

May 5, 2005

TO: IAC Members and Designees
FROM: Laura E. Johnson, Director
PREPARED BY: Gary Cooper, SSB 6242 Project Manager
SUBJECT: SSB 6242 Update

Attached to this memorandum are the sections of the draft SSB 6242 report that represent the framework for developing a statewide coordinated strategy for habitat and recreation land acquisitions. Four coordination options are proposed for the Board's consideration. Each successive option has a broader focus with a wider range of coordination issues.

I hope that the attached draft and my presentation to the Board will generate a discussion concerning the range of coordination options that should be included in the final report for the legislature. Areas where I would like to receive direction from the Board are 1) Is this the appropriate approach? 2) Are these the right options, or should other options be considered? 3) Should any options be eliminated from the report?

How far along is the report?

The SSB 6242 report has progressed considerably since my last briefing to you in March. Several areas of research necessary to write the report are either complete, or nearly complete, including the following:

1. The current acquisition programs of DNR, Parks, and WDFW.
2. The missions and mandates for acquisition for DNR, Parks, and WDFW.
3. State grant funding requirements and processes – primarily WWRP.
4. Comprehensive strategies employed by other states – California and Florida.

Several sections of the report are either not complete or still in draft form. A few of the minor sections, such as background of the legislation, introduction, etc., won't be completed until last.

The only important section specifically called for in SSB 6242 that has not been drafted is the "no net gain" option. All other sections of the bill are in some form of draft.

A partial draft was submitted to the SSB 6242 subcommittee members for comment on April 8th. I am currently reviewing those comments, some of which could result in some substantial changes to the report, especially in the report's organization. Because some sections of the report are still being revised, I am not submitting them to you at this time, primarily to avoid an unnecessary expense of time on your part in making suggestions to work that is being actively revised. The main sections of the report that are not being submitted at this time are:

- 1) "Why Do Different Agencies Have Habitat and Recreation Land Acquisition Programs?" This section discusses the missions and mandates of DNR, Parks, and WDFW. This section profiles the agencies in terms of their specific mandates, their in-house resources, and the professional expertise. The intent of the section is to demonstrate why there are multiple agencies with habitat and recreation land acquisition programs.
- 2) "Agency Acquisition Procedures." This section looks at existing regulations, plans, policies and procedures of DNR, Parks and WDFW to determine what, if anything, in their existing procedures might be lacking with respect to a coordinated land acquisition strategy. The following questions are addressed for each of the agencies:
 - *What is the agency or program's immediate authorizing environment for acquisitions?*
 - *Is there a prioritized acquisition plan?*
 - *Are there prioritized acquisition criteria?*
 - *Are there any requirements for interagency coordination?*
 - *Is there a mandatory public process?*

Inventory

The inventory of acquisitions and disposals between 1980-2005 was not completed until the first week of April, and the database has only been functional for approximately two weeks. On the positive side, however, we now have a working database, and we are beginning to develop the information called for in SSB 6242. Attached to this memorandum are examples of reports that show all

the acquisitions and disposals for each of the agencies, sorted by counties. Also included is a one-page report on unanticipated receipts

Tax/Economic Impacts

Both consultants have completed their initial drafts for the report. These drafts were distributed to the subcommittee for review and comment on March 30th. However, many of the subcommittee members have been involved with the legislative session and were not able to supply comments until recently. The conclusions in the drafts have yet to be incorporated into the SSB 6242 draft report.

Recent developments in the legislature may affect some of the recommendations in the 6242 report. Assuming the Governor signs the Capital Budget, ESSB5396 will require a study to be completed by IAC that is similar to 6242. The study includes the requirement to complete a financial analysis of the difference between paying one hundred percent of a property's true and fair value, compared to open space assessed value, for those properties acquired under 79A.15 RCW. Also, the Capital Budget would require the Capital Budget Committee to prepare a report to, in part, analyze the fiscal impacts on counties of purchasing lands under Chapter 79A15. RCW. Both the Capital Budget Committee and the IAC are required to submit these reports to the legislature by December 1, 2005.

Coordinated Strategy

The biggest challenge to date has been the development of options for the statewide coordinated strategy. In part, development of a strategy has been more difficult because information from the inventory has not been available until very recently.

However, the primary challenge is the *complexity* of the issue. The range of possibilities - of who, what, when and where to coordinate – is very broad. Attached to this memo are those sections of the draft report that attempt to get at the heart of this issue. The section “An Approach to Coordination,” attempts to narrow the range of possibilities for coordination, first by identifying the potential variables to coordinate, then by identifying the problems that increased coordination would address.

