

**Shawangunk Ridge, NY**

In partnership with Open Space Institute, we have protected more than 21,300 acres on and around the Shawangunk Ridge.

Photo by: Chris Bennett



**Reimagining Rural Land Conservation & Outdoor Recreation  
Session 1**

February 14, 2024



Connecting everyone to the outdoors™





# Welcome!

**In the chat, share your name and where you're joining us from.**



# Agenda

## Leveraging Natural, Historical, and Cultural Assets for Growth and Vitality

- Introductions & Warm Up
- Community of Practice Overview
- Presentations
- Breakout Discussion
- Closing





# Meet the Team



**David Patton**

VP Center of Strategic  
Leadership  
National Lands Initiative  
Director



**Brenda Rubio**

Project Associate, California  
Gen Now



**Sophie Neuhaus**

Sr. Program Associate  
10-Minute Walk



**Christina Jang**

Associate Director  
10-Minute Walk

# Warm Up

**As you hear each “I” Statement, put a +1 or thumbs up in the chat if the statement resonates with you.**

- I am seeking to find shared goals with other sectors (philanthropic, private, nonprofit, community) to improve open space equity.
- I want to better understand what equity means in my community and planning.
- I want to have open and honest conversations about how to get this work done.
- I want to collaborate with and learn from park professionals across the country, rather than work in isolation and reinvent the wheel.

Trust for Public Land is a national nonprofit, working to create parks and protect land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come.

**We believe in  
OUTSIDE FOR ALL**





# Community is at the center of all we do.

Communities that place a high value on outdoor access for all are



**HEALTHIER**



**MORE RESILIENT**



**MORE EQUITABLE**

# Connecting everyone to the outdoors

**1 in 3 U.S. residents** do not have a park or green space within a 10-minute walk of home.

We call on municipal leaders to accelerate the creation of parks and lands that drive equitable, healthy and thriving communities.





# Communities of Practice



**Parks Maintenance:  
Policies and Funding**



**Community Power:  
Civic Engagement for a Healthy Democracy**



**Parks Plus:  
Affordable Housing**





# Reimagining Rural Land Conservation & Outdoor Recreation

## Series Overview:

- February 14 - Leveraging Natural, Historical, and Cultural Assets for Growth and Vitality
- April 10 - Economic Benefits of Public and Conserved Lands
- June 12 - Effective and Equitable Community Engagement
- September 11 - Data and Tools to Evaluate Opportunities
- October 23 - Roadmap to Maximizing Land Conservation and Outdoor Recreation



# Reimagining Rural Land Conservation and Outdoor Recreation

Leveraging Natural, Historical, and Cultural Assets for Growth and Vitality



## Key challenges:

- (Re)vitalization with fewer resources
- Meeting multiple objectives



# Reimagining Land for People

Reducing infrastructure and Public Service Costs

Increasing economic development

Improving Public Health

Protecting the Environment

Climate Mitigation

Quality of Life & People



# Rural Communities of Practice



**Planning and Engagement**



**Funding and Policy**



**Leveraging Assets**



# Today's Speakers

## Valerie Eglund

President

R.E.A.C.H. San Benito Parks Foundation

San Benito County, CA



## Sarah Spaeth

Director, Conservation & Strategic Partnerships

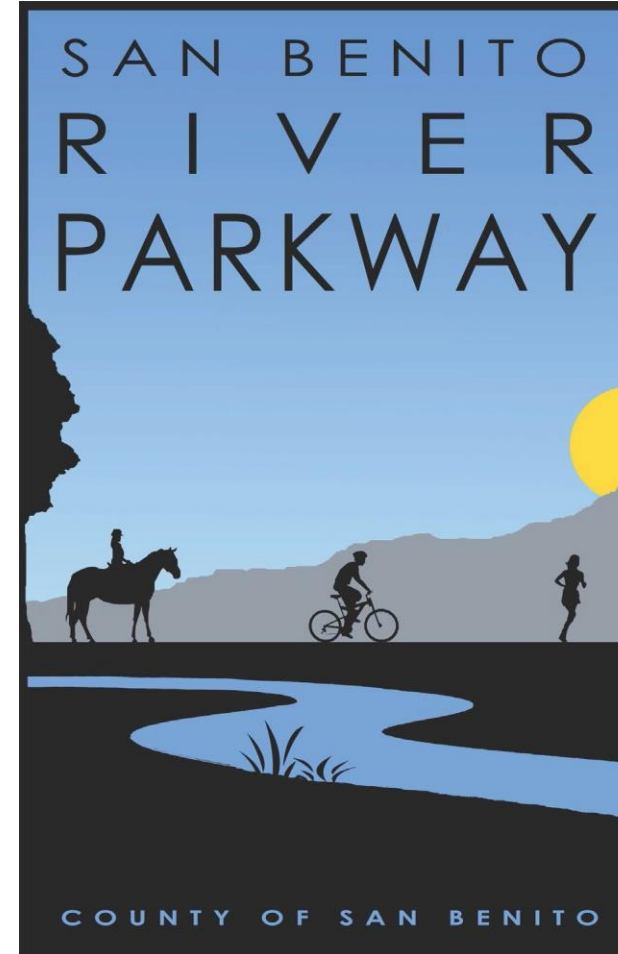
Jefferson Land Trust

Jefferson County, WA



# Reimagining Rural Land Conservation and Outdoor Recreation

Leveraging Natural, Historical,  
and Cultural Assets for Growth  
and Vitality in San Benito  
County, California







