

Comment Number	Comment	Opinion	Primary Theme
1	<p>I am writing as an Orcas Island resident and frequent user of our public lands to express serious concerns about allowing recreational deer hunting on properties that are already heavily used for hiking, horseback riding, and mountain biking.</p> <p>On Orcas, our trails are often narrow, winding, and shared by families with children, older adults, equestrians, and cyclists, all moving unpredictably through dense vegetation and uneven terrain. Introducing recreational rifle and shotgun fire into this same space greatly increases the risk that a missed, deflected, or poorly controlled shot could injure or kill someone who never chose to participate in that risk.</p> <p>National hunting safety data show that while hunting is statistically less common as a cause of injury than many sports, hundreds of firearm related hunting accidents still occur each year in the United States, and most are due to preventable human error. A 2025 synthesis of U.S. hunting accident data notes roughly 1,000 firearm related hunting accidents annually nationwide, with about 100 resulting in fatalities, and estimates that 0.03% of the roughly 14 million U.S. hunters are injured or killed each year. Around 80% of hunting accidents are attributed to human error, and the leading firearm related cause is failure to properly identify the target. These are exactly the kinds of mistakes that become more likely on multi use lands where non hunters may appear suddenly on or near the line of fire. Crucially, these statistics largely reflect incidents involving hunters themselves and other members of their party. They under count the risk to bystanders who are hiking, riding, or living adjacent to hunting areas. In countries that track this more carefully, we can see the broader pattern: in France’s 2024–2025 hunting season, officials recorded 100 firearm related hunting accidents, including 11 deaths, 16 non hunters injured (three seriously), and 135 cases of property damage where 58 houses, 27 vehicles, and 50 pets were struck by gunfire. Italy’s national victim dossier for the 2025–2026 season documented 33 hunters killed and 13 people with no link to hunting (including hikers and neighbors) killed by hunting weapons. Spain’s national data show at least 125 deaths and 729 injuries from hunting weapons between 2007 and 2022. Switzerland records about 300 recognized hunting accidents per year, with over 75 people killed between 2000 and 2019, while experts stress that retirees and others are systematically missing from the official statistics. Taken together, these figures demonstrate that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hunting accidents are heavily tied to human error: mis identifying the target, failing to see someone in the background, or losing control of the firearm while moving over rough terrain.</li> <li>• A non trivial number of victims are not hunters at all; they are hikers, residents, and pet owners using the same public spaces.</li> <li>• Many countries with stronger reporting requirements are now debating tighter controls, including mandatory accident reporting, public exclusion zones, and stricter safety certifications for hunters.</li> </ul> <p>On Orcas Island, the risks are intensified by our specific conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Steep, uneven, and slippery terrain increases the chance a hunter could fall, stumble, or swing a loaded firearm unexpectedly, causing an unintended discharge.</li> <li>• Dense vegetation and winding trails make it difficult to clearly see what is beyond a target or who might be approaching around a blind corner.</li> <li>• Mixed use is the norm: hikers with dogs, equestrians, trail runners, and mountain bikers may be quiet, fast moving, and not wearing high visibility colors, especially in shoulder seasons or low light.</li> <li>• Our visitor population includes many older adults and children, who may not be familiar with hunting seasons, boundaries, or how to recognize when they are entering an active hunting area.</li> </ul> <p>I am also troubled that, unlike driving, there is no ongoing, practical shooting proficiency requirement for obtaining or renewing a hunting license that proves a person can reliably place shots and control their firearm under real field conditions. A hunter may sincerely believe they are a highly accurate, safe shooter based on past experience, but age related vision changes, slower reaction times, medications, or simple overconfidence can all erode safety. Yet those factors are not routinely evaluated once a person has completed an initial hunter education course.</p> <p>Given these concerns, I respectfully request that the County and WDFW:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Refrain from authorizing recreational hunting on Land Bank preserves and other high use public recreation areas on Orcas Island, especially where trails are heavily used by</li> </ol>	Con	Safety

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	<p>the public and where terrain and vegetation limit visibility.</p> <p>2. If hunting is considered at all, confine it to clearly defined zones that are physically separated from established hiking, biking, and horseback riding trails, with generous no shoot buffers around all trail corridors, homes, and roads.</p> <p>3. Require conspicuous, seasonal signage and public communication (maps, websites, kiosks, ferry notices) indicating exactly when and where hunting is permitted, so non hunters can avoid those areas if they choose.</p> <p>4. Explore alternatives to general recreational hunting for deer management, such as limited culling by highly qualified sharpshooters, fertility control in sensitive areas, or other science based methods that reduce risk to the public.</p> <p>5. Advocate at the state level for stronger safety standards that reflect the realities of mixed use public lands, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Periodic practical shooting tests and safety refreshers for license renewal,</li> <li>• Stricter rules on minimum distances from trails, roads, and residences,</li> <li>• Mandatory, centralized reporting of all hunting accidents involving injuries to people, pets, or property.</li> </ul> <p>I support thoughtful, science based efforts to address deer overpopulation and forest health in the San Juan Islands. However, I do not believe that broad recreational hunting on our busiest public lands is compatible with the safety expectations of residents and visitors who use these areas for quiet recreation. As other jurisdictions have learned, it often takes serious injuries or fatalities to trigger reforms; I hope San Juan County will take a precautionary approach before such tragedies occur here.</p> <p>Thank you for considering these concerns and for your work to balance wildlife management, conservation, and public safety. I would appreciate clear information about how public input from the March 23 scoping meeting will be used in this decision making process and what further opportunities there will be for community engagement.</p>		
2	<p>One of the most terrifying experiences I've had on Orcas happened in October a couple of years ago. I had just finished hiking up Lost Oak trail, and I heard a shot ring out, then another. The sound echoed, and I called out, hoping the hunters would hear me. They continued for some time, and I raced back down the mountain, my heart racing. My lovely morning hike ruined by guns. I understand that deer populations need to be culled, but opening up an area on Orcas close to private property and roads (not to mention popular public trails) is dangerous. Please do NOT open this land up for hunting. It's a horrible idea. We don't have enough open land on the island to make this feasible. I realize that many hunters are mindful and careful. But not all of them are. I would also hate that Turtleback would be essentially closed for hiking during hunting season. There has to be a better way to deal with the population.</p>	Con	Safety
4	<p>I do not know where you are thinking of allowing deer hunting in the Turtleback Preserve. I live adjacent to the Turtleback Preserve on the south side of Turtleback Mountain just south of the old Crow Valley School House along Crow Valley Road. Behind our house is the south facing side of the mountain. It is steep and all shooting sight lines on it point downhill towards our home and other residences. This area must be kept shooter free. So, if you allow hunting elsewhere on the mountain, how do you keep hunters from straying over to the south side? A targeted or wounded deer may head that way and the hunter will follow it. Over time, mistakes will be made, someone will be hurt, and those responsible will be so sorry, etc.etc. The deer are not over populating the mountain. In fact, there are far fewer sightings and road kill evidence now than in the past. We do not need to cull them there. Please do not allow hunting anywhere in the Preserve that is now safe to walk through.</p>	Con	Safety
5	<p>Thank you for writing to me to notify me of the upcoming meeting about allowing hunting on Turtleback and North Shore preserves... I am working that day and not sure I will be able to make the meeting. I continue to oppose the idea of hunting on the land we helped preserve and where we hike and recreate.</p>	Con	
6	<p>I won't be able to attend the meeting about allowing hunting on the 2 preserves. I WOULD like to comment though. This to me is a disastrous idea. I walk the North Shore Preserve every day. Unless you introduce killable animals, there aren't any I've ever seen. That's one. Two, I would feel hugely unsafe walking there knowing hunters are randomly on the property. I feel STRONGLY this is a horrible idea. I honestly don't know why it's even being considered. It would make the territory unsafe for the close by people living in homes, unsafe for those of us who walk this preserve, and in my opinion a ridiculous proposal given that in all the months I've walked the preserve daily, I have never once seen a deer. Unless you're planning on seeding the preserve with killable animals. Which is just incredibly cruel. I seriously do not want this to happen. Appalled.</p>	Con	Safety

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	// -- Thank you, Erin! Peter also emailed me and offered a phone conversation with him so I can hear further details. I'm going to take him up on that. A friend I sometimes run into at the Preserve is for it, citing the over-population of deer, as you mentioned. There are obviously issues I'm not aware of, so I look forward to my conversation with Peter.		
7	<p>We are strongly opposed to allowing any hunting in the Turtleback Preserve and in the North Shore Preserve. Our land borders the Turtleback Preserve on the SE side (on the hillside above West Sound), though it is not adjacent to the proposed hunting areas. Following are some of the grounds for our opposition to the hunting proposal:</p> <p>1) To quote from the Land Bank's Turtleback Preserve website: "Treasured by islanders for its dark, undeveloped ridge line, it is a refuge for wildlife and a haven for those who wander the trails through a mosaic of forests, wetlands and open meadows." We feel that that description, currently accurate, is highly inconsistent with seasonal hunting in the Preserve.</p> <p>2) Just on safety grounds, we are not convinced that a minimum distance of 100' from private property and trails is sufficient, even if rifles are forbidden. People don't always observe posted boundaries. We remember the accidental killing of a Lopez Island resident by a hunter back in 2022.</p> <p>3) The noise from gunshots would be very disturbing to both hikers and nearby residents, who deserve to enjoy the quiet and serenity we all associate with the Land Bank Preserves, including in the fall. From our hillside above West Sound, we occasionally hear gunshots from what I think is a firing range down in Crow Valley, which really disturbs the peace.</p> <p>4) We were among the more than 2000 donors back in 2006 (before we had moved full-time to Orcas Island) who donated to the "major conservation effort in 2006" that "made Turtleback a reality" (quoting again from the Land Bank website for Turtleback). We would regard the permitting of hunting on the Turtleback Preserve to be a betrayal of the promises we understood back in 2006 when as one of many small donors, we contributed to the purchase of the land.</p> <p>5) The proposed time period for hunting, about Oct. 11-Nov. 18, is well over a month, more than 10% of the year. And the map that we saw looks as if a large portion of Turtleback would eventually be included in the 2 phases for hunting, even if they're not close to our property, and even if the hunting areas are clearly marked (a restriction that hunters may not strictly observe).</p> <p>6) Finally, though deer are coming back gradually, there are still far fewer than before the hemorrhagic disease killed so many, so we don't see any present need to cull them. We certainly don't feed them, but we enjoy seeing deer, which sadly is still a relatively infrequent occurrence. We understand that deer over-population can be a serious problem, both for the deer and for the ecology of the Preserves, but that is not the current situation.</p>	Con	Safety
8	I am very opposed to hunting in the Turtleback property. Despite assurances of people being notified, not everyone will ever be notified. And all I see in my head are stray bullets hitting tourists, children, islanders and animals. I think this is a terrible idea.	Con	Safety
9	<p>I oppose allowing hunting in Turtleback Preserve. As a hiker, I would not feel safe venturing out on the trails. I am also concerned about the safety of locals and visitors to the area. There is no way of guaranteeing anyone's safety, and accidents could be tragic.</p> <p>It is my understanding that the original Stewardship Plan, which was implemented in 2008, called for Turtleback Preserve to be a wildlife refuge with hunting being prohibited. Please do NOT allow this proposal to go forward.</p>	Con	Safety
10	I hear that quietly something is forming about hunting on Turtleback sandbank hiking area. NO one wants that. Listen to the public. The way to meet hunters sports needs, or over population of deer cannot take a chance of a single human life, pets life and child's life lost or harmed. That park is a refuge for animals, not a danger to them or to us. If you opened this to the public you will find an overwhelming majority against it. In fact, everyone but the hunters. An island is limited in land. The solution to deer population can be partial sterilizing, moving deer to empty islands or the mainland, and other possibilities. Please do not ruin it for hikers, families, pets... // I will never feel safe on a trail in an area in which hunting took place. I have hiked there a lot for the last 33 years, but will quit. I will also never live close by. This is an island. Nothing is far. People make mistakes and go on the wrong day, and bullets travel the wrong way, it is just too small an area, and it is designated for human recreation, not a killing field. An accident is bound to happen. We must find a different way to reduce deer population. One can be taking them over for meat, just like we do with lambs, goats and cows. Not by hunting,	Con	Safety

