a balanced solution to an important issue. We value our natural heritage and also the responsibilities of DNR to manage public lands."

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