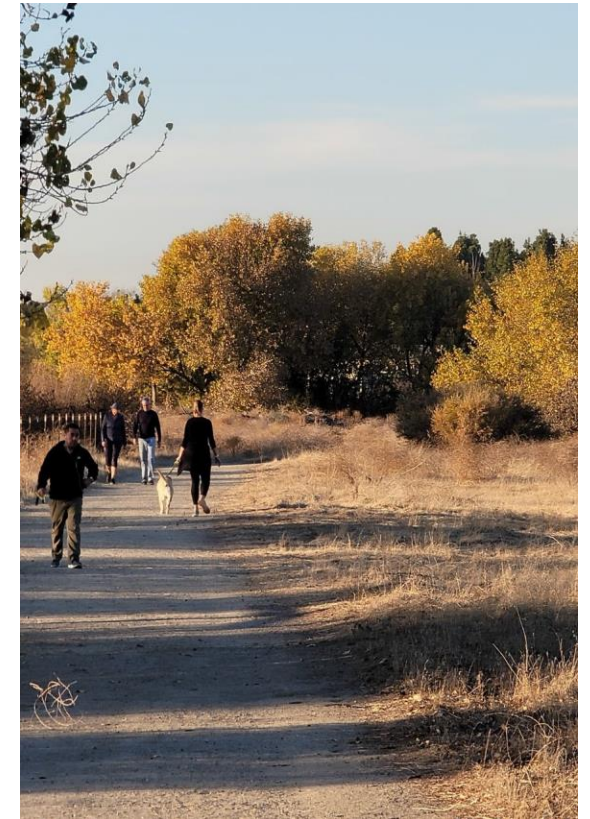
“The mission of R.E.A.C.H. San Benito Parks Foundation is to support outdoor adventure and health, raise funds and advocate for more and improved, sustainable County parks and recreation facilities, bike ways and trails for all in our San Benito County community.”



R.E.A.C.H. Mascot  
Bennie Benitoite

In the Parks Plan, the first SBC Parks and Rec Commission advised in 2012, that a parks Foundation be formed and incorporated as a nonprofit to support county parks. The name ‘Recreation, Exercise, And Community Health’, with acronym R.E.A.C.H. San Benito Foundation was incorporated in 2014 with half of the Board members continuing to be active in 2024.

- ▶ R.E.A.C.H. was identified early on as parks ‘convenors’, having no real jurisdictional or fiscal funding power. We seek to bring stakeholders together, initiating the discussion to create and accelerate the development of current and future open recreation spaces within a walkable/bikeable distance for residents and families.



Riverview Regional Park



# Parks in San Benito County

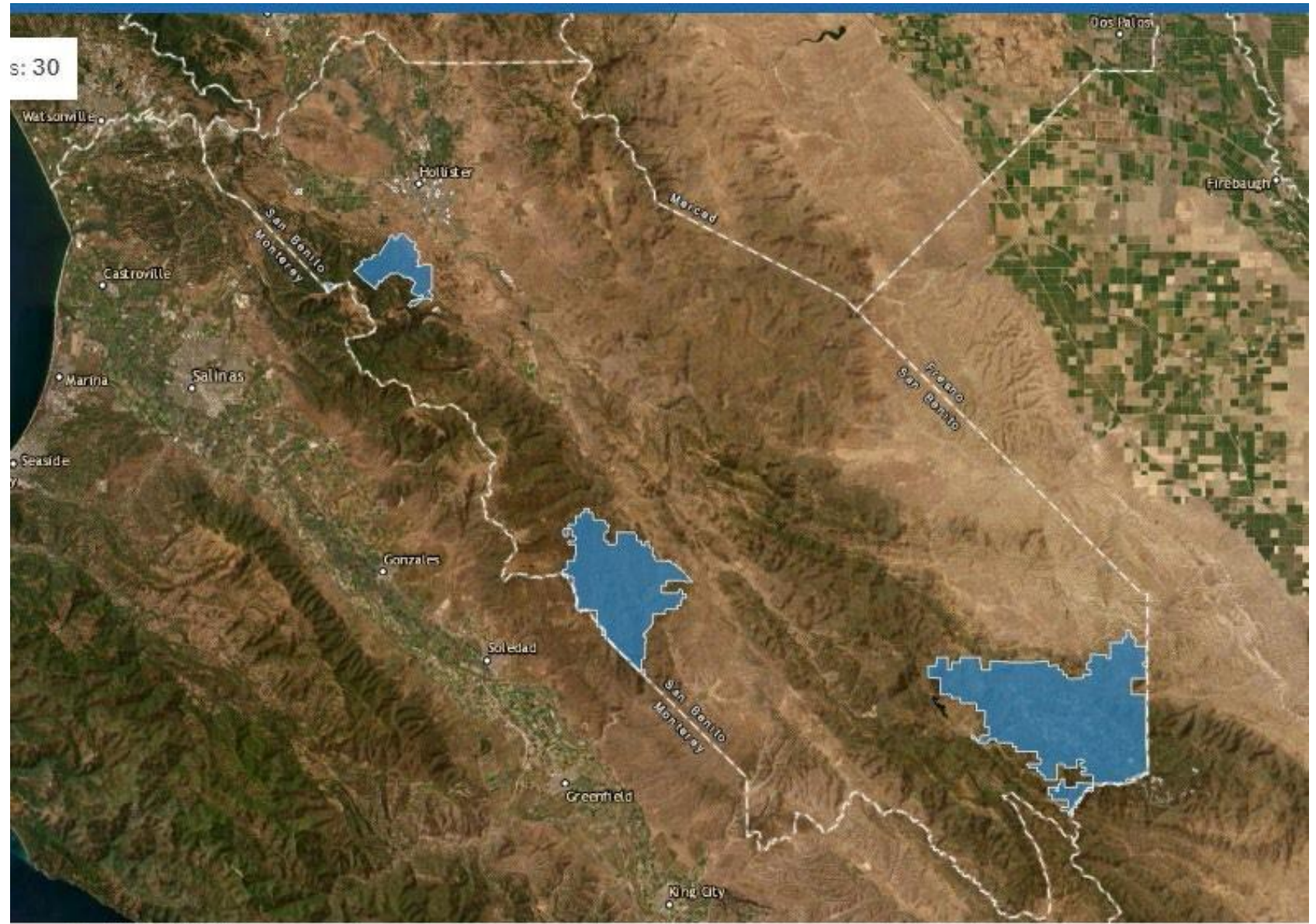
Screenshot of SBC linear and rugged.