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	but in other means of culling them. As for those who like to hunt... we go off island for ski, ice skating and other sports... hunters can go to the mainland too. No. Do not insert hunting into a trails area.		
11	As a member of the Hardy Hikers of Orcas Island, we have been hiking the pristine trails of Turtleback Mt for 30 years and the peace, tranquillity and beauty of the area has never been marred by hunters seeking to kill whether by gun or bow and arrow. May I plead with you now to NEVER allow HUNTING to become a recreational sport on this beautiful preserve which is a refuge for man and beast. Thank you and I will be monitoring the decisions that are made for this one of a kind recreational sanctuary.	Con	Refuge - peace/killing
12	I'm opposed to the concept of sport hunting on turtleback preserve as a management tool. My concern is due to the issues surrounding firearm safety. I'm a veteran, and am well acquainted with firearm safety and risks. The only responsible way this could work is to close the preserve entirely except for hunting during the period it is approved. Regardless of who is hunting. (tribal or not) there is a danger to those who might be hiking. I certainly won't debate the impact on vegetation by our deer. If management of the deer is the true objective I would rather see a qualified contractor hired to do a defined harvest. Again, close the preserve during this period. This is not an activity that can safely take place side by side with other recreational use - putting high visibility vests on hikers won't stop an errant bullet. I've hunted and fished in the past and don't oppose the sport in general. I am disappointed the Land Bank is even considering this option.	Con	Safety
13	This comment combines three comments received 3/26 and 3/30 and 4/19. We have shortened it while retaining the main points. Proposal is an ill-conceived and myopic approach. In my opinion, deer have very little to do with the over-all impact to ecological diversity on the island. We, you, me, all of us, starting with the settlers who came to the islands in the late 1800's and stripped the land of its old growth forests, drastically altered the ecological balance. Then the rest of us came and built the roads, homes, driveways, quaint commercial areas, gardens, fences, planted non-native vegetation, and all that comes with land development. The wild, native areas have been reduced, leading to deer searching for the remaining open areas like Turtleback and the North Shore. I would love to see the Land Bank take a more holistic approach to supporting ecological diversity islandwide. The wealth of knowledge and expertise embodied by the employees of the Land Bank is immense. It's a shame that such knowledge and understanding of how to increase and support ecological diversity is not more fully a part of our land use codes. While there is some understanding in the county codes, I believe it is weakly applied and more could be done to replace and increase ecological diversity lost through development. I encourage collaborative efforts between the Land Bank, Community Development Department, and the County Council. Shooting deer on Turtleback and the North Shore will do very little to support islandwide ecological diversity. Our dabbling often makes things worse. As populations grow, they tend to manage themselves through the availability of food sources, disease, and predators. Disease is one of the best natural selectors for maintaining healthy populations as it selects the weakest, as recently occurred with the Adenovirus Hemorrhagic Disease. Since then, I've seen very few deer in my neighborhood and none on my walks on Turtleback. Those that I have seen appear larger and healthier than in the past. Conversely, hunting, at its best, is non-selective, and at its worst selects for the healthiest and biggest, leading to weakening of the population. If the Land Bank feels hunting is necessary, in some minor way, to increase ecological diversity, why not allow hunting on the preserves where the general public is prohibited? I expect hunters would stay as close to the trails as possible to reduce the distance needed to move a dead deer from the forest to a vehicle, potentially creating a public safety issue. It is also unclear to me how the Land Bank and/or WDFW will ensure that the hunters will actually use low-powered weapons and will stay in the designated hunting areas and not wander off to areas heavily used by hikers or toward neighboring homes. The decision to allow hunting on the Turtleback Preserve should not be taken lightly. It involves a clear understanding of the multilayered relationships between the land, plants, animals, and humans, balanced by each of the Commissioners personal knowledge and experiences. While the proponents of hunting have referenced studies in Canada, on Blakely Island and Yellow Island addressing the impacts of deer on plants and ecological diversity, to my knowledge, there have not been any studies or establishment of baseline information specifically for Turtleback. Hunting has been banned on the Turtleback Preserve for 20 years. During that time the deer population has risen and then drastically declined, while the human population on Orcas Island, residents and visitors, has grown. Given that history, the Turtleback Preserve is the ideal area for an in-depth study of the rise and fall of deer population and its effect on plant communities and ecological diversity. Introducing hunting at this time will forgo the ability to fully understand the dynamics of plant, animal, and human interactions specific to the Turtleback Preserve. The Land Bank has a unique opportunity and responsibility to explore these complex interactions and interrelationships as they relate to the Preserve. The decision before the	Con	Safety

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	Commission is not limited to whether hunting should or should not be allowed, but more importantly how it will affect those who use the Preserve throughout the year. I'm asking you, as our Land Bank Commissioners, to step aside from your own views and beliefs about hunting and explore what the supporters and regular users of the Preserve want it to be. The Commission has a responsibility to fully understand the value of the Preserve to the public prior to making a decision. Ask questions. Seek more public input. Hold more public meetings. Send an islandwide survey. Seek opinions that may be contrary to your own. Make an informed, balanced decision. This decision should not be taken lightly.		
17	I write to you with serious concerns about the proposal of allowing hunting on Turtleback mountain. I grew up on a property adjoining the land bank property and am hoping to raise my future children, livestock, and dogs there as well. Introducing hunting on public land that we all treasure and share is a very scary prospect. I do not want guns of any kind anywhere near the places that my family will be- whether this is our private property or the public land that we also use very often enjoy. I ask that we reconsider this proposal and do not open Turtleback to any type of hunting now or ever in the future, to maintain safety and enjoyment for all islanders.	Con	Safety
18	I first became a land owner in 1999 on Orcas.... before the Land Bank had Turtleback in it's portfolio. We built in 2003 and when Turtleback was a dream, I donated to this cause. It has been a gem, a refuge for quintessential Orcas and San Juan County lands, preserved for our children and all future generations. The Orcas Gun Club was pre-existing. In my very frequent hikes over nearly 20 years, the shots from the Gun Club are disturbing... and, I honor they are neighbors. Fine. But, it would be a dereliction of duty to maintain the original purpose and vision of the Land Bank's Turtleback treasure to allow hunting on these lands. (TB is ) "Treasured by islanders for its dark, undeveloped ridge line, it is a refuge for wildlife and a haven for those who wander the trails through a mosaic of forests, wetlands and open meadows", and noting that "hunting is prohibited"- source: Land Bank website. I will be among the many of us in our Hardy Hiker group and a neighbor who hikes very regularly to protest a decision allowing guns, hunting on these peaceful lands. I bring family and guests to enjoy this treasured Land Bank non-hunting area. I would be embarrassed to hike with my young granddaughters and sons who are small, and unaccustomed to sounds of violence and war and have to explain why this makes Orcas 'special'. Recreational hunting has its own place where it is already permitted.	Con	Safety
19	Per the Land Bank Mandate: To preserve in perpetuity areas in the county that have environmental, agricultural, aesthetic, cultural, scientific, historic, scenic or low-intensity recreational value and to protect existing and future sources of potable water. The healthiest way to manage the deer population would be to mimic what happens in nature. Introducing wolves to cull the unhealthy deer, would be the ideal way to maintain a healthy population. Since this isn't going to happen, managing the deer population by re-creating a more natural cull (targeting the sick, old, and weak individuals) would allow the remaining population to stay healthy and pass along healthier genes. Hunting a few of the most healthy specimens to feed humans and provide a recreational activity for the hunting community does not significantly reduce the deer population, nor improve the overall health of the deer population. I'd like to see the community be a bit more introspective and scientific here. Many seem to care about the welfare of the animals, whether it be from overcrowding and starvation or disease. Is the goal to provide recreational sport hunting? Provide food for a handful of families? Or to responsibly and humanely manage the deer population and improve the overall ecological health of the preserve? The first doesn't necessarily equate into healthy management practices. If the goal is to combine the hunting and population management, bait the deer around a feeding station and take the weakest ones. It would be far less traumatic for the deer and less risk to hikers, and nearby property owners. Just because something is cultural, doesn't necessarily mean it is worthy of continuing as it has been carried out in the past. We can do better.	Con	Ecology
20	I am an Orcas Island resident writing out of concerns I have about the proposed allowance of seasonal deer hunting on Turtleback Mountain. Firstly, it appears this is being pushed through too quickly, not giving Orcas residents enough time to be fully aware of this change & its overall impacts, as well as giving enough opportunity to weigh in on this. I personally have concerns about the safety of hikers on Turtleback, if hunting is indeed allowed. Turtleback's preservation was meant to ensure this kind of ongoing enjoyment of these wild lands, with care & concern for its wild state. The deer are also part of its wildlife & deserving of their own protection. We know that their numbers decreased significantly during the year disease took so many of them. Additionally, if hunters are allowed access, I can well imagine more wear & tear on the land by their	Con	Safety

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	vehicles. What hunters are going to be willing to drag their kill a long distance without a truck at hand to put it in? These are a few on my concerns. I hope Turtleback continues to be enjoyed as it was meant to be from the beginning of its preservation.		
21	<p>We oppose opening the North Shore and Turtleback Preserves to deer hunting. We ask you to consider the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How many deer are there? How many deer are too many? Who did the count if one was actually done. In hikes over the years we haven't seen any and in any case it is our undersatnding that the deer population deer hasn't recovered from the virus that recently ocured.</li> <li>2. Have you considered the liability you face if there is an injury or death from a gunshot? You establish rules that are problematic and if the rules are followed but still result in a fatality there might be legal liability.</li> <li>3. North Shore is WAY too small for hunting and there are residential properties around it.</li> <li>4. North Shore already has fenced areas to protect native planting. Add more fencing at Turtleback if necessary to protect areas.</li> <li>5. Other preserves that are not accessed by the public make more sense if hunting is to be allowed. Certainly they should be open to tribal hunting - we don't think lack of access roads was historically an issue for tribal hunters. Maybe other hunters can learn from them.</li> </ol>	Con	Safety
22	I'm a long time year round Orcas Islander and I strongly oppose hunting on the two preserves. They are meant to be a refuge for both wildlife and humans. There are plenty of other mainland places to hunt. The deer here have lived in close proximity to humans for eons and it is not a fair fight for them, nor is it safe for islanders who live near the Preserves. This is a fragile, delicate place. I also respect the balance of nature and it has always been my fervent wish that we DO NOT DEPORT predators who swim here on their own. Nature is self-correcting, if we humans stay out of the mix. We MUST find a way to replace and restore the habitat that we have stolen from all of the island's original inhabitants (and yes, that's includes humans).	Con	Ecology
25	I am very opposed to ANY hunting on Turtleback Preserve. Orcas Island is a small island. Allowing folks to hunt on a popular dedicated preserve seems more than nonsensical. As yet, the deer population does not appear to have recovered from the disease that almost wiped them off this island.I find the arguments for allowing hunting to be allowed weak and odd.	Con	Low deer population
26	Hunting on Turtleback should not be allowed under any circumstances.	Con	
31	<p>Like our incursion into Iran, I'm still not hearing a clear rationale for this policy. Is it money? I doubt there will be much to be made given the limited window and # of hunters. Is it a culling of an out-of-control deer population? I've lived on this island for 30+ years. There have been a number of "boom and bust" cycles when it comes to deer, and right now does not feel anywhere close to a boom, especially after the recent virus. Do you have data showing that the deer population is beyond — or even approaching — a particular threshold? A 100-foot buffer seems woefully inadequate when you consider the trajectory of a bullet. And what is the definition and range of a "short-range arm"? Are there any enforceable regulations on what happens when a deer is actually killed (e.g., no gutting on the property, need to remove the entire carcass, etc.)? I would also like more information on "the cultural importance of regaining access to the islands," e.g., Are the tribes — or certain tribes — feeling a need to reconnect with this particular island? Finally, there are plenty of far more accessible places to hunt deer on the mainland — much larger tracts that are safe from human encroachment and filled with plenty of these creatures. Are those areas becoming less attractive, and if so, for what reasons? In general, I do not think this is a good idea. At the very least, a much better case needs to be made for this policy to make sense.</p>	Con	Questions need
34	<p>I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the structured proposal for deer hunting. I'm glad there are people of different background and expertise who are bringing their views forward, especially the botanists. This is important. However, I side against this proposal for the following reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. All lives matter: As humans, we are in primary position to be stewards to the existing web of life. There are numerous historical examples of our stepping in in a well-meaning attempt to balance, with the unanticipated results going awry.</li> <li>2. Hierarchy: Making this decision presumes our needs come ahead of other species, floral or fauna. Nature determines this, not us. How would we feel if the deer gathered to consider culling we humans off this island, for our own good? Shouldn't deer have a seat at the table of something which effects their survival?</li> </ol>	Con	Opposition to killing

