

Western Washington Pilot Project Pierce County Biodiversity Alliance

WORKING TO CONSERVE THE DIVERSITY OF LIFE IN WASHINGTON STATE

Background

Executive Order 04-02, which created the Washington Biodiversity Council, directed the Council to demonstrate the applicability of incentive programs in two biodiversity conservation pilot projects, one on the east side of the state and one on the west side.

Each project received \$20,000 from the Council and ran from January 2006 through June 2007.

The Council's Pilot Projects Committee chose the projects.

Pilot Projects Committee

Bonnie Bunning, chair
Washington Department of Natural Resources

Brian Collins
Skokomish Nation

Rob Fimbel
Washington State Parks and Recreation
Commission

John Marzluff
University of Washington

Jackie Reid
Thurston County Conservation District

Ken Risenhoover
Port Blakely Tree Farms

Steve Tharinger
Clallam County Commission

Josh Weiss
Washington Forest Protection Association

Megan White
Washington State Department of Transportation

Project Summary The Pierce County Biodiversity Alliance organized a BioBlitz, or rapid biological inventory, in the lower White River Biodiversity Management Area (BMA) between Buckley and Sumner. The BioBlitz ground-truthed species diversity, engaged citizen scientists, and served as a kick-off for community stewardship planning.

Key Accomplishments

- **Conducted 24-hour BioBlitz** in June, 2006, involving 100 professional and citizen scientist volunteers.
- **Recorded nearly 600 observations of animals and plants.** Observed 123 of 158 predicted species of birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians (78%).
- **Contacted over 90 landowners** on both King and Pierce County sides of White River about the BioBlitz and the biodiversity management area tax incentive.
- **Aided formation of two community stewardship groups,** Crescent Valley Alliance (Washington Department of Wildlife's 2006 Conservation Organization of the Year) and Friends of the Lower White River.
- **Facilitated joint proclamation** by County Executives Ron Sims and John Ladenburg that endorses community efforts to protect biodiversity of the lower White River.

Lessons Learned

- **Unexpected landowner category—difficult to engage.** Limited Liability Corporations (LLCs) hold significant parcels along the lower White River for investments or future development. These "non-working" lands have no local contacts; they are not addressed in existing incentive programs.
- **River corridor lacks sociological cohesiveness.** The lower White River stretches between several jurisdictions; the people living there identify more with their town than with the river itself. As a result, PCBA is working initially with county and city personnel to develop a stewardship plan.
- **Tax incentives are highly utilized.** More than 70% of eligible landowners already enrolled in Current Use Taxation programs.

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Relationship with Council Strategy

Several learnings from the project inform the recommendations put forth in the public review draft of the *Washington Biodiversity Conservation Strategy: Sustaining our Natural Heritage for Future Generations* (August 31, 2007)

- **Citizen Science works well to engage people in biodiversity conservation.**
(Education Strategy 3.3, Science Strategy 4.2.1).
 - Over 25 citizen volunteers participated in 2006 BioBlitz, including high school and college students.
 - Twenty residents and eight teachers trained in data collection technique (NatureMapping).
- **Citizen Science helps fill gaps in knowledge; Biodiversity Inventory need not be expensive.**
(Education Strategy 3.3, Science Strategy 4.2.1).
 - BioBlitz ground-truthed predicted species and made preliminary determination of threats and stressors. Data are being used in lower White River biodiversity stewardship plan.
 - Occurrence records are useful for Washington Natural Heritage Program landscape mapping project.
 - Species lists are informing Cascade Land Conservancy's option to buy Puget Sound Energy parcels along the lower White River.
- **Local government staffs are critically important** for providing expertise and technical assistance for community biodiversity conservation efforts.
(Land Use Strategy 2.1, Land Use Strategy 2.5.1)
 - Planning, conservation, wildlife, and data management expertise are all represented in the Pierce County Biodiversity Alliance and all are vital to its success.
 - Staff members from several jurisdictions are key to biodiversity stewardship planning in the lower White River corridor.
 - Gaps and challenges increase as agency staff are reduced or detailed away from biodiversity planning.
- **Small investments yield successes in community stewardship programs.**
(Education Strategy 3.4)
 - With assistance from Pierce County Biodiversity Alliance, Crescent Valley Alliance completed a stewardship plan, received grant funding to post informative signs at its watershed boundaries, and undertook the National Wildlife Federation's Community and Backyard Wildlife Habitat program.
- **Landowners on the rural-urban interface need innovative incentives.**
(Incentives Strategy 1.2)
 - Tax incentives are already well-utilized by landowners along the lower White River.
 - Certain sectors (warehouses, corporate landowners, "non-working" lands) are not the focus of existing incentive programs.

Project partners include: Pierce County Planning and Land Services Department, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, University of Washington, Cooperative Fish & Wildlife Unit, Metro Parks Tacoma, National Wildlife Federation, Puyallup River Watershed Council, Pierce County Conservation District, Crescent Valley Alliance (CVA), Friends of the Lower White River (FLWR).

Key Participants:

Katherine Brooks	Michelle Tirhi	Karen Dvornich	John Garner	Linda Burgess
Pierce County Planning & Land Services	Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife	UW NatureMapping	Michele Cardinaux Metro Parks Tacoma	Puyallup River Watershed Council
Gretchen Muller	Dave Seabrook	John Stern	Lucinda Wingard	Jeanne Fancher
National Wildlife Federation	Pierce Conservation District	Tracy Engels PCBA coordinators	Crescent Valley Alliance	Friends of Lower White River