The 750 mile long San Andreas Fault runs through the county, south to northwest creating a magical landscape.

The upper blue park is the State Vehicular Recreation Area.

The center blue area is Pinnacles National Park.

The lower blue area is Bureau of Land Management areas.



# A Snapshot

- ▶ San Benito County is geographically, economically, and politically linear in character. Its county seat is located northerly, in the high-yield agricultural and business sector.
- ▶ Hwy 25 branches off of the 101 hwy in the north, and continues the length of the *1,391 square mile county*. This highway, with many names, was once only a wagon trail. It connected Rancher's products and hay to the growing San Francisco Bay area markets. After the Railroad was extended to Tres Pinos in 1873 the county saw a rise in the economy. If horses were the engines of travel, San Benito County was the 'gas station'.
- ▶ Fully  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the county's land is rural with large cattle ranches, mining operations, and federal lands, including the Pinnacles National Park. This  $\frac{3}{4}$  is primarily politically conservative, whereas the northern  $\frac{1}{4}$  is more liberal in nature, as well as laying claim to the several California State Parks in the county.

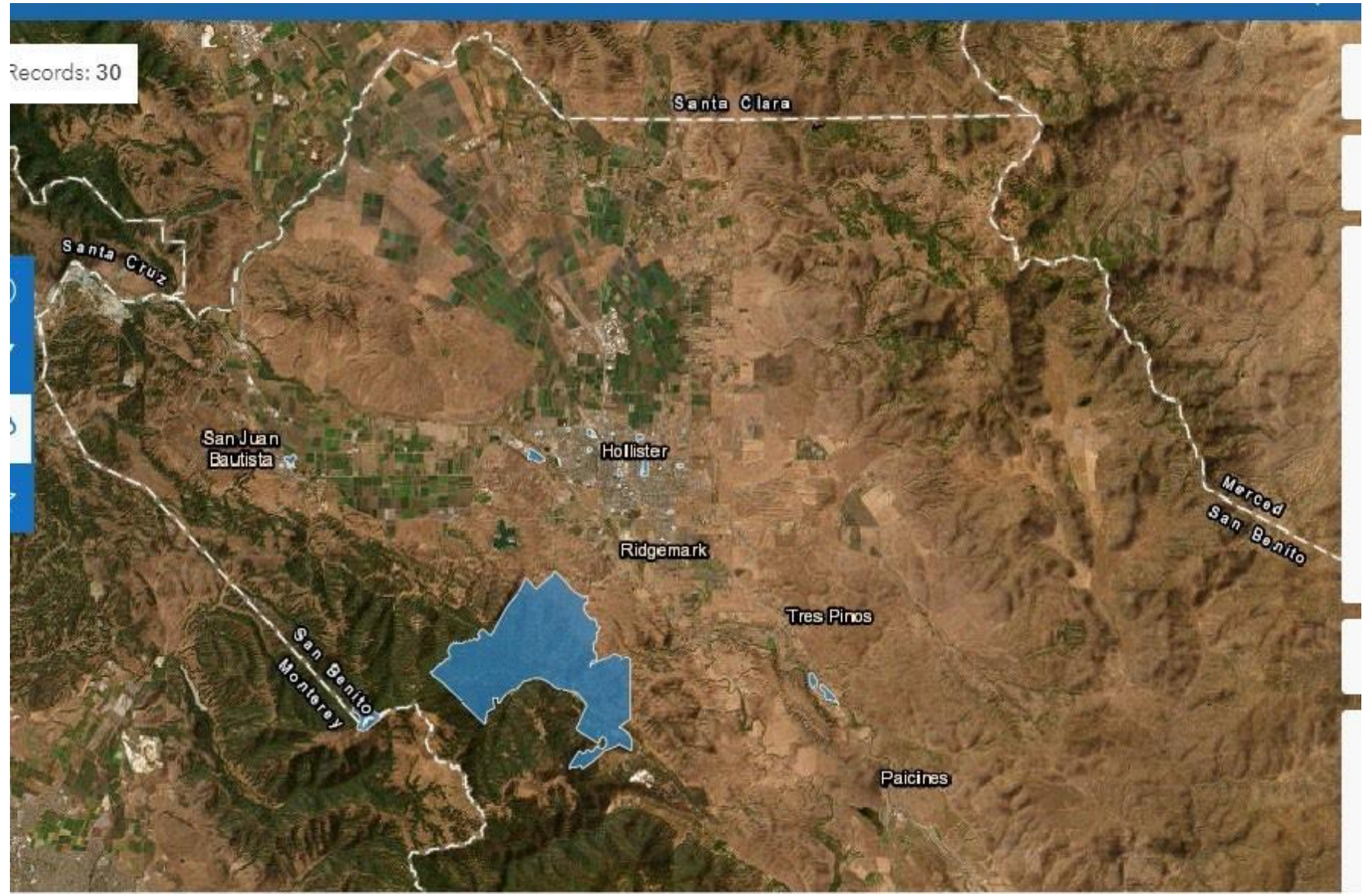


# The Northern Third of San Benito County

San Juan Bautista has several historical State Parks and a Nat'l Historic Trail designation.

Hollister has numerous City Parks and borders the developing Riverview Regional Park and River Parkway.

These two are the only incorporated cities in SBC.



## The Challenge: Unify support for equitable outdoor access.

- ▶ **San Benito County is, as shown, a rural county with a small population** heavily weighted in the Latino community. From 1980 to 2024 the population has moved toward tripling from ~ 25,000 to ~ 69,000, weighted in the farm labor force and those contrasting families working in the Bay Area seeking affordable housing with open space. This contrast in population serves to skew the perception of economic wellbeing when nonprofits and county governments are seeking grants.