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	<p>3. Tried and tragedy: This has been enacted in the past on Lopez to tragic results. Another person not at the table-the one who's life was lost while engaging in hunting. This is a lesson in unintended results. The recent wasting syndrome which killed many of the deer during the pandemic was a recent example of nature stepping in to affect change. Watching deer walk the land in front of Rosario resort several years ago was the first magic moment for me. I decided to relocate here to live and open a business. Let's do our part to keep the magic alive, wherever it roams. Let's honor the original intent of Turtleback.</p>		
36	<p>What about bow hunting? A missed shot from a rifle can travel two miles and still be lethal. A buffer of 100 feet from a trail? I would suggest closing the trails. Aren't there professionals who handle culling deer when they become a problem? What happens if someone dies during this experiment? Is the Land Bank liable? I dont even like deer but the hunting idea needs more thought. -- // The questions were for the board to consider, esp the liability. Allowing hunting is not a good idea for the land bank to pursue. This could cost funding and that means less property acquisition. Not one person I have talked to thinks hunting is a good thing to do. I, and many others, remain unconvinced that allowing hunting on the Turtleback and North Shore preserves will help anyone but hunters. And I do not see any benefit to the reputation of your organization. Allowing this, even entertaining this proposal, is doing nothing to preserve the causes most all of us hold dear and could have negative repercussion for years to come. Please do not lose the trust of the people who fund the wonderful work you have been doing. I am all for an island-wide initiative to control the deer population. Let us talk about that. How and what it will cost. Not a drop in the bucket bid for whatever you are trying to achieve or whoever you are trying to make happy. At what cost to your reputation and so misguided.</p>	Con	Safety
37	<p>My family partnership has owned 17 acres immediately south of the Land Bank's 58 acre North Shore Preserve (NSP) since 1962. I will begin my comments by stating we attended the April 30, 2025 Point Doughty Natural Area Preserve Management Plan outreach event sponsored by the Washington Department of Resources, referred to herein as the NAP, and the March 23, 2026 event sponsored by the San Juan County Conservation Land Bank to discuss limited deer hunting on Turtleback and the NSP. With regard to the Point Doughty NAP, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) made it very clear this property is deemed to be the most fragile. The only public access allowed is by water. No camp fires are are permitted and overnight camping is discouraged. As far as deer hunting on the Point Doughty NAP the DNR has, to my knowledge, never granted permission. With regard to the NSP, our adjacent property has been posted with "NO HUNTING" signs continuously since 1962. On occasion we have had to contact the Sheriff when we suspected there were deer hunters trespassing on our property. In the future if we encounter hunters trespassing on our property we will request they be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. Located on our property we have a pond which attracts all forms of wild life including deer, eagles, ducks, geese ,river otters, and raccoons among others. Before the virus killed off many of the island's deer we would experience up to 15 plus deer grazing around or near our pond. Since the virus decimated our deer population the most deer we have seen is three, only one of which was full grown. Before the Land Bank considers opening the NSP to limited deer hunting wouldn't it be prudent to reasonably determine how many deer are located in or near the NSP? Such an audit would prevent the annihilation of NSP deer population. The Land Bank has yet to install markers on its south and west property lines as was agreed so that NSP hunters and hikers would know when they are trespassing on adjacent property. Furthermore, what is to prevent a hunter pursuing an injured deer on to adjacent private property? As an adjacent property owner you are hereby on notice we have young children and pet dogs frequently on our property. Finally, we do not believe the small size of the NSP lends itself to deer hunting after considering the required set backs from the property lines and the rugged landscape. I request you keep us advised as you further consider allowing limited deer hunting on the NSP. If you do proceed to allow limited deer hunting at the very least you should advise adjacent neighbors the names and contact information for the hunters who have been granted permission and the dates they will be on the NSP.</p>	Con	Trespass
40	<p>Please, no guns on Turtleback! Children roam with their parents nearby. Old folks enjoy the wonders of nature. And all feel safe and free. For now... Hunting would change all this. We contributed three times to the campaign to save Turtleback. Making it a nature preserve was our fondest wish. There was so much camus blooming up there last spring. Please, let mother nature manage the deer on our beautiful Turtleback.</p>	Con	Anti-hunting
42	<p>I was happy to see that the Land bank has extended the comment period to April 20th. As I look back at the meeting of March 21st, I recall only a very few Orcas Islanders present to hear the proposals, and feel strongly that another meeting be scheduled in a larger venue. The meeting was not well publicized and others would like to come in person to have their questions succinctly answered. Turtleback is historically a no hunting area and the Island citizens helped pay for the Land bank purchase and so should</p>	Con	Safety

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	be present to hear the proposals outlined at the last meeting. I thoroughly understand the need to protect the environment of our mountain which we all treasure, but feel that the deer are not the only or major culprits...climate change and summertime heat, lack of rain also contribute. There was no disclosure as to where this proposal came from, and in all fairness it's a lousy idea. The chance of injuries to folks ie., tourists not familiar with the mountain and the closure of only certain areas is Not Acceptable. Also the injuring and suffering of deer is to be avoided, and "skills" of the individual hunters may be questionable. Lastly...we were told by the biologists no less, that the proposal would only help the flora for a short while!! Please consider another meeting to reach out to additional Orcas Islanders so that their opinions may be heard and thought about as well. Others may have different or better ideas.		
48	Commenter is not opposed to hunting in general and has a long history of hunting personally. His main concern is that he doesn't think the proposal will have any impact on the deer population, but it will make a lot of people on Orcas angry. He argued that if our goal is to reduce the population, we should close the preserve for a short period and bring in experienced hunters to cull as many deer as possible. He opined that at least 75% of people living on Orcas are opposed to deer hunting in general, and that going forward with the proposal would create long term public image problems for the Land Bank.	Con	Public perception concerns
49	We are very concerned about the proposal to allow hunting on Turtleback. Our property directly abuts this preserve. We have been here for 15 years and have experienced two incidents of hunters driving into the road below us and shooting uphill for deer hunting. We called the game warden on both these accounts. People hike in the woods above our house all the time, families, children and pets. This would create great anxiety for people living in this area. Please express our deepest concern.	Con	Safety
51	We would just like to go on record that we absolutely and completely oppose any hunting at all (especially deer) or use of guns on Orcas Island.	Con	Anti-hunting
52	I am writing to strongly oppose the proposal to allow hunting on San Juan Preservation Trust and Land Bank lands on Orcas Island, including Turtleback Mountain. In my view, this initiative is ill conceived and not well considered from either a public safety or habitat management standpoint. The stated rationale does not withstand scrutiny. Allowing a limited number of hunters on these lands will be little more than a drop in the bucket (according to your own presentation) in addressing deer overpopulation and overgrazing on Turtleback Mountain. It is difficult to understand how such a small scale hunting program would meaningfully resolve the underlying ecological concerns—especially when weighed against the impact on public use, safety, quiet enjoyment, and the reputation and perception of the Land Bank and SJPT. My objection is specifically to hunting on lands that have been donated to and supported by the public, including full time residents who also pay taxes, to preserve and maintain these places for shared recreation, conservation, and refuge. These lands are valued not only for their ecological importance, but also for the peace, safety, and accessibility they provide to hikers, families, and others seeking a quiet public experience. The public presentation on this issue felt more like an infomercial for hunting interests than a balanced, transparent evaluation of the proposal. Many island residents are left wondering why the SJPT and Land Bank would advance such a plan when it appears to serve only a very small number of hunters while creating avoidable safety issues and uncertainty for the broader public. Providing hikers and children with fluorescent vests so they will not be mistaken for game underscores how absurdly incompatible this proposal is with the safe, peaceful use of these lands as public preserves. The 2023 fatal shooting on Lopez Island from 96 yards away underscores the gravity of the safety issue, for which no solid plan was presented. To be clear, this letter is not an attack on hunting, gun ownership, or those who lawfully participate in either. I own a gun myself, and I respect the legitimate and important role that hunting can play in other contexts. My concern here is much narrower: this is a poor use of the preserve, a questionable policy choice, and an unnecessary disruption of lands that should remain safe, quiet, and welcoming for the many residents and visitors who use them. With respect to Tribal hunting, I am wholly in favor of honoring treaty rights; however, I do not believe that honoring such rights has any bearing on solving the ecological challenges to these lands as presented by the Land Bank. Honoring treaty rights and opening Turtleback Mountain to non Native hunters should be treated as separate issues. I urge you to reject this proposal and pursue habitat and deer management solutions that are more effective, more carefully designed, and more consistent with the public's use of these lands.	Con	Safety
53	To the board of the Land Bank and the San Juan Preservation Trust: I was very disappointed to read in The Sounder about the Land Bank's and SJPT's effort to open two of the island's beloved preserves to hunters. As a full time resident, taxpayer, and donor, I was surprised that there was no notification about the proposal or the meeting that was taking place. However, I was able to watch the recording (twice) and it only strengthened my shock and disappointment that this is even being entertained. I, and many others	Con	Safety

Comment Number	Comment	Opinion	Primary Theme
	<p>with whom I have spoken, have had trust in the Land Bank as well as the SJPT, voting to extend an excise tax, donating as much as we could to support such noble organizations and their efforts to keep the wild, wild and to create and maintain safe spaces for all people to come and enjoy peacefully and safely. At the moment, I am feeling misled. The preserves are a sanctuary where people and wildlife can coexist in a sacred space, and now you want to invite people with guns onto the properties to hunt. Many of these people would be non-residents from off island, bringing firearms onto the island. We would have to wear orange jackets and hear gunshots ring out while hiking or enjoying a view from a bench. Even if only for several weeks of the year, it changes the whole dynamic of the experience. And the preserve. Not to mention the Land Bank's image and purpose on Orcas. This is the community's land, paid for by donations and local tax dollars and I am disturbed that the Land Bank is appearing to fall prey to special interest and lobbying groups instead of acting in the capacity as advocate for the land and the visitors to these pristine locations. Not only did the Land Bank/ WDFW 's presentation come across as a thinly disguised mouthpiece for sportsman lobbying efforts, it also frankly didn't make very good points. Allowing hunting in these areas really won't impact the deer situation overall on Orcas (their words); therefore neither will it impact the ecosystems. For example, a response to a question regarding efficacy of this hunting proposal was "What does this mean for the broader landscape, for the whole unit on a whole? A drop in the bucket".* And frankly, I didn't see any solid science, surveys or any concrete information that showed the current deer population or goals on these specific parcels. The proper homework had not been done, or at least was not presented. Other islands and studies were mentioned, including Yellow Island, which is not a proxy, as there are no humans residing there. I don't think we can truly evaluate the environmental condition of an area without considering the impact of development, agriculture, chemical use, climate and so on. We have more than a deer problem. I heard no argument that convinced me that allowing guns onto these peaceful preserves would in any way solve any of the ecosystem issues on Orcas. Safety was poorly addressed. When someone asked how the rules would be enforced such as party sizes, alcohol, boundaries, leaving trash, licenses and guns checked, they didn't have an answer. The best they could come up with was "yet to be determined, but we're gonna do our best"* and "When you have a spotlight on anybody they just tend to act considerably better"* These are not appropriately considered answers to serious questions about safety, responsibility and enforcement. I was left with the very clear impression there was no plan for enforcing safety and compliance. I have since educated myself about the recent hunting death on Lopez that was brought up at the meeting. Reading the report shocked me at the horrific nature of what happened, including the shooter lying and fleeing the island while the man he shot was dying. But what is perhaps most relevant here is the fact that the report says that when they recreated the scene, the shot was fired from 93 yards away from the victim. And it killed him. Your proposal is to allow hunters as close as 100 feet to private property and public walking trails. There is no part of this plan that feels remotely safe to me. When someone expressed concern about an unskilled hunter wounding an animal and having to follow it onto a neighboring property, where the private property owner may feel strongly against hunting (as this gentleman seemed to be), the answer was more of the same vague non commitments. We do our best, and, it's imperfect. I can say that overall, the arguments and responses were very weak and did not instill confidence in the plan, nor were they convincing as to the merit of this major change in the land use. I also felt there was a very strong bias being represented. This was not an open forum as no other points of view were included in the presentation. It was completely pro-hunting. When people raised questions or concerns, they were consistently met with pushback, pro-hunting jargon and talk tracks. Questions also arose around hunting party size and discussion followed. All presenters reinforced clarity with the numbers of maximum two persons per party, per day, as is underlined on your website posting of the proposal. But then the man in the front row, interjected "The proposal for the hunting party sizes and whatnot, they, we're still in discussions about this." ** I was very confused by this statement. First, who is this person? Is he a decision maker? He was not identified as such by the land bank or in his own introduction. Is he an island resident? A lobbyist? Land Bank board member? Who is the "we" he is talking about. And more confusing is his statement. Is the proposal being presented "hunting party sizes and whatnot" subject to change if, and when this proposal is approved. Does he speak for the Land Bank? Clarity around his role and statement need to be made for the record. I felt that what we witnessed was a marketing campaign to allow hunters on this special land. I don't know what the Land Bank and SJPT have to gain by this proposal, but I'll tell you what they stand to lose: public trust, respect, and support. Therefore, I urge you to put the interests of the residents, visitors, and community of Orcas Island, who have invested in these preserves in many ways, above the special interest groups and reject this proposal.</p>		

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57	In the past I believed that the Land Bank had the Orcas island residents' best interests in mind when they made the Turtleback Preserve a sanctuary where people and wildlife can share this peaceful space. We want to keep this wild peaceful preserve for all people to come and enjoy peacefully and safely. It seems the Land Bank has changed its goal by allowing hunting and firearms in the preserve. We hike often in the Turtleback Preserve and don't want to have to wear orange clothing and hear gunshots disturb the quietness of what was set up as a preserve. The Turtleback Preserve is the community's land, paid for by donations and local tax dollars and I am disturbed that the Land Bank is appearing to fall prey to special interests instead of acting in the capacity as advocate for the land and the visitors to these pristine locations. For safety, sanity, and serenity ... maintain the ban on hunting on the Turtleback Preserve!	Con	Refuge - peace
58	We are having a difficult time understanding what is really driving this proposal. What are the Land Bank priorities? Is it the ecology balance that is the driving force to warrant hunting or is it about allowing recreational hunting on Turtleback Mountain Preserve or is it both? After reviewing SJCLB meeting agendas and minutes since 2022, and attending the presentation on March 23, 2026, we are concerned that no clear data or urgency has been presented to support initiating this program at this time. In addition, the long-term implications of introducing hunting into Turtleback Mountain Preserve have not been fully addressed. We note that the SJCLB Minutes in 2022 do not reflect any challenges or questions to the staff from any of the commissioners, specifically on hunting before the vote to approve amending the Stewardship Management Plan was made. For 2026, deer hunting on San Juan County Land Bank preserves (specifically Lopez Hill and Mount Grant) is scheduled for September 1st to October 31st. Is this same amount of time being planned for Orcas Island? These questions were followed by others about the planning and decision making processes, availability of and plans for deer population and monitoring data, safety, and potential permit requirements. The comment ended with, "At this juncture, we feel very uneasy."	Con	Questions
59	I'd like to add my feedback to the proposed plan to bring hunting to Turtleback Reserve in the fall of 2026. To be honest, I was reluctant to write this as it seems like a forgone conclusion that the hunting plan will be approved. However, I must say something to show I tried my best to prevent what I consider a bad idea from succeeding. I strongly oppose any hunting in Turtleback Reserve. I walk in Turtleback daily from both the north and south side trailheads. I alternate between Raven's Ridge, Turtle Head, Lost Oak to Ship Peak, so I frequent every trail. I know this trail system very well. I chose to live near Turtleback to have daily access to exercise in the forest. Additionally, in the fall, I forage for mushrooms, which have become a primary food source for me and my family. I take interested friends and groups to Turtleback to learn about and gather mushrooms. With grocery prices so high, this addition to my diet and winter food stores has become essential. October is the best month for mushrooms in Western Washington. We frequently leave the reserve's main trails to forage for mushrooms. In the proposed hunting plan, I would not feel safe being in Turtleback during this vital time, let alone off trail where mushrooms are found. This would significantly impact my ability to sustain myself on the island, both financially and environmentally. In addition to the practical issues with this plan, I find discharging weapons in this sacred and peaceful place truly distasteful. I do not want to hear gunshots during the special time I spend every day in the woods connecting with nature. Washington State has many hunting locations; please let our Turtleback Reserve not be one of them. If the real concern this plan addresses is keeping the island's deer population at a healthy level, I request that DNR bring in professionals to cull a prescribed number of deer. I do not trust amateur hunters to be safe in an area meant for hiking. Other islanders have already brought up several safety incidents, including a death on Lopez Island. I don't want to feel afraid on Orcas, and this plan certainly makes me feel that way. I don't believe that the practical or spiritual implications of this plan have been considered. Hunting at Turtleback would significantly interrupt my life on this island. This plan would preclude me from going to Turtleback during the month of October, which is the best time of year here. It threatens a food source for me. I hope you consider my words and rethink this plan. I'm begging you to keep Turtleback peaceful. I welcome any further questions about my perspective, please call me if you'd like to discuss.	Con	Safety
60	We own the property next to the Land Bank off of Glenwood Inn Rd. Our road has an road easement through part of the designated 58 acres for hunting. This is our home, and the thought of driving down to our cabin worrying about being shot at is terrifying. There has been no indication from the Land Bank how they are going to address this. I feel there needs to be a little more thought put into the whole process of hunting on Land Bank properties. How many deer are on the property? How are you going to protect your neighbors? Do you really think culling a few deer over an 18 day period is going to solve the problem? My wife and I are opposed to the hunt. These situations, if not checked	Con	Safety

