

# Election Results Will Bring Changes in State Forest Management

by Toby Thaler

Wednesday, February 11, 2009

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The big news for the state forest lands campaign is that Peter Goldmark replaced Doug Sutherland as Commissioner of Public Lands on January 14. While most rural counties went for the incumbent, returns from King County were strong enough to sustain a 30,000 vote margin for Goldmark, or 50.55 percent. After a grudging and late concession by Sutherland, the transition is now well underway. Unfortunately, lame duck Commissioner Sutherland tried to push a number of last minute actions that may have to be addressed or reversed by Goldmark, including some that affect the Olympic.

The change to Goldmark is sure to affect all of OFCO's state lands work. After eight years of a hostile administration at the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), we are excited by the prospect. To see Goldmark's platform, see [www.petergoldmark.com](http://www.petergoldmark.com)—select "About Peter; Peter on the Issues."

The parallel change from Bush to Obama at the federal level will also affect our work. The regional directors and possibly other positions at all three key natural resource agencies—the Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service—are likely to change. EPA has a major role in the Clean Water Act assurances process leading to a major decision in summer 2009 whether the forest practices habitat conservation plan (HCP) complies with water quality requirements. The Services are responsible for overseeing forest practice HCP compliance on state and private lands. If you have contacts and interest to influence any of these crucial appointments in the Obama Administration, please contact us.

Of most direct interest to OFCO in the near term is the Olympic Experimental State Forest (OESF) plan. Under the state lands DNR HCP, the OESF is treated differently from the rest of the trust lands. DNR committed to do an EIS for the OESF plan, and its scope, alternatives, and schedule are undergoing active review. OFCO finds itself with some unity of interest with Peninsula DNR trust land beneficiaries: both groups want the OESF plan done and done well. But the beneficiaries are after certainty of revenue while we want certainty of conservation.

The OESF does not include DNR lands along the Strait or Hood Canal, so OFCO is also concerned with implementation of the HCP outside the OESF. Other pending DNR HCP issues are the development of a Marbled Murrelet conservation strategy and the treatment of small streams ("headwaters"). In addition there are forest practices compliance (Is it happening?), effectiveness monitoring (Does it work as advertised?) and disputes over the WEC v. Sutherland settlement.