- ▶ **Easily 80% of the visible open space in the county is behind a fence.** State Parks providing outdoor recreational opportunities are farther than 10 minutes outside of the city limits. Bicycle access is hampered by road conditions, lack of bike lanes, and the unwillingness of drivers to share the road.
- ▶ **The county functions on a very limited tax base** which restricts it to fulfilling only mandated requirements for parks. County coffers have not been able to keep up with infrastructure around water, sewer and its 400 miles of aged county roads mostly built pre-WWII.



# The Dream! From the Pajaro to the Pinnacles! SBC Riverview Regional Park and River Parkway

This Concept Plan initiated circa 2010, has moved forward since 2021. The Regional Park is funded and in the final design stages, with the first phase starting late 2024. It includes accessible bathrooms, trail and inclusive play structure. The River Parkway is being piecemealed together as the county can afford. Roads are taking precedence in the county.



Riverview Regional Park and River Trail concept plan  
Summer 2021

# Leveraging Natural, Historical, and Cultural Assets for Growth and Vitality in San Benito County, California

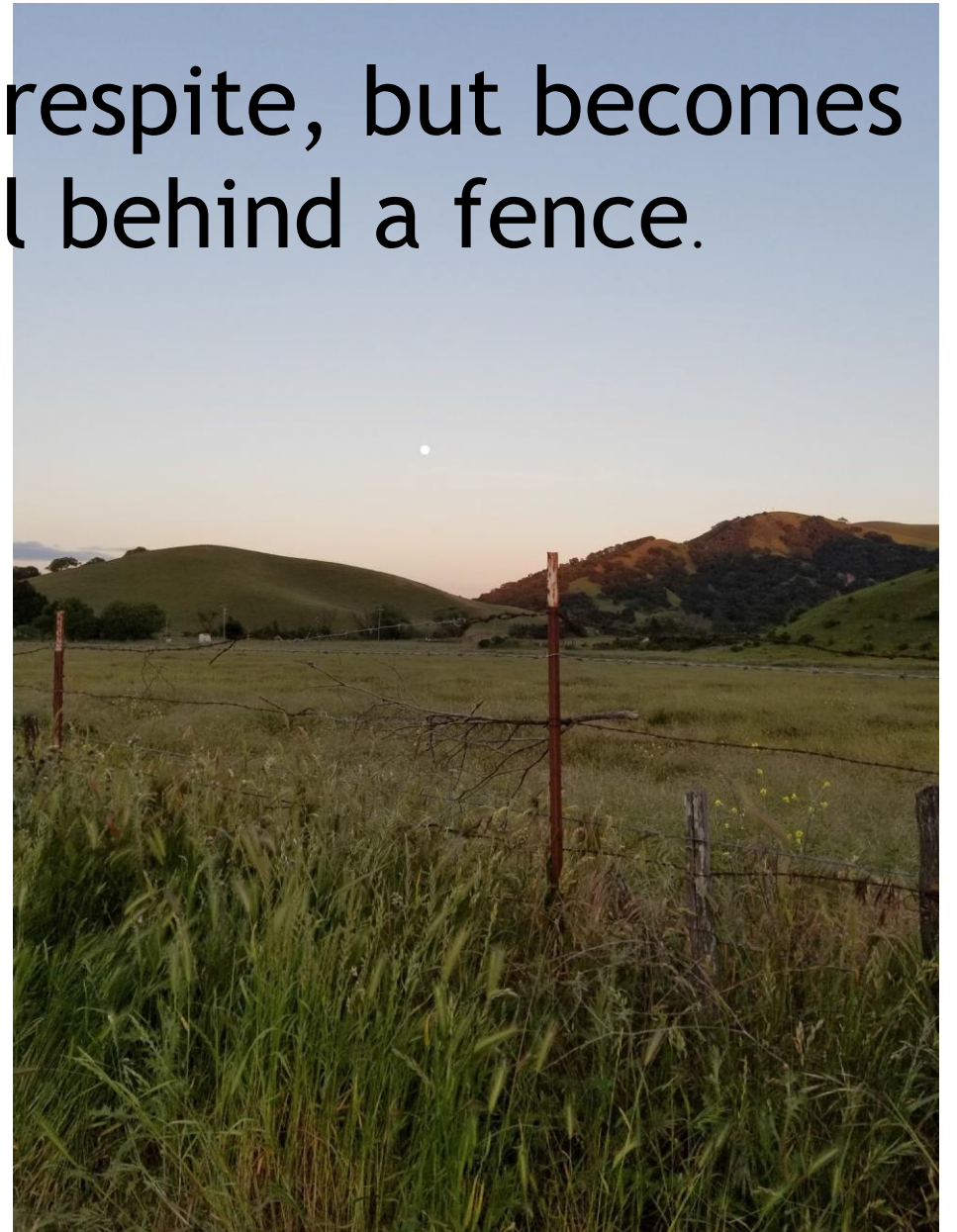
- ▶ The San Benito River and Hwy 25 traverse the length of the county. These two natural and economic assets hold potential for connecting the natural, historical and cultural building blocks of a robust tourist economy. Encouraging growth in private and county campgrounds, bicycling accommodation, agritourism, culinary and wine experiences all would contribute to and vitality and sustainability of county parks.