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	early, may not produce the results expected. I don't want this hunting to turn into an ongoing event that ruins the enjoyment of our property that we have been blessed with for the past 75 years.		
61	Please do not allow hunting on our sacred preserve of Turtle 🌿 Back! Respect 🙏 the safety of the people who live nearby, and who enjoy hiking in the peace and quiet 🤫 there! The animals there also need to be honored. Thank you 🙏 for your kind consideration. Blessings and love ❤️ A 40year resident and respected elder 🙏 of Orcas.	Con	Safety
64	I, and many others who send this letter, have trusted in the wisdom of our Land Bank, voting to extend the excise tax, donating as much as we could to support such a noble organization and its efforts to keep the wild, wild and to create and maintain safe spaces for all people to come and enjoy peacefully and safely. At the moment, I am feeling misled.The Turtleback Preserve is a sanctuary where people and wildlife can coexist in a sacred space, and now you want to invite people with guns onto the property to hunt. Some of these people would be non-residents from off island, bringing firearms onto the island. We would have to wear orange jackets and hear gunshots ring out while hiking or enjoying a view from a bench. Even if only for several weeks of the year, it changes the whole dynamic of the experience, and the preserve. Not to mention the Land Bank's image and purpose on Orcas. This is the community's land, paid for by donations and local tax dollars and I am disturbed that the Land Bank is appearing to fall prey to special interests instead of acting in the capacity as advocate for the land and the visitors to these pristine locations. For safety, sanity, and serenity maintain the ban on hunting on the Turtleback! When will we finally realize that overpowering, dominating, KILLING the non-human residents of this island has long been a disgrace.	Con	Safety
66	I am writing in response to the proposal to introduce deer hunting within Turtleback Mountain Preserve on Orcas Island. I appreciate the seriousness with which you are addressing ecological concerns. On a clear morning atop Turtleback Mountain, the islands stretch out in every direction—blue water, distant ridgelines, the quiet rhythm of wind through oaks, fir and madrone. People come here for that feeling. They come because it is safe, because it is shared, and because it has been set aside as something rare: a true public refuge. This is now at risk. Turtleback Mountain is not simply another parcel of land requiring intervention. It is one of the most heavily used and deeply valued public preserves in the San Juan Islands. It functions as a shared commons—a place where residents and visitors alike can experience a sense of safety and connection to the landscape. Introducing hunting, even in a limited and regulated form, fundamentally alters that relationship. Turtleback Mountain is already fulfilling its purpose—as a place for quiet recreation, wildlife observation, and shared public access. Introducing hunting risks undermining all three, while offering uncertain ecological benefit. I urge you to reconsider the proposed lethal and human-directed killing approach. This is not primarily a question of whether hunting can be conducted safely. It is a question of compatibility. This debate is not about whether hunting is good or bad. It is about whether hunting belongs in one of the most heavily used, publicly cherished preserves on Orcas Island. A landscape defined by open public access, dense trail use, and informal movement through forest and meadow is inherently at odds with an activity that depends on concealment, pursuit, and lethal force. Even the perception of risk will change how people use - or avoid - this space. Once that shift occurs, a precedent is created, it cannot easily be undone. Turtleback is not remote backcountry. It is an extensively used public landscape, with a dense network of trails winding through forest and meadow. Families hike here. Children run ahead on the path. Lovers exchange vows. Dogs move through brush just out of sight. Visitors, many unfamiliar with hunting practices, come expecting a peaceful and predictable environment. Into that setting, the proposal introduces firearms, however regulated, and asks the public to adapt. And the risks of injury to people are not theoretical. The community has already experienced the consequences of nearby hunting—a bullet through a home, a fatal accident on Lopez island. They are reminders that in landscapes like this—wooded, uneven, and actively used—perfect separation between hunters and the public is not realistic. We are told the risks are low. That hunting will occur off-trail, away from homes, with strict limits and clear signage. But this argument misses something essential: the issue is not only actual safety—it is lived experience. A preserve like Turtleback works because people trust it. They wander without calculating risk. They pause in quiet places without wondering who else might be just beyond the trees. The introduction of hunting, even in a limited form, changes that relationship immediately and irreversibly. At the same time, the ecological rationale for hunting remains uncertain. We lack reliable baseline data on deer populations. In fact, as an avid weekly hiker, I have not seen deer on Turtleback in the last 3 years, and sincerely wish I did as part of my outdoor experience. Meanwhile, the ecological issues of plant stress are driven by climate variability, soil conditions, development, habitat fragmentation, invasive species. To frame deer as the central lever is to simplify a complex system. If the goal is truly ecological resilience and the protection of sensitive species, there are more precise, effective, and publicly compatible forward-thinking alternatives	Con	Safety

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	<p>available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted protection of critical habitat through small-scale, seasonal enclosures around native host plants used by butterflies and other endangered species, rather than attempting to manage deer across the entire landscape.</li> <li>• Distributed habitat restoration, creating multiple smaller patches of native vegetation to increase resilience against browsing pressure.</li> <li>• Propagation and replanting of native host species to accelerate recovery and improve plant survival.</li> </ul> <p>These approaches for example reflect a more refined understanding of the problem: that protecting species depends less on broad, landscape-level intervention and more on safeguarding the specific plants and conditions they require at critical moments in their life cycle.</p> <p>It is also worth remembering how Turtleback came to be protected at all. This land did not become a preserve by accident. It was the result of public investment, community vision, and the work of the San Juan County Land Bank. Turtleback was protected through public effort and is stewarded by the San Juan County Land Bank as a place of refuge for wildlife and people. This is foundational and it matters. A refuge is not simply land that is managed—it is land where something is intentionally held apart from other uses. A refuge is not just land where wildlife exists. It is land where wildlife is not under constant pressure from humans. Introducing hunting, no matter how regulated, crosses that line. Animals shift behavior, becoming more evasive and nocturnal. The landscape becomes defined by risk rather than refuge. Human presence changes from observer to participant in predation. Once that shift happens, it is not easily reversed. The meaning of the place changes.</p> <p>Most importantly, as a refuge, Turtleback Mountain remains what it was intended to be. Turtleback Mountain is already fulfilling an essential role for this community - ecologically, socially, and culturally. Altering the use of this landscape to include hunting erodes public trust that has made the preserve possible.</p> <p>There is a quiet but consequential shift happening in how we talk about land. Places like Turtleback Mountain on Orcas Island are protected because they offer something increasingly rare: space that is not optimized, not extracted from, not constantly adjusted to meet human goals. A refuge. A commons. A place where people and wildlife can exist without being managed into efficiency. Now, we are being asked to see that same place differently - not as a sanctuary, but as a problem to solve.</p> <p>The argument for hunting on Turtleback is framed as ecological necessity. Deer, we are told, are overabundant. Wildflowers are smaller. Restoration is harder. All of this may be true. But embedded in that argument is a deeper assumption that deserves scrutiny:</p> <p>That every observed imbalance demands intervention.</p> <p>That every landscape must be corrected.</p> <p>That is not conservation. That is control.</p> <p>I refute that deer are out of balance with the ecosystem. Consider what is “balance” on an island like Orcas?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Predators have long been absent</li> <li>• Landscapes have been logged, cleared, and fragmented</li> <li>• Fire regimes have been altered</li> <li>• Climate patterns are shifting</li> </ul> <p>There is no historical baseline we can return to. The system is already, irreversibly, a human-influenced landscape.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• So when we say deer are “too many,” what we often mean is: they are too many for the outcomes we currently prefer: bigger camas bulbs, more visible wildflowers, easier restoration. These are aesthetic and management goals - not universal ecological truths.</li> </ul> <p>Listen closely to the ecological argument, and a pattern emerges:</p> <p>We are not just protecting nature - we are curating it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fencing areas to exclude deer</li> <li>• Intervening to protect specific plant species</li> </ul>		

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Managing for preferred outcomes</li> </ul> <p>At a certain point, this stops being preservation and starts becoming landscape gardening at scale. And if the goal is to maintain a curated version of nature, then yes - deer become a problem. Hunting becomes a tool. The preserve becomes a project. But that is a fundamentally different vision than what Turtleback was meant to be. This is not just a decision about deer. It is a decision about philosophy. Do we want every landscape to be measured, adjusted, managed toward preferred outcomes? Or do we want some places to remain open, uncontrolled, allowed to evolve without constant intervention. Turtleback Mountain is one of the last places on Orcas Island that still feels like the latter. We should be very careful before turning it into the former. Because once a refuge becomes a management zone, it rarely becomes a refuge again. What we are really debating is not whether Turtleback is failing, but whether we are willing to let it be something other than what we prefer. Turtleback is not a laboratory. It is not a fenced restoration plot or a controlled study site. It is a living system shaped by centuries of disturbance, including our own. The absence of predators, the fragmentation of habitat, the very presence of deer at current densities—these are not natural imbalances we can neatly correct. They are the long echo of human intervention. To respond with yet another intervention, this time layered directly into a shared public space, is not restoration. It is continuation. And it comes at a cost that the current proposal understates. Turtleback Mountain is one of the few places on the island where the public experience is simple and universal: you arrive, you walk, and you do not have to negotiate with the land. You do not need specialized knowledge. You do not need to check a calendar to know whether today is a day you can safely wander. It is a commons in the truest sense - open, legible, and shared across generations. Introducing hunting, even in a limited, regulated form fractures that simplicity. It asks the majority of users to adapt to a minority use that is fundamentally incompatible with it. Not because hunters are irresponsible, but because the activity itself requires a different relationship to the landscape: one of pursuit, concealment, and lethal intent. That relationship cannot be cleanly overlaid onto a place defined by openness and trust. The argument that “it can be done safely” is, in a narrow sense, true. But safety is not the only measure that matters. A place can be statistically safe and still be functionally diminished. When families hesitate, when visitors choose another trail, when the quiet assumption of shared use is replaced by uncertainty, something essential has already been lost. What we should not do is take one of the island’s most widely shared and deeply valued public landscapes and convert it, even partially, into something else. That promise is not incidental. It is the foundation of public trust. Emphasize that the land was protected for passive recreation and conservation, not multi-use extraction. Hunting has a place. It is part of the region’s history and, for many, an important source of food and connection to the land. But not every place can serve every purpose. Orcas has evolved to a new equilibrium, and we must remember it is no longer the land of the 1800’s or earlier in history. Once hunting is allowed, it’s hard to restrict or roll back and there is a shift in the identity of protected lands. The sounds of killing travel far in quiet landscapes; peace is disturbed. The definition of refuge changes. The social contract with the public is altered and the fundamental experience of Turtleback Mountain preserve is changed. Rather we have unequivocally placed value on sanctuaries and chosen the strength of a public lands system. Can we accept limits? Not every ecological outcome can, or should, be optimized. Some level of browsing, change, and imperfection is part of a functioning system. Turtleback Mountain serves thousands of people each year. It already provides habitat, beauty, and a sense of common ground in a divided world. To change its character in pursuit of a solution that could be pursued elsewhere is not just a management decision; it is a redefinition of what we believe public land should be. Sometimes the most disciplined, and most forward-looking, choice is to recognize that a place is already doing exactly what it should and to leave it alone. I respectfully ask that you pursue solutions that address ecological concerns while preserving the integrity, safety, and shared experience of this extraordinary place and preventing lethal consequences for beings who share our island. Thank you for your consideration and for your continued stewardship of the lands entrusted to your care.</p>		
67	<p>What was the catalyst for proposing hunting on these two preserves now? Am I correct in understanding the reason for proposing both gun and bow hunting is connected to hunting regulations? Is bow hunting exclusive to local tribes an option? If not, why? Please send me contact information for the gentleman that presented the tribal information. // -- Thanks for the opportunity to thoughtfully discuss my concerns regarding the Land Bank's proposal to allow limited hunts for both Tribal and general populations, and to weigh in w/my conclusions. I am not in favor of the proposal as it stands for the following reasons: As a supporter of the LandBank and both a donor and a fundraiser for the Turtleback Preserve purchase "public hunting grounds" was not in the definition of benefits of preservation. I would not have spent the time/energy/money</p>	Con	Safety

