

Habitat & Recreation Lands Coordinating Group

8th Annual State Land Acquisition Coordinating Forum

Forum Purpose: The Annual State Land Acquisition Coordinating Forum is an opportunity to learn about habitat and recreation lands that state agencies anticipate receiving state and federal funding to purchase with appropriations in the 2017-19 biennium. Participating agencies will present maps and other information about planned projects, explain the purpose of the acquisitions and describe their coordination efforts. Attendees are encouraged to discuss the projects openly at the forum.

Date: March 18, 2016

Scheduled Time: 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Location: Room 172, Natural Resource Building, 1111 Washington Street SE, Olympia, WA 98501

Attendees:

Wendy Brown	Washington Recreation and Conservation Office
Kaleen Cottingham	Washington Recreation and Conservation Office
Wendy Loosle	Washington Recreation and Conservation Office
Sheilah Kennedy	Okanogan County Commissioner
Steve Jenkins	County Governments/Douglas County Commissioner
Lora Leschner	Pacific Coast Joint Venture
Tom Bugert	The Nature Conservancy
Hannah Clark	Washington Association of Land Trusts
Jeff Parsons	Puget Sound Partnership
Leslie Betlach	City Government Park Planners/Washington Recreation and Park Association
Clay Sprague	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Steve Hahn	Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission
John Gamon	Washington Department of Natural Resources
Heather Kapust	Washington Department of Ecology
Josh Giuntoli	Washington State Conservation Commission

Welcome, Introductions, and Agenda Overview

Wendy Brown, Habitat and Recreation Lands Coordinating Group Coordinator and Recreation and Conservation Office Policy Director, welcomed the members of the Habitat and Recreation Lands Coordinating Group (Lands group) and reviewed the agenda. The members and attendees introduced themselves. Senator Parlette was unable to attend.

Acquisition Forum Purpose and Information Presented

Ms. Brown provided an overview of the changes made to the format of the Lands Group report that will be submitted to the Legislature. Due to recommendations made by the Joint Legislative and Audit Review Committee (JLARC) to provide more transparency, the report will be adjusted to include additional information for properties' current use, planning links, project outcomes, current progress on outcomes, anticipated future costs, partnerships, and if the project is supported by the local jurisdiction.

Agency Presentations

Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Projects

Clay Sprague presented projects on behalf of WDFW. He began with an overview of the agency's mission, strategic plan, and their land acquisition process. The latter included a description of their acquisition principles, internal policies, and the Lands 20/20 internal application process.

Mr. Sprague provided an overview of the proposed acquisition projects for WDFW. Organized by county, each project summary included a description, relevance to the agency's mission, a map of the proposed project area, proposed acquisition cost, anticipated operating and maintenance costs, and a discussion. Projects from various counties were highlighted, including Cowlitz (Merrill Lake), Douglas (Mid-Columbia – Grand Coulee), Grays Harbor (7400 Road Access), Kittitas (Teanaway Valley, South Fork Manastash – Heart of the Cascades), Klickitat (Bowman Creek, Simcoe), Lincoln (Lake Creek – a withdrawn proposal, Seven Springs), Spokane (Chapman Lake), Thurston (South Sound Prairies, West Rocky Prairie), Walla Walla (Touchet River and Grassland – a withdrawn proposal), and Yakima (Cowiche Watershed, Bear Canyon Inholding).

Full details of WDFW's 2017-19 Land Acquisition Proposals may be found [here](#).

Tom Bugert asked about the grazing policies established by RCO and WDFW. Director Cottingham explained RCO's policies as it relates to grant applications; Mr. Sprague explained WDFW's policies, intended to be consistent with the pre-existing purpose and function of the land and contingent upon alignment with the agency's mission. In response to Commissioner Kennedy, Mr. Sprague explained the WDFW process for addressing landowners, leases, and grazing rights. One mechanism through which local governments maintain grazing access is through MOUs established between WDFW and the local entity.

Issues with PILT (payment in lieu of taxes) continue to provide challenges in land acquisition proposals; however, communication between agencies and county commissioners allows for transparent transactions and decisions to pursue (or not pursue) specific acquisitions. Commissioner Kennedy commented on the improved management practices and communication between state agencies and county governments.

Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission (WSPRC) Projects

Steve Hahn, Lands Program Manager, presented projects on behalf of State Parks. He began with a summary of the mission and values of State Parks', focusing on acquisition goals and priorities. Recently, more acquisitions are occurring within long-term boundaries and fewer new areas, affecting what State Parks terms as "final assemblage" when reviewing potential adjoining parcels for complete projects. State Parks' underlying intention is to take advantage of opportunities and willing sellers, however this is often contingent upon funding approval. Mr. Hahn shared information about ten projects: six within a long-term boundary and four within areas that have not had long-term boundaries established at this time.