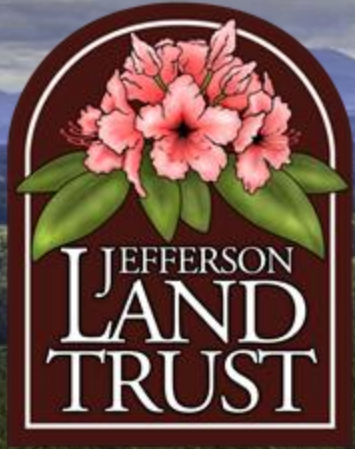


Open space is a great visual respite, but becomes just a tease when it's all behind a fence.

The barrier to parks access and sustainability is not only money, but land acquisition and winning over private land owners bordering the river.

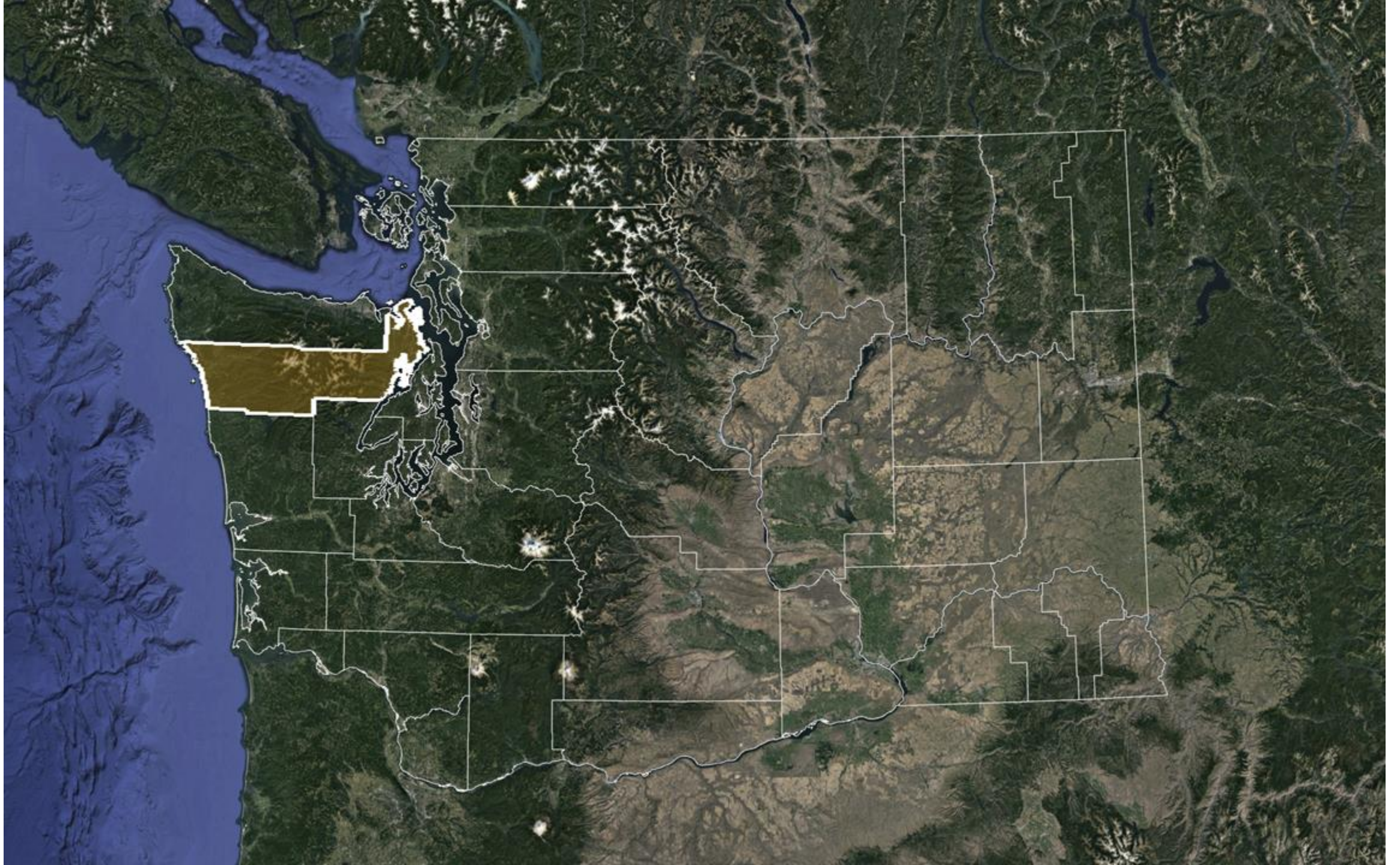




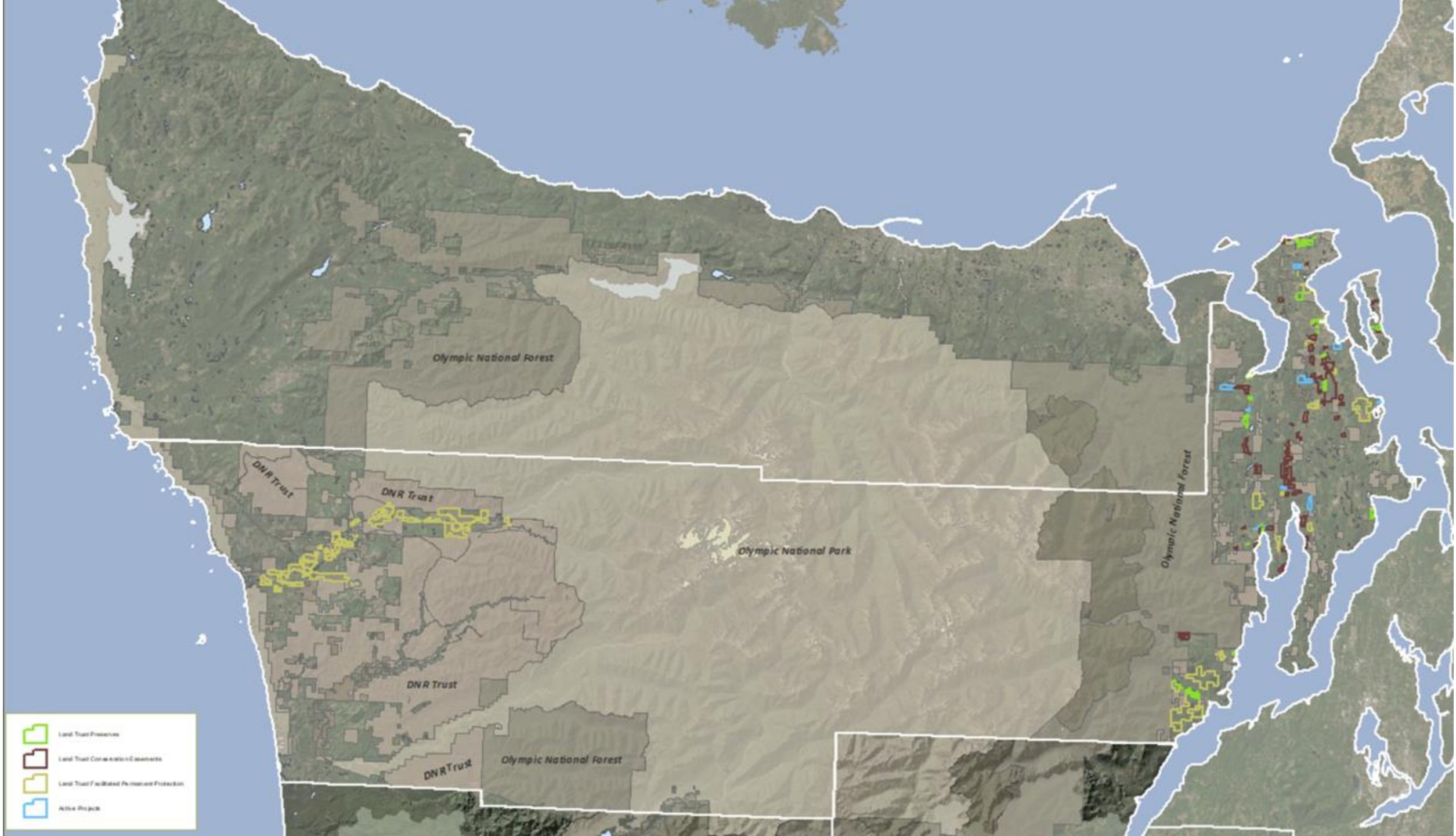


*Welcome to Jefferson County*







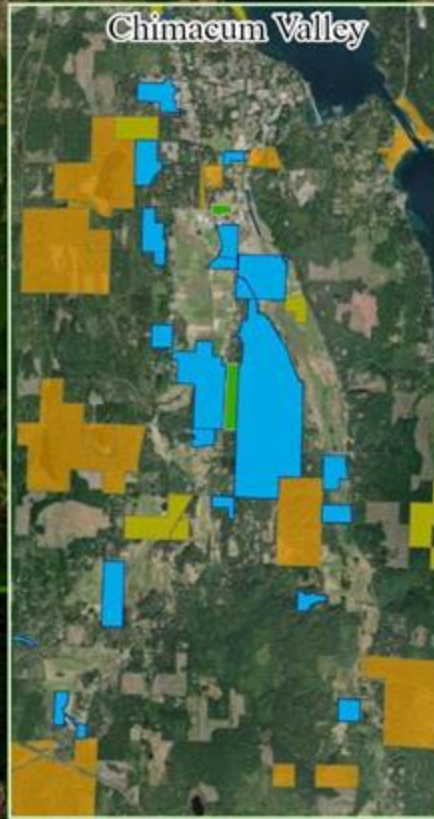