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	to help with the purchase if that had been the case. It is impossible to "close" Turtleback Preserve for safety during a hunt. There are many ways to access it - many of us regularly hiked there before it was an official Preserve with official access points. There are no fences to climb and very few boundary signs. The "100' buffer zones" are not large enough (and logistically cannot be large enough) to contain bullets and gunshot sounds. If hunting is permitted it should be limited to Tribal Bow Hunting Only (no guns/bullets) as a one time trial, with herd counts before and after to gauge/record the ecological impacts accurately. Now that the public has voiced recorded concerns regarding unsafe conditions of hunting in the Preserve, the LandBank has increased liability. If someone gets hurt, or property is damaged, etc. -not only during the hunt but also before and after - those concerns have been documented. Lawsuits are expensive and time consuming. I would prefer my Land Bank dollars go toward acquiring more habitat for the deer to graze than to removing a species the preserve was purchased in part to protect. Specific data has not been collected. This step is time consuming. It is also the best way to support a proposal. Generalized data is not sufficient. It is not a generalized proposal. Population data should be collected before and after each hunt for specific areas. This data should be made conveniently public knowledge within a year. The reasoning hunting "done on other island preserves without a problem" is a generalized statement...and stretching the definition a bit when looking at Lopez Island's history. It does not take into account the almost tribal distinctions that residents of Orcas make between ourselves and the rest of the humans living in our county. I understand that eradicating deer can be part of ecology management. I spent 6 years on a team for National Parks that eradicated goats and pigs that were devastating endangered plants and birds. I have managed /owned 57 acres on Orcas since 1992. I have an occasional bow hunter help me with thinning the herds of deer that graze/overgraze this land. Keeping the ecology in balance is a delicate undertaking. It requires far more than organizing the project. Every action causes a reaction. My vote is no on the LandBank's proposal to hunt.		
68	Clearly the deer population on Orcas is a problem; however, I do not think this is the solution. The County should be taking measures island wide to control the deer. This piecemeal, limited and potentially dangerous hunting plan is unacceptable and will not correct the problem. It is time for San Juan County to step up and take responsibility for something on this island.	Con	Safety
69	Egads, putting the deer population & human life in danger is such a horrid consideration. Just say NO! Can't island hunters hunt in eastern WA?	Con	Safety
71	We have supported the Landbank for more than thirty years. We believe in its mission. However the proposal to allow hunting on Turtleback seems like an abandonment of the core principle of preserving the beauty and serenity of special places on the islands. We do not want to have to listen to gunshots on Orcas Island, nor be concerned we might inadvertently be in danger from hunters. Please rethink your proposal and maintain the special atmosphere of Turtleback.	Con	Safety
72	Please put me down on record that I am totally AGAINST your proposal to allow hunting of any kind within the Turtleback Preserve. I could list the many reasons why, but I'm sure you have already heard most, if not all, of them, and I'd rather not get all worked up and angry in a letter. Keep the Preserve the way it was meant to be: set aside for wildlife (that includes the deer) and humans to enjoy forever! Believe me, "Nature" will work it all out.....STOP interfering!	Con	Anti-hunting
73	I am supplying official comment to the hunting proposal on Turtleback:1) WDFW seems unable to restrict commercial pots out of the ferry lanes, so why should we have confidence that it can manage an experimental hunt on Turtleback? Every year taxpayers spend over a million dollars repairing the underwater gear, on WSF vessels, due to pot line entanglement. WDFW has ignored requests to map out restricted pot zones in the ferry lanes by which commercial fishers can abide. 2) Fishers that I know, agree that the management of the openings for the recreational Chinook fishery in Puget Sound, and Area 7, is egregious, discouraging and disappointing. Maybe WDFW should focus more on symbiotic outreach to fishers in Area 7 rather than a hunt. How can Saturna/Tumbo Island be open for Chinook by the DFO (Fisheries and Oceans Canada) but adjacent area 7N is closed by WDFW? Aren't those biologically the same Fraser River or hatchery fish swimming around southern Georgia Strait? This is a far bigger issue for WDFW to address—and marshal its resources — than some piddly hunt on Turtleback. We should expect state government to work efficiently and to treat our tax dollars with respect, even if the majority party legislators choose to go down a more financially dangerous and irresponsible path. 3) Will WDFW require hunters to take a geography test? How will hunters know that a trail is nearby before they pull the trigger? What is WDFW's liability if someone gets injured because a hunter was unknowingly too close to a trail? 4) I thought that the Land Bank, or either SJPT, considered Turtleback to be a special environment. However, the promotion of this hunt substantiates that the area	Con	Distrust of WDFW

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	beyond the trails is not a precious eco-zone since hunters will be trouncing around on it. 5) Let's take a pass on the hunt. Let's focus efforts on more aggressive removal of blackberries.		
74	I honestly can't believe change to the original dedicated purpose of a peaceful and safe Turtleback Preserve is being considered. The acquisition of Turtleback Mountain Preserve is a partnership San Juan County residents enthusiastically participated in with the Landbank, to protect the environment for a safe and peaceful experience of Nature. The prospect of pulling the rug out from under the folks who supported the original purpose of Turtleback procurement is frankly overwhelming. Beyond the bad publicity, loss of trust, and controversy that will incur once a move like that is put in place, it will only be a matter of time before someone is hurt or killed, prompting a major lawsuit to the County (which obvious by proposition one, it cannot afford). Please come to your senses and drop this foolish deliberation.	Con	Breach of Trust
75	The Land Bank's proposed structure for limited deer hunting on Turtleback and North Shore preserve is based on incomplete, biased, or incorrect information and should be tabled until proper studies can be completed. Further, the Land Bank has blurred the lines around its land management objectives, leaving uncertainty as to whether it has a legitimate obligation to establish "balance" of nature, which has not been defined, or to provide for a recreational public hunt simply to exploit a harvestable surplus of deer because it is "there," or to enhance survival of native plants in fact facing competition from non-native or invasive species, or to fulfill Native American treaty rights. All of these elements have been brought into the conversation, but it is not always clear that deer hunting is the best – or an appropriate – answer. Deer population and densities in San Juan County. Black tailed deer on Orcas and the other county islands are naturally smaller in size and exist in higher densities than their mainland counterparts due to a biological phenomenon known as Insular or Island Dwarfism, an evolutionary tendency toward small body size in deer and other animals on relatively small islands. On islands without predators, species mature to reproductive age sooner, with less energy cost, and are smaller by genetic determination, not malnutrition. Besides Black tailed deere on Orcas, examples of dwarfing include the Florida Keys (White tailed deer), Jersey, UK (Red deere), Assateague I., Virginia (imported Sika deer), Ryukyu I., Japan (native Sika deer), Margarita I., Venezuela (White tailed deer), and Coiba I., Panama (White tailed deere). WDFW has, as recently as 2017, incorrectly advised the Orcas community that deer on the islands were overpopulated because predators had been killed off by early settlers, are now "starving," and were smaller due to malnutrition. Not only does this ignore dwarfism but also falsely alleges that apex mammalian predation was ever a factor on these small islands. In 2017 when deer numbers were high, the Journal of the SJ noted that residents frequently saw does with twin fawns. But "twinning" occurs when the deer are well fed and in prime condition, not when they are stressed for food. Therefore, the Land Bank and Preservation Trust need to step back from advocating public hunting to bring deer "into balance" when the need for or natural character of "balance" has not been documented. WDFW's mandate: WDFW exists under a legislative mandate established by RCW 77.04.012 which states that the mission of the department is to "Attempt to maximize the public recreational game fishing and hunting opportunities of all citizens." The department's generic response to situations where wildlife numbers are not actually declining is to propose taking the harvestable surplus. The Land Bank, which does not operate under a hunting mandate, needs to filter the department's inputs and recognize it as information that, while not facially wrong, is nevertheless a source of bias. The Land Bank's legitimate concerns – namely that native plants in the preserves are suffering competition from non-native species – are not necessarily answered by deer hunting plans unsupported by accurate census data. Accordingly, the department's monochromatic reliance on hunting as a solution needs to be put into perspective. Where is the exploration of alternatives that do not involve deer recreational deer hunting which conflicts broadly with public enjoyment of the preserves? Public support. I personally fall into the ranks of Orcas citizens who love the Land Bank and Preservation Trust. When my sister passed in 2011, we appealed to all her friends in the Doe Bay area to contribute to the Preservation Trust in her name. I plan to do the same. It pains me to see these cherished organizations allow their base of public support to slide into division and distrust. Land conservation on tiny Orcas Island, which is suffering intense development pressures, needs all the help it can get.	Con	Opposition to logic behind proposal
82	I worked as a full time house-call veterinarian on Orcas for many years and am now a part time resident. I don't think hunting should be allowed on Turtle Back or North Shore as proposed by the Land Bank. My main concerns are safety and serenity. I don't want to see butterflies go extinct due to the loss of wildflowers but I doubt the number of deer killed via the hunting will affect that, so to me that argument is a moot point. I am concerned about the type of 'bullet' suggested for use which can cause an inhumane death of the deer and possible and inhumane death of a human. Those bullets can travel a long way. Providing reflective vests at trail heads highlights that someone thinks	Con	Safety

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	that there is a high risk for a fatality. I for one would discontinue my hikes if I saw “reflective vests’ offered at the trailhead... it would make me question and be concerned for my safety. I also wonder about liability issues. The Land Bank, to me, should be protecting our lands to preserve the beauty of our island. I strongly object to the hunting proposal.		
14	Your presentation on 3/23 was very informative. The science is clearly indicating that over grazing as a result of too many deer on Orcas Island is a serious ecological problem that should be addressed. Unfortunately, culling them by allowing a short hunting season appears to be the best solution. I'm also impressed that you have experience on San Juan and Lopez Islands with this solution. I am writing to express my concern for allowing the public to use Turtleback and North Shore during the hunting season. We are blessed to have many wonderful hiking trails on Orcas Island so closing those two locations for a short period would not be considered a hardship but, in my opinion, it would be the safest decision. Please do not commingle hunting and hiking even with clearly marked boundaries.	Mixed	Safety
15	I appreciate the opportunity to submit written comments on the proposal for limited deer hunting at the Turtleback Mountain and North Shore Preserves. While I support responsible wildlife management to address overpopulation and ecological balance, I strongly oppose the creation of separate ethnic-based hunting periods and closures on public preserves. Public lands and preserves funded by all taxpayers should be managed under neutral, equal rules that apply to every individual regardless of ancestry. The proposal creates a two-tier system: a general state-managed hunting window open to licensed hunters, followed by a tribal-managed period during which the North Shore Preserve is closed entirely to the public and reserved exclusively for members of specific tribes. This structure treats citizens differently based on ethnic descent and tribal enrollment, which is a form of government discrimination. All residents and visitors contribute to the purchase and maintenance of these lands through taxes. Granting exclusive access or special seasons to one group defined by ancestry violates the principle that public resources belong equally to all citizens. Historical treaties may create legal obligations, but they do not justify ongoing racial or ethnic preferences enforced by government on lands held in trust for everyone. True respect for history and culture would seek voluntary, non-coercive solutions rather than dividing public access along ethnic lines. I urge the Land Bank to reject any plan that includes ancestry-based hunting zones, exclusive tribal periods, or closures that exclude the general public. Instead, pursue deer management through race-neutral regulations that treat every licensed hunter the same—such as limited permits, strict safety protocols, and non-lead ammunition requirements applied equally. If the preserves cannot be managed without special ethnic privileges, consideration should be given to alternative approaches, including greater private involvement or different conservation strategies that do not rely on government-enforced group preferences. Equal treatment under the law and fair access to public resources are fundamental to a free society. I respectfully request that the proposal be revised to eliminate all ethnic distinctions in hunting access and scheduling.	Mixed	Opposed to exclusive Tribal hunting
29	"I am writing in regard to the proposal to allow hunting on Turtleback Land Preserve...I am completely against allowing any hunting anywhere, on this...OUR... Land Preserve! This is land to be held for people to enjoy nature, hiking, in quiet serenity and SAFETY! More and more, we need to protect our natural spaces, for ourselves and for generations to come. Let nature be nature...let the deer live as deer...and let humans have safe, quiet natural spaces." // -- Thank you, very much for the information and clarity you provided. I appreciate knowing who is involved and the scope of hunting and hunters. I also can appreciate control on deer foraging, and that public safety is being considered.	Mixed	Safety
33	In decades past, we used to hike freely at all the public areas around Watmough. Then the shooting death happened. I have some strong opinions about so many people hunting in such a small and brushy area. Of course they couldn't see their backstop out there. It was inevitable that an accident would happen. That was my family's wake up call. No amount of safety vests or whistles will ever grant us safety in these conditions. We, and many other Lopezians, no longer feel that we can safely hike those areas during hunting season. Of course, there is a solution other than hikers knowing that they cannot hike safely for those four months of the year. This is a solution that the feds won't consider, but you, as a smaller, local entity could. What if you were to allow both hiking and hunting on alternate days during those four months? You could assign certain days each week for hunting permits and other days for hiking. Publicize and post this schedule. That way the area can be safely used by both hikers and hunters, rather	Mixed	Safety

