

Forest Resource Lands and SJC's Comprehensive Plan Update

What are Forest Resource Lands?

"FRL" is a zoning label for parcels of land with soils and geography that make them suitable for long-term forestry use. Washington's Growth Management Act instructs every county to designate enough FRL to support the long-term viability of forestry, meaning enough land for timber to support loggers, mills, and forest product producers.

Is it really necessary to designate Forest Resource Lands?

Yes! Designating lands as FRL helps ensure that they will be used for forestry rather than conversion to denser industrial, commercial, or residential development. With development pressures higher than ever in San Juan County, we need FRLs so that the San Juans can support our current forest economy, to support our rural character, and for benefits like protecting air and water quality, aiding aquifer recharge, providing access to recreational activities, improving wildlife habitat and connectivity, and sequestering carbon.

How much Forest Resource Land do we need in San Juan County?

How much FRL is needed to support existing forestry activities? How much FRL will be needed in the future? The Comp Plan update process is supposed to include an assessment to answer these questions, but the County isn't currently planning to do that. Local foresters tell us that we can't afford to lose FRLs, yet that is just what happens in our county. Since 2000, 167 acres of FRL have been de-designated here, and the SJC Planning Commission is preliminarily recommending the elimination of an additional 127 acres.

But aren't Rural Farm Forest lands also zoned for forestry?

Yes, for small-scale forestry, but the "RFF" name can be deceptive: RFF provides for rural residential development and allows many more kinds of uses than just farming and forestry. Most RFF parcels are 5 acres or smaller, and so support forestry only in the aggregate. And as you can see from the list on the back, RFF lands allow for many more types of development than FRLs do, including uses that can conflict with forestry activities.



The FRL designation protects forests for forestry today – and for the future.

What can I do?

Let the County Council know that you support local forestry jobs, our rural character, and the water quality, aquifer, habitat, and carbon-sequestering benefits that our island-scale forests provide. Request that the Council stop de-designating FRLs until they have identified the amount we need for a sustainable forest economy in the islands. Recommend that they also explicitly recognize secondary climate benefits of forests, including water quality, habitat, and carbon sequestration in the Comp Plan update. With so many development pressures, tell the County Council that we need to designate more, not fewer FRLs in this Comp Plan update.

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What's the Difference Between RFF & FRL?

	What Can Occur on RFF Land?	What Can Occur on FRL Land?
Maximum developable area for non-forestry use	100%	20% but not less than one acre
Maximum area of impervious surface	30% not including driveways	10%
Vacation Rentals	Yes	No
Bed and breakfast inns	Yes	No
Hangars	Yes	No
Multi-family residential units	Yes	No
Rural residential cluster development	Yes	No
Playing fields	Yes	No
Indoor swimming pools	Yes	No
Animal shelters and kennels	Yes	No
Veterinary clinics	Yes	No
Any commercial use with permit	Yes	No



For more information, contact Friends' Executive Director Brent Lyles
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