Snow and Salmon Watershed



Chimacum Valley



Quimper Wildlife Corridor



Lower Chimacum Creek



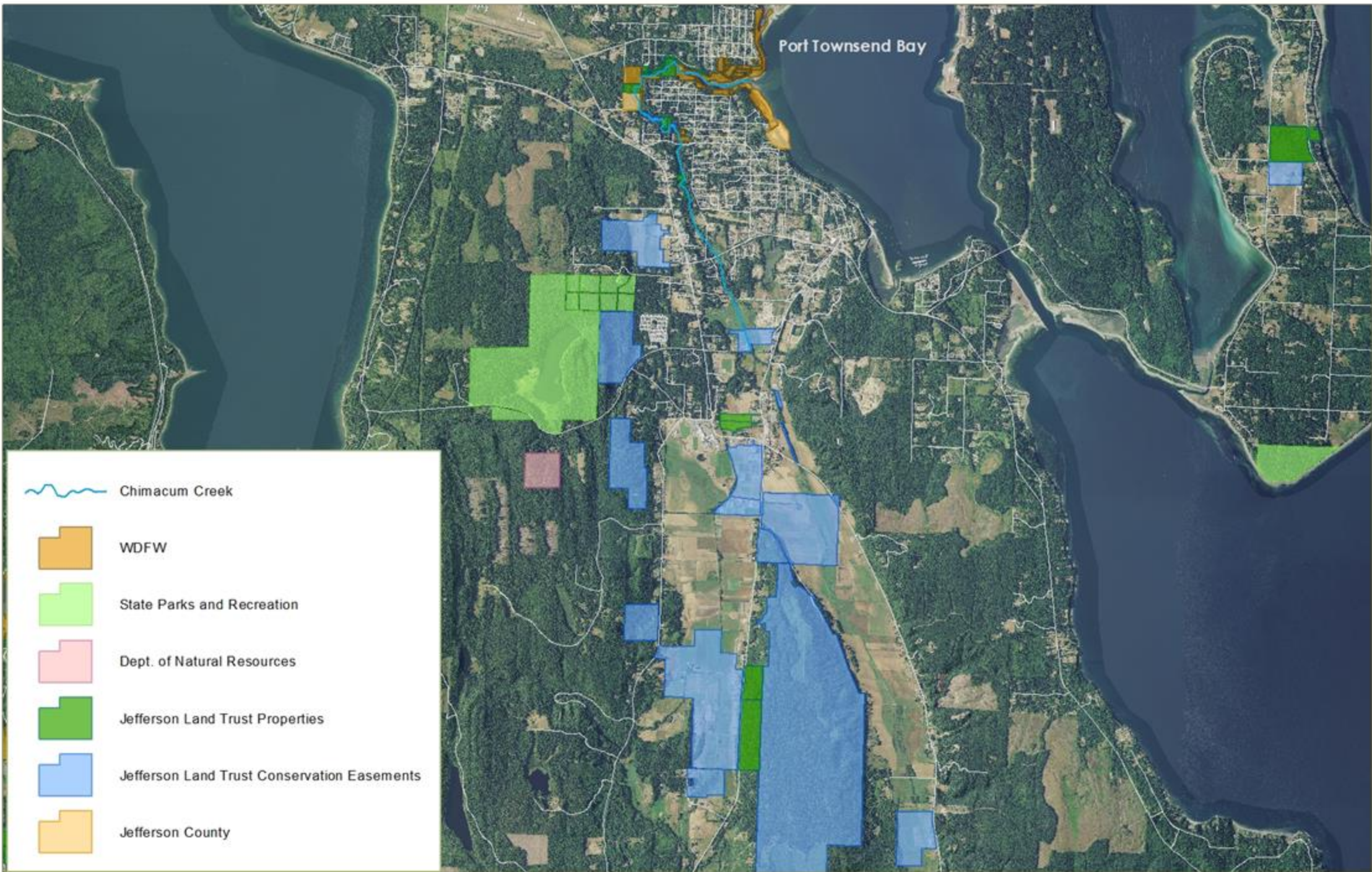
Tarboo Watershed



Duckabush and Dosewallips







Port Townsend Bay

 Chimacum Creek



WDFW



State Parks and Recreation



Dept. of Natural Resources



Jefferson Land Trust Properties



Jefferson Land Trust Conservation Easements

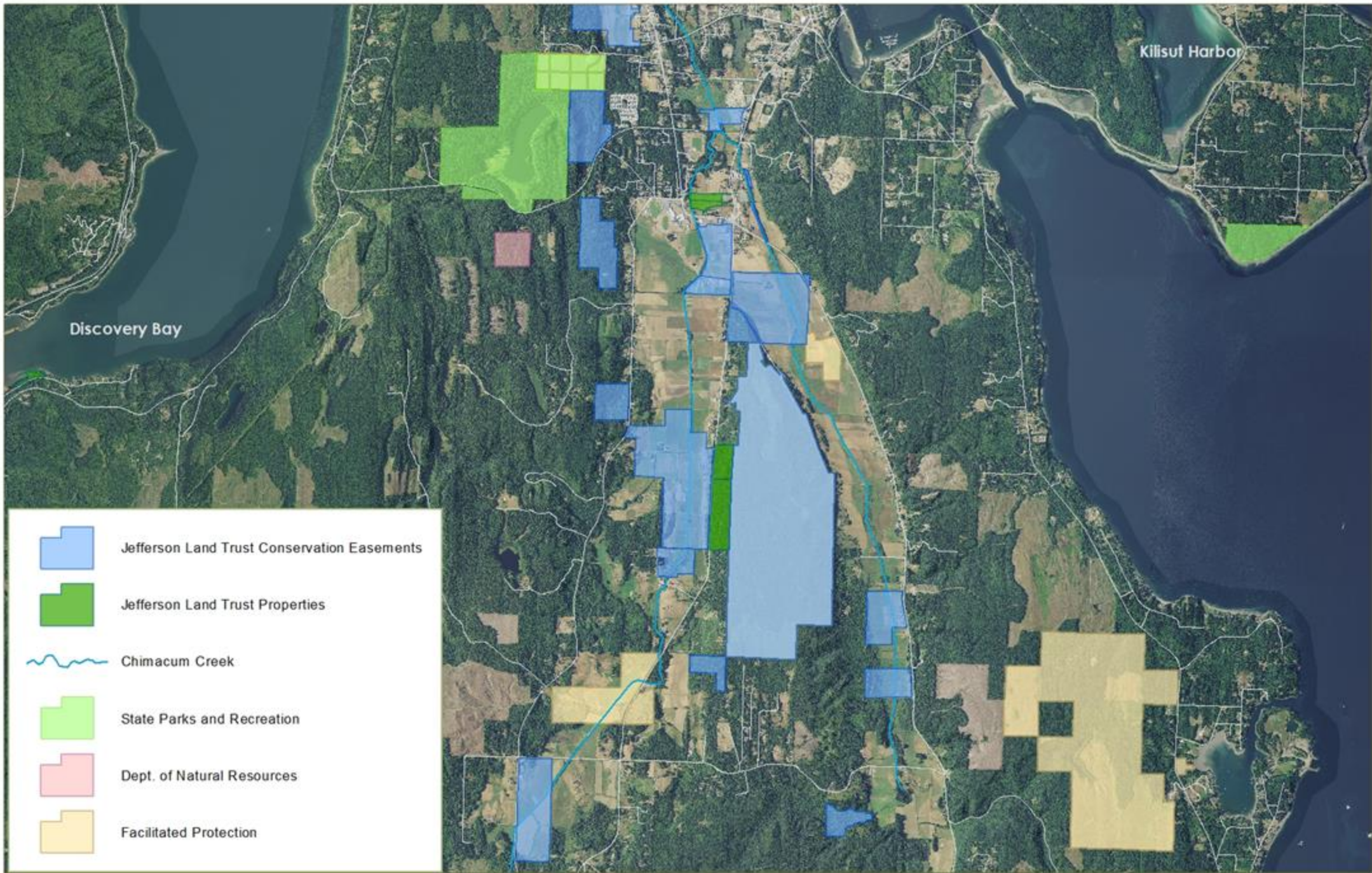


Jefferson County













*Photo: Robert Tognoli*



*Thank you!*







# Q&A

**Sarah Spaeth, Valerie Eglund  
David Patton**

# Breakout Discussions

- Why did you sign up for this track and what would you most like to learn or do through participating?
- What natural, historical, and/or cultural assets exist in your community and what makes them unique?
- How is your organization and/or your community currently approaching the use of these lands/assets?
- What popular, unique, or culturally-relevant activities exist in your community that could take place in a park/open space?



**Welcome back!**  
What did you hear?







# Next Steps

- Exit Ticket
- Session Materials
- Next Session: April 10, 2pm ET / 11am PT



# Thank you!

See you on April 10!

**Contact Us**

**Sophie Neuhaus**

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Connecting everyone to the outdoors™