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	than the current awful situation on Lopez where hikers cannot safely use the properties for four months of every year. I think this is a great compromise and far better than hikers being anywhere near hunters. The San Juan islands public lands, even Turtleback, are simply too small to safely share at the same time. Accidents are inevitable.		
47	<p>I have spoken to a number people with more knowledge than I regarding the complex background of this proposal. So I must respect the generally accepted interpretations and avoid paying too much attention to the ambiguities of the many issues involved in this precedent setting proposal. Taking in the proposal as a whole rather than the sum of it's parts is a better approach. The primary reasons/goals for proposing these areas open to deer hunting seem to be 1) forest diversity and richness furthered by reducing local deer numbers, 2) provide for continuance of socio-cultural traditions with increased opportunity for hunting and harvest by locals and others and 3) recognition of tribal rights and interests in terrestrial hunting and harvest while creating a "co-management" or "co-stewardship" collaborative framework and exclusive 2 week tribal members only season under Point Elliot Treaty rights that have never formally existed in the County. In my mind, the main problem with the first goal is that quality deer habitat is not consistent across undeveloped parcels. Private lands and ag areas often adjacent to these Land Bank Preserves with landscaping and disturbance mosaics are more diverse. From my 19 years of deer harvest on SJI in very high quality, diverse habitat doe deer have pretty small core territories, perhaps 50-100 acres that overlap with other does. My best guess. Better habitat areas lead to better nutrition and higher rates of twinning and outflow to adjacent areas So a few small open hunting zones (that are not likely characterized as good deer habitat in and of themselves) for several weeks may well reduce destructive deer browse on Preserve vegetation. Especially if does as well as bucks are harvested with reasonable success rates. However, if more enlightened adjacent private land owners also allow harvest the preserve vegetation would be more lightly less browsed as area populations increase toward carrying capacity. In a flash of optimism I do think the proposal, augmented by more lands open to hunting, could be helpful in avoiding the ugly impacts of overpopulation we saw in 2016-2021. Perhaps the positive ecological results (insects, flowering plants, forest understory and especially declining bird populations, etc.) of dampening overpopulation across all properties will cause county residents to favorably vote for renewal of the CLB next time around?The socio-cultural traditions of meat harvest, especially since the decimation of salmon as reliable wild food has settled in for the long term, are very important even if not generally understood or respected by urbanized immigrants building single family dwellings on acreage across the islands. I applaud the recent DFW and Land Bank efforts to increase deer hunting opportunities on private and public lands here. Looking at the Mt Grant and Lopez Hill efforts in this regard seem to indicate that many hunt days are used by non-locals who come from mainland areas where in season competition is higher due to many factors that do not exist out here. Our issue here is a paucity of public land open to deer harvest but during quickly increasing deer populations on our islands hunter harvest opportunity is sky high and I am sure that word has been out for a long time. Many serious hunters and families that want venison know longtime land owners and have good hunting areas. Hunters from off-island who hunt for one day, unfamiliar with the area, are bound to have a lower success rate that is not as helpful to overall goals. Therefor, the additional tribal hunting effort on these two Orcas Preserve zones, whether exclusive or shared in time and space is certainly an opportunity to see Treaty rights implemented in a reasonable way after 170 years and increased harvest of local deer populations that may result in increased effort and success (with increasing bag limits and multiple tags) as the deer population irrupts again as it surely will. In another blinding flash of optimism, especially as other private land owners continue to wake up to our island reality, I see this as one of the only possible avenues toward future better forest and deer stewardship. If the tribal and County folks prefer to see this limited start as "co-management or co-stewardship" framework with our little non-sovereign County then so be it.</p>	Mixed	Ecology
3	<p>Hi! We live on Turtleback's toes in West Sound. I haven't reviewed your proposal on deer hunting, so you may have addressed this.</p> <p>1) WHERE on Turtleback? Several of our friends live on land abutting the reserve. I found a hunting arrow once buried 1/3 up its shaft in the yard of our next-door neighbor in Rosario, and there was no hunting allowed. Sure don't want bullets flying into our neighbors or their homes. Need to define the huntable area to exclude shots leaving the reserve.</p> <p>2) Turtleback and the Northwest reserve are on the same side of the island. Won't do a thing for deer populations on the other lobes of our land. Keep thinking. Is there some portion of Moran State Park that could safely host a hunt? Good luck. // -- Thank you so much for responding. IF the sightlines associated with the attached map preclude an</p>	Pro	Safety

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	arrow or bullet straying onto private property, terrific. If Orcas is still rural enough to allow deer hunting without endangering residents, that should be good for the health of the deer population in the long run. Thank you for your responsiveness and consideration.		
16	Most of what I had planned to write in about was covered at the meeting regarding the importance of opening up a deer season on Turtleback, so the only thing I wanted to comment on further was the concerning comment from the guy on San Juan in terms of the importance of having a season that's open only to the local indigenous communities. I'm a grad student in the Natural Resources Management program through the University of Idaho, as well as a hunter, and I think it's worth pointing out that much of the policy that I've studied for my classes has been based around the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. This framework, which is shared by the United States and Mexico, was largely created after the extinction of the Passenger Pigeon and the Bison. Especially in the case of the Bison, we have examples of how game management (or lack thereof) without respect to Indigenous peoples, is management that's created without a substantial body of knowledge that western science alone can't provide. As a state, Washington has been fortunate to have our fisheries co-managed through the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission and the results of the Boldt decision. I'm encouraged to see the Land Bank doing what's right for the land and for the original stewards of the land by offering not only a season for deer, but also a time for native folks to hunt as well. I look forward to seeing what comes of this and appreciate the work you're doing.	Pro	Support for Tribal hunting
23	I noted that only one hunting part will be allowed at a time. Does this mean per day? If so, who would determine who gets access? That is potentially a very limited number of individuals who will be afforded the opportunity. // - Thank you for the follow up. For context, I most likely will not end up hunting Orcas as I live in Tacoma. However, I do hunt Vashon island which has many of the same issues that it sounds like Orcas has regarding access, safety, and other concerns. I do think utilizing WDFWs "hunt by reservation" system is a great idea. Vashon has only one public access spot; Island Center Forest. During modern season, King county parks shuts down most of ICF and staffs check in booths for hunters at the trail heads. I personally have not hunted ICF but I have not heard any complaints from hunters or residents regarding the safety of this arrangement. Anyway, I commend you for opening your lands for public use including hunting. Vashon land trust does not allow hunting and neither do several other land trust type agencies I have contacted.	Pro	Questions
24	Very well organized and well-attended meeting last week, and good recap article in the Orcasonian. As I mentioned to Mr. Peter G, a couple of people at the No Kings rally over the weekend circulating a petition against the hunting proposal to people who probably didn't attend the meeting and know nothing about the proposal or the issue of deer population dynamics and their ecological consequences. The points of the proposal are simple: - Purpose: protect, restore native ecological balance. - Very limited season (20 days on Turtleback, open to other recreational users; 18 days on North Shore for Native Americans, closed to other users) - Limited firearms: shotguns and bows. - Trial program, but record of safe and successful programs at other locations (Lopez Hill, Mt. Grant). I think most people are "getting it". More will get it with continued good explanation to counteract misrepresentation. Keep on & Good luck!	Pro	Ecology
27	I am enthusiastically PRO. Here are my comments:I commend the Land Bank for taking this pragmatic approach that supports limited hunting under defined circumstances and timelines. The Land Bank should consider expanding the type and timeline of hunting at both preserves to include bow hunting. (Is there a reason proposed hunting is so limited?) The strategy of working with the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission on hunting permissions is brilliant and defers management of a potentially arduous and complex process to a knowledgeable, respected and familiar entity to tribes. It would be great if the Orcas Island Community Foundation took an interest and found a local nonprofit to defray costs of tribal hunters who need to travel to hunt. If allowable it would be wonderful if Moran State Park considered a similar policy. I hope they will track this initiative. (Are you working with them?) Thank you for considering this needed opportunity for hunting in general, and tribal hunting especially. It would be an embarrassment to Orcas Island if we do not express strong support for tribal hunting. I wonder if more people would benefit from education on this topic – I am hearing a lot of poorly informed comments and think that if significant voices of opposition persist that some additional information might be helpful. (Is there another island organization that could help?) Have you heard any feedback from tribal representatives and what message would it send if we did not advance this idea? Could there be a window of time	Pro	Ecology

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	for a women's-only hunting opportunity?North Shore Specific Comments: Deer damage to plants is highly visible and hunting will do a lot to reduce deer pressure on plants that provide important resources to birds, amphibians and other wildlife. 100% support for tribal hunting. This is long overdue!!!Turtleback Specific Comments: The available hunting area seems like it could support more than one small party of 1-2 people. Have you considered expanding this? Thank you for making hunting a priority. This makes all kinds of sense and is great to see our county embracing pragmatic land management practices. Kudos to you! I am glad to see there is an explicit allowance for tribal hunting. I appreciate the Land Bank's thoughtfulness with respect to nearby residences and commend you for your conservative approach. I hope it leads to more support for an expansion of this practice to other preserves. We have observed a marked increase in the number of deer in our neighborhood. I know this waxes and wanes with disease and appreciate this proactive approach! I am a wildflower lover and am heartbroken every time I see a chomped camas or lily flower. Hunting will help restore some balance to our highly disturbed landscape. Some of these flowers are just hanging on and we need more of them. Thank you for your efforts to make this possible.		
28	We live on Cormorant Bay Rd and have noticed a large increase in deer over the past few years while driving and hiking. I can believe that the population is now large enough to cause health problems in the deer and impact native plants. I'm all in favor of the plan to allow hunting, which seems careful and well thought out.	Pro	Ecology
30	I'm writing in to say I support allowing the public to hunt on turtle back at specific times, I think avoiding hikers and other people sharing the space at the same time as hunters would be wise. Also I support some bird hunting on Orcas.	Pro	Support for hunting
32	Hello. I am in full support of the proposal for a tribal-only, 2-week, hunting opening on the North Shore Preserve, Orcas Island. I strongly feel that it is important to honor treaty agreements, many of which have NOT been honored. I see this as an important opportunity to "walk the talk" that one hears or speaks at gatherings and events where local non-indigenous residents, and tribal/first stewards, come together to promote harmony, share history, and share cultural knowledge. Thank you!	Pro	Support for Tribal hunting
35	I believe that the Land Bank is doing the right thing in allowing Tribal Hunting on the preserves and should likely find additional opportunities for the First Nations. I especially like the idea of closing the North shore and hope that it would allow for proper sacred rights and rituals.	Pro	Support for Tribal hunting
38	I am a resident and property owner in San Juan County. The latter shouldn't matter but for some reason, it does in our current political discourse. I am also a hearty and grateful supporter of the Land Bank. Thanks to the SJC Land Bank, our community benefits from unprecedented access to open lands. I thank you for your good work. I am writing to request that you fulfill both the intent of the Land Bank and our community's tax investment in the Land Bank's stewardship by honoring our treaties with tribally-managed hunts at the Turtleback and North Shore Preserves.	Pro	Support for Tribal hunting
39	I am writing to express my support for the Land Bank's proposal to allow limited hunting on Turtleback and the Northshore Preserve. I especially support the proposal for tribally-managed hunting periods. Thank you for your thoughtful approach to re-introducing an activity that occurred on these lands for thousands of years.	Pro	Support for Tribal hunting
41	This letter is in support of deer hunting on Turtleback with the hopes that hunting would become far more understood by the general public as a practice necessary for the preservation and restoration of the complete and whole island ecosystem. Orcas Island is not unique in having a "deer problem." Around the world over the ages, split-hooved browsing un-checked herds of all types, wild and domestic, have decimated once thriving ecosystems into monocultures and even deserts (think Africa) by virtue of a lack of predation. From Long Island NY with their urban deer to the Red Deer of Scotland browsing down young pine forests, to the endangered Cedars of Lebanon saplings being eaten by feral goats, the story is always the same. Freely burgeoning herd populations become seen in the minds of humans as a positive sign of abundance even as the totality of the former ecosystem has been reduced by browsing to an empty shell of its former self, which becomes the new normal over the years of generational memory. In these modern times, it is popular for individuals to seek a "cause" that makes them feel valuable with purpose, and often, emotionally charged memes send many people high-up into a silo of support for their favorite icon without ever considering the larger picture. Hitting the "like" button has become synonymous with "fact" and "truth" at the expense of the larger interconnected or nuanced reality. To unconditionally love deer at the expense of every other part of the ecosystem is NOT conservation, preservation, or environmentalism. If Mother Nature had her way, we would still have all of the predators that once were here that kept the deer herd in check. (The deer were not here	Pro	Ecology