Mr. Hahn provided an overview of the proposed acquisition projects for State parks. Organized by county, each project summary included a description, factors driving the funding and acquisition opportunities, a map of the proposed project area, proposed acquisition cost, anticipated operating and maintenance costs, and a discussion. Projects from various counties were highlighted, including Klickitat (Western Pacific Timber), Clallam (Miller Peninsula - Jones Trust and Douglass Trust), San Juan (Moran State Park – Jones Property, Sucia Island San Juan Marine Area Harndon Island Property), Grant County (Steamboat Rock state Park Northup Canyon – Bruner Property), and Lewis (Willapa Hills Trail – Marwood Farms). Mr. Hahn concluded by sharing proposed acquisitions within the Inholdings and Adjacents category.

Full details of State Parks' 2017-19 Land Acquisition Proposals may be found [here](#).

Break 10:35 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Projects

Jed Herman, Division Manager of the Conservation, Recreation and Transactions Division, began by commenting on the updated format of the report, as staffing support and resources become available the long-term goal is to populate it with more forward-thinking data. Mr. Herman spoke to the improved coordination and collaboration between agencies; Mr. Bugert added that it is timely to renew the invitation to local entities to provide briefings to the Lands Group regarding their acquisition forecasts and planning.

Mr. Herman briefly summarized the mission of the [Natural Heritage Plan](#) (2011), a program that manages natural resource conservation areas and natural area preserves. The Natural Area Preserves Act in RCW 79.70 guides these efforts. Mr. Herman proceeded to provide an overview of the proposed acquisition projects for DNR. Organized by county, each project summary included a description, relevance to the agency's mission, a map of the proposed project area, proposed acquisition cost, anticipated operating and maintenance costs, and a discussion. Projects from various counties were highlighted, including Adams (Marcellus Shrub Steppe Natural Area Preserve), Clark (Lacamas Prairie and Washougal Oaks Natural Areas), Grays Harbor (Chehalis River Surge Plain), Jefferson (Crowberry Bog), King (Mt. Si and Middle Fork Snoqualmie and Rattlesnake Mountain Scenic Area), Kitsap (Stavis and Kitsap Forest Natural Area Preserve), Mason and Thurston (Kennedy Creek), Pacific (Bone and Newaukum River), Skagit (Cypress Island), and Thurston (Woodard Bay).

Mr. Herman explained the metrics behind the "proposed acquisition costs" listed for each project, in response to Commissioner Kennedy's inquiry about appraisals. The cost reflects highly-informed estimates based on other properties purchased in the area and other factors, and would ultimately be refined based on the appropriate appraisal (whether using state or federal funds).

Mr. Herman described the current conservation lands holdings, as well as the natural areas objectives, purpose, selection process, boundary designation process, and management planning.

Full details of DNR's 2017-19 Land Acquisition Proposals may be found [here](#).

Round Table Discussion

Ms. Brown opened the discussion to the group to receive feedback about the new report format and whether it has supported improving transparency and coordination of state land acquisitions.

Mr. Herman stated that it is important to inform the public and others reviewing the report that the costs for each proposed acquisition are estimated. Mr. Sprague agreed, sharing that agencies work to provide clearer estimates earlier in the process. Mr. Hahn suggested providing data in the report that are consistent across agencies based on standardized assumptions. Ms. Cottingham suggested additionally sharing information about how local entities/governments were part of the process. The Lands Group members expressed agreement that this information (local vetting) should be included in the upcoming report.

Ms. Brown welcomed suggestions for further outreach, noting that information from the forum will be shared on the RCO website, with legislators, Association of Counties, and Association of Cities. Ms. Leschner suggested informing the Lead Entities (Governor's Salmon Recovery Office). Mr. Herman advised the group to begin planning for ways to incorporate the new legislation, collaborating information between state agencies, non-profit organizations, and local government. The Lands group also discussed the objective of transparency, coordination, and communication, continuing to build out engagement and

collaboration efforts. Additionally, continuing to provide information about how acquired properties are maintained, including costs and communicating plans, is important for local government support.

Meeting adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

Habitat & Recreation Lands Coordinating Group

Regular Quarterly Meeting

Date: March 18, 2016

Time: 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Location: Room 172, Natural Resource Building, 1111 Washington Street SE, Olympia, WA 98501

Attendees:

Wendy Brown	Washington Recreation and Conservation Office
Kaleen Cottingham	Washington Recreation and Conservation Office
Wendy Loosle	Washington Recreation and Conservation Office
Sheilah Kennedy	Okanogan County Commissioner
Steve Jenkins	County Governments/Douglas County Commissioner
Lora Leschner	Pacific Coast Joint Venture
Tom Bugert	The Nature Conservancy
Hannah Clark	Washington Association of Land Trusts
Jeff Parsons	Puget Sound Partnership
Leslie Betlach	City Government Park Planners/Washington Recreation and Park Association
Clay Sprague	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Steve Hahn	Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission
John Gamon	Washington Department of Natural Resources
Heather Kapust	Washington Department of Ecology
Josh Giuntoli	Washington State Conservation Commission

Item 1: Welcome, Introductions, and Review of Agenda

Wendy Brown welcomed members and reviewed the agenda.