My hope is to receive direction from the Board on whether the range of options presented as possible coordination scenarios is acceptable. In particular, the last option, which includes a broad array of entities, would be the most comprehensive approach, but would also require extensive effort, could be very costly, and would not be a quick solution. Does the Board want this to remain as an option? A detailed case study of how California and Florida have approached

the task to comprehensive coordination is included to provide the Board more information as they consider this option.

Following the discussion of coordination options is a section titled "Land Acquisition Profiles," which is also attached to this memorandum. In addition to a variety of land acquisition statistics that have been derived from the 6242 inventory database, it contains an initial analysis of the WWRP program, including its strengths and potential weaknesses as a statewide coordinated strategy.

Last, though a series of draft options for developing a statewide coordinated strategy has been developed, they are not included as an attachment here, due to their preliminary status. I do plan to present a range of options during the Board meeting for your consideration.

Approaches to Coordination

Defining the Scope of Coordination

In an effort to provide the best range of options for the legislature, a great deal of thought and discussion was focused on the meaning of “coordination.” In short, *what is the problem* to be remedied, and *how much* coordination is necessary to achieve the legislature’s goal of ensuring that acquisition and disposal decisions “are based on a determination of need compared to existing lands serving those purposes in various areas of the state”?¹

This report begins with a range of alternatives for defining the scope of who and/or what needs to be coordinated. Each successive alternative has a broader scope. For example, does the legislature want to coordinate the activities of DNR, Parks, and WDFW only, or should the coordination be more inclusive? Is the concern about coordination primarily a concern about the *expansion* of publicly owned habitat and recreation lands, or is it a broader concern about all habitat and recreation land acquisitions?. If the concern is about expansion, then a narrow focus on the activities of a few agencies and funding sources might be acceptable. However, if the concern is about all acquisitions, of both private and public lands, then the focus must be widened to include a broader range of entities and funding sources.

After a discussion of the alternatives for defining the scope of coordination, this report presents five “problem scenarios,” and a range of possible approaches to addressing the scenarios. There are many possible approaches to increasing coordination, ranging from relatively minor improvements in communication processes, to very tight coordination that might require changes in the authorizing environment, or even organizational structure. Every option within this continuum represents a series of tradeoffs in areas such as cost, time to implement, comprehensiveness, or flexibility.

Last, each possible scope of coordination is matched to problem solving approaches. On the assumption that comprehensive problem solving approaches are not warranted to address simple problems, potential solutions are proposed that would represent the least amount of coordination necessary.

¹ Section 2 (b)(i)

Preliminary Draft – May 4, 2005

Defining the Scope of Coordination – Problem Scenarios

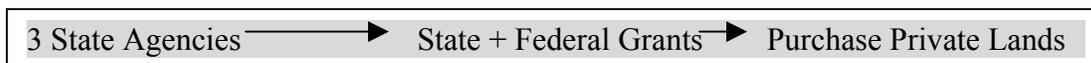
	Scenario 1 involves:	
3 State Agencies that	Use State Grant funds to	Purchase Private Lands
	Scenario 2 involves:	
3 State Agencies that	Use State and Federal Grant funds to	Purchase Private Lands
	Scenario 3 involves:	
3 State Agencies that	Use State and Federal Grant funds, and other funds, to	Purchase Private Lands
	Scenario 4 involves:	
3 State Agencies that	Use State and Federal Grant funds, and other funds, to	Purchase Private and Public Lands
	Scenario 5 involves:	
All Entities	Use State and Federal Grant funds to	Purchase Private and Public Lands

Discussion



The *scope of coordination* here would be limited to DNR, Parks, and WDFW acquisitions of private lands. The scope is based on the assumption that the expansion of state-owned habitat and recreation land is the primary concern. The focus on state grants assumes a limited approach to trying to coordinate existing grant processes over which the state has direct control. And, because Washington Wildlife & Recreation Program funding represents the vast majority of state agency habitat and recreation land acquisitions, the focus would be limited to that program.

Potential solutions to increase coordination within this scope of coordination could be relatively minor, as there is a small number of players to coordinate and a single funding program.



The *scope of coordination* here remains on DNR, Parks, and WDFW, as well as on the issue of expansion of state owned habitat and recreation land. With respect to funding sources, however, the scope is broadened to include the acquisition of private lands that are funded through federal grants. At issue is whether lands acquired through federal grant funding processes represent a high enough percentage of the overall amount of acquisitions to affect coordination.