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	<p>“first.”) As opposed to the popular imagery of Mother Nature as being kind and endlessly loving; the weak, injured, old, new-born, and pregnant deer would be the first to be culled out in a manner counter to the Disney-like constructs of today’s popular narrative regarding nature. Nature is indeed beautiful, and it is the basis of our existence, but beauty should not be confused with its natural operating system, which is all about numbers, odds, competition, birth rates and mortality. In addition to the four-legged predators who evolved alongside the deer were the two-legged ones; the native people who also hunted deer for food and materials needed for everyday life. Humans are at the top of the food chain, and to take ourselves out of that role, especially since there are now no other predators, is to irresponsibly circumvent the natural system through inaction. Turning a blind eye to the plant-level ecosystem devastation that an unchecked herd inflicts upon most all other species, plant and animal, is simply wrong, because plants are the basis for all animal life, and all plants begin their lives at the browsing level. Out of my 70 years in this incarnation, I’ve spent 60 of them working intimately and full-time with plants, personally and occupationally. By age 10, I was already growing trees in used coffee cans. I grew up in the woodlands of Pennsylvania where the songs of the Wood Thrush and Veery were common among the Lemon Spice bush and understory Viburnum. These birds are rare now, in large part, due to rampant deer populations browsing out the understory shrubs which are their nesting preferences, otherwise known as “habitat loss.” In the 38 years I’ve been on Orcas Island, working with landscapes and forests, I’ve seen a massive decline in many forms of life and diversity due to over-browsing by deer. Development and climate change combined has not done anywhere near the damage to the local ecosystem that the deer have done. I’ve seen two deer population boom and bust cycles in my time here, and along with that, all of the damage that is done to wildflowers, flowering shrubs, broadleaved evergreen ground cover in the forest, and the near-complete ground level browsing-out of our future forests. Along with this damage is the fragmentation and depletion of resources for bees and other insects, birds, amphibians, and the microbiome of the forest floor. After a “bust” in the deer population, the rest of the ecosystem recovers far more slowly, if at all, while the deer population quickly spikes again. Boom and bust is no substitute for balance. Too many people will say that it looks “green enough” to them, but “green enough” is not good enough, because the full-bodied diversity and abundance of the ecosystem has been hollowed out at the browsing level, and along with the browsing comes the deprivation of renewal as resources used by the ecosystem’s occupants are depleted. One could easily analogize this tragedy with an operating system on your computer with certain sub-parts deep in the system missing, making the larger basic functions insufficient or inoperable. There are still a few areas of the island that have good forest understory groundcover, but there are many other areas where I’ve seen complete and permanent destruction to stands of Salal, ferns, and Mahonia. Where the meadows once turned blue with Camas, you’d now be lucky to find just a few. Where Indian Paintbrush once splashed color on the waterfront, there is now only grass, and the Sedum and Licorice Ferns that once flourished across an open forest’s rocky floor are now completely gone except for places where the deer can’t reach them. Finding just one or two something here or there no longer counts for “there’s nothing to worry about.” Flowering Current and Red Elderberry once were common sights, but many of these short-lived shrubs have since died out and nearly all seedlings are quickly browsed out, limiting natural recruitment to near zero. The same can be said of almost all tree species, including Madrona, as the older trees are dying and every tiny seedling is browsed out within a month of germination. For those who doubt my observations, one only needs to go to Yellow Island in May to observe the coastal prairie or to Vendovi Island to see a healthy in-tact forest, where a deer-free management strategy is in place. For trees and shrubs – as if browsing isn’t bad enough, is the thrashing of woody structures by the bucks. Trees and shrubs need at least 10 to 20 years to be what I call “thrash proof”, but the frequency of thrashing occurring is so high on young saplings that it is difficult to find any young tree at all that has not been severely damaged. These wounds do not heal, they induce internal trunk rot, and are eventually fatal to the tree. While my history with plants, and my understanding of how deer damage is inflicted upon plants is vast, my experience in dealing with people on this issue as a landscaper is also as vast (and frustrating). Along with any conservation efforts that will only be successful through management of the deer herd is the need for a public education campaign in order to dispel the many myths surrounding the Bambi syndrome and the way the general public views “nature.” I’ve found, time and time again, that even when people see the raw evidence of damage, many fail to accept the facts. Here are just a few examples. Client: “I want a native landscape because the deer don’t eat native plants.” Me: “What have the deer been eating before we began planting ornamentals?!” Client: “The deer won’t eat my plants because I like the deer.” Me: “Did you have this discussion with them, and what did they tell you?” Client: “I didn’t know the rabbits could climb up to 6 feet. Look at what they did to my cedar tree.” Me: “Look at these foot prints. Do your rabbits have split hooves?” Client: “You must have planted all these 4-inch Salal wrong, because each one just popped out of the ground last</p>		

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	<p>night.” Me: “Look at all the hoof prints.”Deer damage is often insidious and unrecognizable to those who do not want to understand the specific details of how and when it happens. For example, no one sees munched Salal leaves, and many people believe deer don’t eat it. But deer eat the emerging young shoots, leaving the missed older leaves in-tact. Browsed young shoots include buds for the flowers for bees which will also generate berries for birds. Over time, the missed older whole leaves that were lucky enough to not be browsed come to the end of their life span and die. The Salal is then capable of regenerating foliage along dormant buds lower in the branching mass, and the cycle of new growth being browsed is repeated as the stand is reduced lower and lower until there is nothing left. When nothing is left, the rich leaf compost dries up and blows away, leaving the forest floor void of its former microbiome and surface habitat. Beyond those who lack a detailed understanding of what is lost in the environment by deer numbers being too high, are those who will conflate traditional forms of hunting with other issues in today’s world. I will be the first to say there are too many guns in the world, too much violence, and too many pointing fingers falsely blaming others for their own problems. None of these global issues are synonymous or equivalents with the need to control the deer population for the maintenance of a full and complete ecosystem. Man is not the only mammal capable of doing great harm to the environment, yet we are here, we are a part of “nature”, this is our home too, and we are the only animal capable of using our intellect and knowledge to maintain a balance that recognizes the totality of the whole. We have an inherent responsibility to act accordingly. Waiting for another hemorrhagic pandemic to run through an overcrowded herd is far less humane than a few well-placed bullets or arrows. Inaction is devastating when action is required.</p>		
43	<p>I write in support of San Juan County Land Bank’s proposal to open several reserve areas as hunting zones on Turtleback Mountain. I am a wildlife veterinarian, and while I currently work on marine wildlife, I studied deer and deer diseases for my PhD work at the University of Georgia where I was also employed by the Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study. I have read most of the peer-reviewed publications referred to in Kurt License’s presentation and support the thought that reducing deer density will benefit plants and ground and mid-canopy nesting birds that suffer from over-browsing of deer. In fact, in April 2008 I wrote a letter to the Land Bank Commissioners requesting they consider allowing limited hunting on turtleback (attached). In February 2013, SeaDoc hosted Dr. Peter Arcese who gave a public lecture on the indirect effects of humans on native species and ecosystems, which included research they had conducted on black-tailed deer overpopulation in local islands. At the time, many islanders seem to be very interested in hunting as a tool to provide local food and reduce the effects of deer over population. That YouTube video can be found at: <a href="https://youtu.be/ZxA9FAIpgk0?si=44-oUvB7cSf9xEor">https://youtu.be/ZxA9FAIpgk0?si=44-oUvB7cSf9xEor</a> I have not been off the trails on turtleback so cannot comment on the accessibility or value of the habitat in the two proposed reserves, but I do applaud that they were selected for their relative isolation from trails and neighbors, which will hopefully minimize concerns from hikers and neighbors. I also like that you will require people to hunt with non-lead ammunition, something I think we should be moving towards as a nation for public health and ecosystem health reasons. I strongly recommend that the Land Bank consider close monitoring and publication of annual hunter harvested deer data. It is not hard to age deer and collecting detailed data on sex and age of hunter harvested deer will help the Land Bank determine if hunter harvest is helping to adequately manage the deer herd.</p>	Pro	Ecology
44	<p>The recent discussion around tribally managed hunting at the North Shore Preserve should not be framed as a debate. It is not a question of preference, comfort, or local opinion. It is a matter of whether this community is willing to uphold binding treaty law and reckon honestly with its responsibilities. The Treaty of Point Elliott (1855) is not symbolic. It is a living, legal agreement in which Coast Salish tribes explicitly reserved the right to hunt, fish, and gather on open and unclaimed lands. These rights were never ceded. They persist today, and they are enforceable. To challenge tribally managed hunting is to challenge the legitimacy of that treaty, and by extension, the rule of law itself. San Juan County exists on lands questionably ceded through this treaty, and its history reflects both its authority and its failures. Following the agreement, Indigenous communities were displaced from the San Juan Islands, denied reservation lands within the county, and increasingly separated from the places that have long sustained their cultural and spiritual lifeways. Over time, private ownership and regulatory systems have continued to limit access to shorelines and traditional sites, creating a reality in which treaty rights are recognized in principle but constrained in lived experience. While recent efforts toward tribal engagement and collaboration signal a shift, they remain incomplete when measured against the treaty’s original promises. Upholding the Treaty of Point Elliott requires more than acknowledgment. It requires restoring access, sharing decision making, and supporting the ability of Coast Salish peoples to live in relationship with these lands.San Juan County’s recent steps toward collaboration with tribal nations and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife should be understood for what they are: overdue compliance. For generations, treaty rights have been</p>	Pro	Support for Tribal hunting

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	<p>minimized, delayed, or selectively enforced. What is being proposed at the North Shore Preserve is not radical. It is the bare minimum required to begin correcting that pattern. Opposition to these efforts often reveals a deeper discomfort, not with hunting itself, but with Indigenous authority. The question beneath the surface is who gets to decide how land is used. For too long, that authority has rested almost exclusively in non-Indigenous hands, despite the fact that this land is governed by agreements that say otherwise. This is where the larger Land Back movement enters the conversation, and why it matters. Land Back is not about exclusion or erasure. It is about restoring Indigenous governance, stewardship, and access in ways that align with both treaty law and ecological reality. Tribally managed hunting is one clear, tangible expression of that restoration. It represents not only a legal right, but a relationship to land rooted in responsibility, reciprocity, and long term care. As Paula Gunn Allen writes in <i>Becoming Kin</i>, the work before us is not simply political. It is relational. It asks us to unforget the histories that have been obscured, to recognize how separation from land has shaped systems of harm, and to reimagine our place in relationship to one another and to the natural world. To become kin is to move beyond passive acknowledgment toward active responsibility. It is to understand that justice is not abstract but lived through how we choose to engage with land, law, and community. Similarly, Robin Wall Kimmerer, in <i>Braiding Sweetgrass</i>, reminds us that land is not property, but a living relative, and that our role is to participate in systems of reciprocity rather than control. Taken together, these perspectives point toward a necessary shift from control to relationship, from extraction to stewardship, and from distance to accountability. To become kin, and to live in reciprocity, requires more than acknowledgment. It requires action that reflects those values. At a time when ecosystems are under strain, it is both short sighted and unjust to sideline the very knowledge systems that have sustained these landscapes for millennia. Indigenous stewardship is not a threat to conservation. It is a model for it. We cannot continue to benefit from land shaped by treaties while treating those same treaties as negotiable when they require action from us. If we claim to value justice, sustainability, and community integrity, then we must be willing to act accordingly. Supporting tribally managed hunting at the North Shore Preserve is not controversial. It is necessary. The only real question is whether this community is prepared to meet this moment with honesty and accountability or continue to delay what is already long overdue.</p>		
45	<p>I'm writing to express my support of Tribally-managed hunting on the North Shore Preserve. As stated in Article 5 of the Treaty of Point Elliott (1855), in exchange for land for white settlement, Tribal nations reserved the right to fish at usual and accustomed grounds and stations, as well as the right to hunt and gather on open and unclaimed lands. With historical and contextually-based knowledge of sustainable hunting practices, I welcome having Tribal Nations as collaborative partners in helping San Juan County more respectfully and responsibly manage its natural resource gifts. Tribal Nations treaties and treaty rights affect settler populations by shaping legal frameworks, influencing land and resource management, impacting economic activities, fostering cultural awareness, and contributing to social justice efforts. Understanding and upholding these rights is crucial for building equitable and sustainable relationships between Tribal Nations and settler communities.</p>	Pro	Support for Tribal hunting
46	<p>Thank you to the Land Bank for your efforts to control the deer population and promote ecological health on Orcas. I believe your plan is well thought out. I wonder why bow hunting isn't the preferred option over short range guns? Thanks for your prompt and elucidating response. It sounds as though crossbows are more effectively lethal than bows, and I am more in favor of a non-gun option though I would support either for a month long period such as Early Modern season.</p>	Pro	Ecology
50	<p>Hello, I would like to submit here my comment in support of the land bank's proposal to have the deer hunting on Orcas Island. I think it's fine, I'm not a hunter or a hunting supporter, but I support having hunts at Turtleback and Northshore to do something to preserve the biodiversity, primarily. And I like the modest opportunity for the tribes made available by the tribal reservations. I also appreciate that hunters are generally peaceable and respectful of the area and neighbors. OK, thank you for trying to make things just a little better for all of us!</p>	Pro	Ecology
54	<p>I am writing to express my support of allowing hunting to occur on the Turtleback and North Shore Preserves. I am a resident of Orcas Island and have worked as an ecologist in the islands for over twenty years. I believe that allowing hunting is important both to protect the biodiverse plant life found in the San Juans and as an act of reconciliation with local tribal members. Year after year I have seen the detrimental impacts that an overpopulation of deer has on the plant life in the islands. It is very difficult to restore rare plant communities without installing fencing to keep the deer out, and this is not always a viable solution. The absence of native flowering plants greatly affects our native bees and butterflies- an often overlooked part of the story. Turtleback Mountain is an ecologically unique place that could be home to a wide assortment of healthy native</p>	Pro	Ecology