Item 3: Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program Review Bill: Statutory Changes and Implementation Schedule

**Due to member needs, this item was presented first.*

Kaleen Cottingham, RCO Director, provided background on the WWRP review process, held last fall, summarizing the facilitator actions for soliciting feedback and compiling recommendations for updating the WWRP. RCO submitted their final recommendations in late 2015, and drafted a bill that would implement those recommendations that required statutory changes. The bill passed the Legislature, and next steps include implementing the changes. Ms. Cottingham summarized the recommendations for the allocation formula, capital improvement, greater eligibility, multiple benefits, working lands, acquisition/development ratios, underserved communities, public access, state strategic investments, and consistent planning requirements.

With the inclusion of an emergency clause in the WWRP bill, many elements of the bill go into effect immediately. Anticipated next steps include drafting and adopting new policies and criteria through the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board. Long-term needs include updates for the 2018 grant round, such as evaluation criteria, grant manuals, etc.

Additionally, the bill states that the state agencies would develop a coordinated, statewide, conservation and outdoor recreation strategy that outlines state agency priorities for acquisitions and development. From existing planning documents and strategic plans, this strategy would identify action areas for the

next 6 years. The Lands Group could facilitate completion of the plan, and Recreation and Conservation Funding Board would review and approve the plan.

RCO is preparing to address the working lands recommendation, mainly that a forestland preservation component was added as a new category within the Farmlands Preservation Account, was renamed the Farm and Forest Account. RCO is seeking representatives from state agencies, nature conservancies, land trusts, and timber industry to provide input on advisory committees for this program.

Item 2: Member Updates

Round Table Updates: 2016 Legislative Session

Tom Bugert provided an update on behalf of The Nature Conservancy, specifically regarding PILT payments. Impacts primarily in central Washington counties resulted in actions to fix the issues through the Legislature. This session, a PILT coalition was formed (half county commissioners and half non-profit organizations) to address the ongoing rate challenges experienced by an increasing number of counties. Significant progress was made, but it is still unclear whether PILT will be addressed in the final budget. The coalition intends to continue their efforts until a resolution can be reached. He added that the WWRP bill also contained a recommendation that the Legislature review the PILT issues and seek a solution.

Ms. Brown provided an update on behalf of RCO. Three request bills were submitted this session, all of which passed the Legislature 1) reauthorization of the Washington Invasive Species Council (WISC); 2) extension of the Habitat and Recreation Lands Coordinating Group; and 3) and revisions to the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program. The WISC bill was vetoed by the Governor in an effort to force action from the Senate regarding a budget.

Steve Hahn shared information on behalf of State Parks, which did not have agency request legislation. He provided updates on bills that may affect the agency, including legislation that would allow rangers to pursue criminals outside of state parks, and legislation that would extend maximum lease terms to 80 years and reduce the need for unanimous commission approval to majority approval.

Clay Sprague shared information on behalf of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), which did not have any related agency-request legislation. He commented on the activities to support the WWRP review, wildfire management and prevention, potential funding proposals for 2017, and gathering feedback and garnering support through the Washington Wild Futures initiative. He added that WDFW is beginning to develop a statewide recreation and management plan. Ms. Cottingham suggested that the agency join RCO's efforts as they develop their SCORP plan.

Jed Herman briefly summarized the legislation activities of DNR. This session included a primary focus in fire-related legislation, covering funding requests, fire suppression efforts, and management needs. He commented on the WWRP review, noting some challenges in the PILT sections of the bill. Through coordination with county assessors, the issue was resolved and DNR hopes to initiate communication earlier in the process in future efforts. DNR continues to monitor the large budget discrepancies between the House and the Senate, while awaiting the final version.

Heather Kapust provided an update on behalf of the Department of Ecology, which had two request bills. Ecology is facing issues with low revenue forecasts and undergoing strategic planning for the toxics, water quality, and cleanup programs.

Commissioner Sheila Kennedy summarized activities to support PILT and fire-related legislation. Josh Giuntoli briefly summarized the budget outcomes for WSCC, including funding for fire suppression. Commissioner Steve Jenkins commented on ongoing efforts of Douglas County to address fire

management, suppression, and prevention efforts. Jeff Parsons provided an update on behalf of the Puget Sound Partnership, including challenges with budget shortfalls for shorelines and stormwater financial assistance for local governments which remain unresolved. Leslie Betlatch provided an update on behalf of the Washington Recreation and Park Association, commenting on the WWRP review and the competitive grant application process.

Item 4: State Parks Economic Analysis

Steve Hahn presented information regarding State Parks' economic analysis conducted by Earth Economics. The report included a model for measuring the value and benefits of services provided by the agency. The goal of the model was to assess the economic benefit of state parks to the environment, society, and the economy at a small scale, e.g. the park level. The process is intended to provide tools for measuring and comparing the relative benefit between existing parks and potential properties.

Meeting adjourned at 2:15 p.m.

Next meeting:

June 15, 2016 (Wednesday)

9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Natural Resource Building, Rm 172

1111 Washington Street SE

Olympia, WA 98501