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	<p>plant and insect populations, but which suffer due to heavy herbivory. The deer do have their place in the ecosystem but because their natural predators were killed off by early European settlers, I believe we have an obligation to keep the population at a healthy level- not only for the benefit of other species, but for the health of the deer as well. Allowing one, 2-person hunting party per day for a limited number of days would pose a very low safety risk and would be beneficial for the land itself. At minimum, I think there should be special opportunities for tribal members to come and hunt on their traditional hunting lands.</p>		
55	<p>I wanted to write to express my support for the deer-hunting proposal for the Turtleback Preserve. Having worked to help conserve, manage, and restore the botanical diversity of our islands for ~15 years now, I have seen firsthand the negative impacts deer have on the richness and diversity of shrubs and wildflowers, through their herbivory and the indirect facilitation of non-native and invasive plant species. One of the many reasons the islands are important for conservation is the extent to which native plant diversity is represented across island habitats. Even though we make up less than 1% of Washington's land area, the islands are home to about 1 in 4 of the state's native plant species. Much of this diversity is due to the presence of three regionally rare habitats that the islands have in abundance: open Douglas fir woodlands, coastal meadows, and rocky bald habitats. Unfortunately, an overabundance of deer is one of the leading stressors on these habitats. Because they are mixed browsers, their diets consist primarily of forbs and shrubs, while grasses (in meadows, that is, primarily the invasive annual grasses) are left untouched. Because the island no longer has medium and large predators, or grazers that would also eat grasses (like elk), deer are having an outsized impact on these understory communities. I know that safety is a major concern on the island, and I believe these concerns can be managed through good planning and clear communication. While strategies like fencing are important, reintroducing hunting to manage the deer population will improve the Land Bank's ability to steward Turtleback into perpetuity. I've attached some reports that provide more detail on the impact of herbivory on the success of meadow restoration projects. I've also linked to the second chapter of my Master's work , which discusses the impact of herbivory (both deer and geese) on meadow islands and highlights, on a small scale, what is occurring across the islands.</p>	Pro	Ecology
56	<p>Hunting is good. The deer are devastating.</p>	Pro	Ecology
62	<p>I support this plan. It is an important step in the right direction and would help us steward the deer population with compassion. I do not want to have another deer wasting disease because of over population. This would also help prevent native plants from being over browsed by deer. There are no downsides only minor logistics and details to work out. Please do everything possible to build this relationship with the tribes. This plan would be literally the least we could do. It's a starting point. I've lived here for over a decade and I am losing hope and patience with the prevailing insular island culture that elevates so-called "island families" who can seemingly do no wrong yet resist change and accountability at every opportunity.</p>	Pro	Ecology
63	<p>I fully support the idea of a program of controlled deer hunting on Turtleback Mountain and North Shore preserves as a means for:(1) Managing a healthy deer population on Orcas in order to support the overall sustainable biodiversity of all of the island's other plant and animal populations, and (2) Upholding the Treaty of Point Elliott. I have read articles in The Sounder about it, followed the information links on your website, and then watched the YouTube recording the March 23rd public meeting. Most of my questions and concerns regarding this proposal were addressed at some point during that meeting. I hope the Land Bank will be doing more publicity in response to the questions and concerns you've gotten, and I look forward to seeing you on Orcas at the April 17th Land Bank meeting to learn more. The following are the thoughts I'll be bringing to this meeting:I've observed that there is a great deal of misinformation and feelings of fear among many islanders because they have never had any experience with any kind of gun or responsible hunting practices. Therefore, I think it would behoove the Land Bank to bring the fear factor into the open. I like what the representative from the tribes said at the end of the March 23rd meeting in answer to Jeff Otis's experience with a bullet coming through his house, which is near Turtleback. To paraphrase, he said that there is a history of pain from sides, [from accidents, hunters who are irresponsible, and from broken treaties], which is very sad, but that this proposal is simply an opportunity to try come together now in being good stewards of nature for our shared land for our future generations. I would add, as one of the representatives from WDFW said, that this is also an educational opportunity for people to learn about to the effort and expense of hunter safety training and licensing that will be required, just as is required for obtaining a driver's license. He also emphasized that this partnership will offer the WDFW staff an opportunity to educate our islanders about the destructive effect that deer overpopulation has on all the rest of the nature on Orcas that we all love. More hands-on clarification is needed to describe how the boundaries and trails are</p>	Pro	Ecology

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	set to provide safety for neighboring properties.Would it be possible to completely close off both preserves to recreational hiking during both hunting periods i.e. from mid-October through mid-November? It might be worth a try to allay safety fears. I think it would be great and helpful to publicize stories about what happens with the limited hunting programs on Mt. Grant on San Juan and Lopez Hill on Lopez have been operating successfully in those preserves. I did not know about those at all. The fact that the proposal has a Phase 1 and Phase 2, and the timeline for those phases, is another thing that has not been publicized at all. I would like to know more about that as part of the plan.		
65	I'm writing to support opening select areas of Turtleback Mountain and the North Shore Preserve to limited deer hunting. I've hunted deer in the surrounding area for several seasons, thanks to generous private landowners. It's a remarkable landscape and offers a unique opportunity for quiet observation, connection to the ecosystem, and participation in the food chain. On Orcas Island, deer lack natural predators. Both research and observation suggest overpopulation can harm herd health and vegetation, and local browse conditions at times reflect this imbalance. However, limited public access has restricted hunting's role in population management. The proposed constraints are thoughtful. WDFW's limits on equipment and methods of take are appropriate for safety, and I support using non-lead ammunition where feasible. However, many hunters rely on smoothbore shotguns with buckshot or slugs. Non-lead buckshot is scarce, and most non-lead slugs require rifled barrels, which are uncommon locally. While archery and muzzleloaders fit well, the non-lead requirement may exclude hunters unable to invest in new equipment. Two suggestions: If there is community resistance around firearm safety due to range, consider limiting access to archery and muzzleloaders and, demand may exceed a reservation system; a lottery-style "special hunt" draw, similar to WDFW's existing process, could be more equitable. Thank you for considering this opportunity and for inviting public input.	Pro	Support for hunting
70	Hi! As an orcas resident, small business owner and mom, I'd like to express my support for opening hunting on turtleback preserve in a limited way. It is important for the ecological health of our forests to do what we can to reduce the deer population. It can be done safely. We could also do a trial year and see how it goes. Finally, I'd like to suggest that regardless of whether hunting is opened to the general public, I would like to see the area opened to tribal hunting. That is an important part of fulfilling our responsibilities to support Indigenous communities reclaim their rights to subsistence hunting and land stewardship.	Pro	Ecology
76	There is no silver bullet for this solution: deer herbivory is extensive and consistent across the islands, and it's proven by fencing exclusions. This problem going to persist and we need to be working together to create many solutions. It would be great to spend less money on fencing, and to provide food for the community, and to honor treaty rights. This is our treaty to be implemented and honored. Public lands should be available to tribes for harvest, hunting, ceremony. This is the only way we can be on stolen land. We need to be working together and accepting that everyone has different opinions. We need to change. The deer are truly a problem. There is no undergrowth in some of these places.	Pro	Ecology
77	In support of hunting of all kinds (bow included) on Orcas. Venison is an ethical meat source, which is increasingly important due to the climate crisis. My own family has hunted here for 40 years, and Killebrew Lake is the only area available. It is also important, it is a sacred obligation, to uphold the 1855 Point Elliot Treaty. The proposal for Turtleback and North Shore provides a sustainable source of meat, returns a portion of tribal access, and could strengthen the cross-cultural bond between communities.	Pro	Sustainable food
78	Deer overpopulation is hurting plant regeneration, biodiversity, and the general ecology of this area. I'm in favor of opening up this intentional, carefully thought through hunting program, and think it is imperative for the ecology of the area. Also, we have a duty to provide tribal access. We have a duty to honor treaty rights, and I hope this is part of much larger process.	Pro	Ecology
79	Hunting is very important for island community in terms of spiritual practice, self sufficiency and community resiliency. Its not only recreation but food harvest. Turtleback Mountain is a special sanctuary. I've studied the topography of the designated sections, and as a life long hunter, I believe that it can be done safely for archery and modern firearms. Most land is private and it is crucial to provide public spaces for people to harvest their own meat, and reduce deer. I have a background in conservation and work in landscaping and there is severe herbivory of plants. We don't want to have to waste taxpayer money in having WDFW pay to have our deer problem taken care of.	Pro	Sustainable food

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80	I read the Orcasonian piece on the subject and I applaud the efforts to comply with the treaty and manage the deer overpopulation that threatens our native fauna and flora. Creating reserved time for non-tribal local hunters/harvesters to cull deer should be a part of the plan. Maybe it already exists? I am interested in the topic. Not sure if its applicable but I support using rifles with copper bullets to cull them humanely. Thank you for your efforts.	Pro	Ecology
81	Hello. I was born on orcas Island and have lived here going on 38 years. My nephew told me about this request for public hunting grounds and that I should make my opinion heard. I have hunted blacktail with my bow for more years than I can remember. It is a part of my life that I deeply cherish. In years past more and more property's where I once had permission to hunt have become inaccessible. Some of these property's I used to hunt have in fact been donated to the land bank over the years. And of course I do really appreciate any land that becomes public, but it's getting harder and harder to find ground to hunt with every year that passes. I'm well aware of the opinion of the majority of "islanders" who see deer as if they were their personal pets. I see people reaching out on Facebook or orcas rant and rave hoping to find permission and space to hunt and the onslaught of feedback from people condemning it. But hunting is a part of life for many responsible and appreciative people who simply aren't able to buy their own land. I am one of these people. I would love more than anything to see space opened up not only for old hunters but for newer generations of kids who wish to learn the value in harvesting their own food from this amazing land we call home. Please take this into consideration.	Pro	Sustainable food
83	It's great that you would open these areas to hunting. This goes hand and hand with what the state biologist suggests for conservation and a lifestyle that can be practiced by many and characterizes this rural county. I do think you're a bit extreme in the restrictions made. Let me explain: Limiting the access to a set number of Hunters per day is confusing. What does one at a time mean. One group per hour, day, morning, evening? I think you should start by having it it simply open, like all other public land that allows hunting. Also the weapon requirement in your proposition is impractical. Because of the existing restrictions on types of weapons, only shotguns, bows, muzzloaders and handguns can be used. All these firearms (excluding the bow) shoot a slow projectile, which in turn needs to be heavy to carry enough kinetic energy for an ethical kill. Additionally, a slow lead projectile does not fragment like a fast rifle ogive does. In this case, lead will not find itself in the food chain of carrion, for example. WA state does not require hunters use non lead ammunition for big game, so I wonder why you need to set this as a rule straight away. If the goal is conservation and a sustainable harvests in agreement with the wdfw and tribal biologists, then give the hunters a good chance from the start. Additionally, license costs have significantly gone up in the last couple years. License cost, non lead ammo availability and scheduling around your sign up requirements are all burdens which may even more limit a successful harvest. I believe in the land bank and I believe you are looking for a good compromise that follows the science and gives access to residents of our state to engage in a cultural significant practice that is hunting. I appreciate what you're doing and I understand that it can be a touchy subject in this day and age. But it pains me to think, of a possible parallel universe, where the land bank would manage our public land in a way that basically turns them it into a dog park for retirees from the city. Sadly, I don't think its too far from reality. Hunting is significant and its practice needs to be supported. Go Land Bank! Ps I have a proposition for land bank property management: no dog walking on weekends. It stresses the wild life and burdens other users. Let them walk during the week when most people are at work.	Pro	Support for hunting
84	Within this proposal is the stipulation that the North Shore Preserve would be open only to Tribally-managed hunts in the beginning of November, which is outside of the state hunting season. As our San Juan County community explores the ethical merits of Tribal hunting in the islands, we must first look at the legal frameworks for Tribal hunting - namely the Treaty of Point Elliott, the supreme Law of the Land as per Article VI of the U.S. Constitution. This historic agreement made non-Native settlement possible, and guaranteed future generations of Native peoples access to hunt and fish in their ancestral homelands. This document is still active today. Jay Julius, Lummi fisherman, councilman, advisor and father, reminds us that the Treaty “is a peace agreement,” and that “it is not just our Treaty; it is yours, too.” We applaud the Land Bank for actively attempting to uphold the Treaty agreement - as the United States has failed to do in countless ways since Treaty ratification in 1859 - by opening up access to land in the islands for Tribal hunters. We recognize that this is no easy task, as the current cultural and political environment does not lay even ground for such accountability. It is up to each of us islanders and organizations to shift our stride toward right and respectful relations to place and to the Original Stewards, and from these relations to guide our practices of citizenship and governance. We witness the challenges that arise if residents feel that there isn't enough for everyone, or that Tribes are getting special treatment. We want to identify that this is not fundamentally a discussion of opinion, but one of legal rights established by those who walked before	Pro	Support for Tribal hunting

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	<p>us so that their descendants could be here in these islands. Project partners will be publishing subsequent articles on other legal cases that establish precedent for the legal interpretation of the Treaties, specifically regarding Tribal rights to harvest on public lands, including federal, state, county, and town properties. As US citizens and government representatives, it is our responsibility to understand and uphold those agreements made in the Treaty. Otherwise, we risk ending up with words and signed legal documents that hold no merit or accountability. It is at crossroads such as this that we have an opportunity to re-examine what we think we know, as well as our relations to place and to future generations. We don't need to relive the 1960/70's Fish Wars. The North Shore Tribal hunting proposal is a small step our County must take for the health and prosperity of the Land, local Tribes, and, inevitably, all of us. As was made evident in the Land Bank meeting, hunting is also a time-tested and scientifically sound practice to care for deer herds and keep ecosystems in balance.</p>		
85	Supportive of hunting. Suggested combining tribal and state hunting for cross-cultural connection.	Pro	Support for hunting