Preliminary Draft – May 4, 2005

Potential solutions to increase coordination could require a more comprehensive approach to ensuring the agencies are meeting the state's objectives for acquisitions, while acquiring lands through grant processes that are not directly under the state's control.



Again, the focus is on DNR, Parks and WDFW. However, the scope is broadened to include all acquisitions funded through state and federal funds, for both private *and* public lands. Here the concern balances considerations of the *expansion* of habitat and recreation lands through the acquisition of private property, as well as the *disposition* of public lands. There is a greater degree of concern with maximizing habitat and recreation values through a coordinated program. Here other funding sources, such as DNR's Trust Land Transfer Program, must be included in the scope of coordination.

Potential solutions to increase coordination are more complicated because there are more funding sources involved, and because the focus on public land acquisition implies a more comprehensive, *qualitative* approach to making land acquisitions. At this level of coordination, the expectation that there is a more comprehensive assessment of potential acquisitions, which would be used as a basis for prioritizing acquisitions, becomes a more prominent possibility.



Here, the scope is broadened to include not only DNR, Parks, and WDFW, but all other entities involved in habitat and recreation land acquisition, including local and federal government, and nongovernmental organizations.

Increased coordination within this scope entails the most comprehensive approach to habitat and recreation land acquisitions. The emphasis on coordination across a broad range of entities and activities implies a comprehensive assessment of habitat and recreation lands, a more centralized strategy, and most likely the need to develop better tools for mapping and characterizing lands.

Identifying Problems and Potential Solutions

This section of the Report identifies several challenges, real or perceived, to any of the coordination strategies.

Poor Communication

Poor communication between state agencies: The perceived problem here is that agencies aren't communicating effectively enough with one another and, as a result, probably aren't making the best decisions about what habitat or recreation lands to acquire or dispose of.

Solution: Enhanced communication. The coordination remedy would be to implement measures to make sure the agencies are communicating, but there is no formal requirement that their final acquisition or disposal decisions necessarily hinge on the decisions and actions of one another.

Poor communication between agencies and constituents: Under this scenario there is a perceived problem with how the agencies involve and/or inform the general public, or elected officials. Agencies are making decisions based on good information, but their constituents are not given enough information to have confidence in those decisions.

Solution: Increased transparency. In this instance, coordination could be achieved through greater *transparency*. Relatively simple measures to keep everyone informed about where and why state agencies are acquiring habitat and recreation lands might be sufficient to address the issues of coordination between the state and its constituents.

Inadequate policies or criteria

Here the perception is there are minor gaps in agency policies or criteria relative to habitat and recreation land acquisitions. These gaps could be in the areas of communication, transparency, in how acquisitions are prioritized, or the criteria for determining which grants to fund.

Solution: Identify gaps and supplement existing policies or criteria. Agencies would formally revise their existing policies or criteria.

Too much autonomy

The perception of the problem is that state agencies are making uncoordinated decisions because they are too autonomous. Simply requiring increased communication or transparency would not be sufficient.

Preliminary Draft – May 4, 2005

Solution: Joint decision-making. Under this scenario, agencies would not only be required to communicate more effectively, but would also be required to sacrifice a certain amount of autonomy to some type of process whereby decisions are made jointly.

Lack of internal coordination

The perceived problem here is that state agencies cannot demonstrate why they acquire or dispose of one property over another, because they have not synthesized their plans, policies, regulations and agency mandates sufficiently to develop an agency acquisition plan. Under this scenario, acquisition decisions are not *internally* coordinated, because the agency has not developed a forward looking strategy, using the information already at its disposal.

Solution: Enhanced Planning. The primary effort here is to coordinate existing information, and to develop that information into a meaningful acquisition strategy.

Inadequate Information

The perceived problem is that agencies cannot effectively coordinate because there is not enough existing information available to set acquisition priorities. Efforts to improve internal coordination would fall short of achieving true coordination. Limiting coordination to just a few agencies would undermine the expectation they are able to make informed decisions about the “determination of need” for a particular acquisition, because there is a higher expectation placed on what that determination means. The expectation here is that acquisition decisions should be the best possible, and should derive from a comprehensive base of information that goes beyond existing information.

Solution: Comprehensive coordination. The solution for this scenario would involve coordination at a number of different levels, and across a wider range of entities involved in habitat and recreation acquisition. It assumes that all the players are essentially pursuing the same overall strategy, where each player’s role is more defined with respect to that strategy.

Pursuit of this strategy would require a significant investment to develop the information base, such as a comprehensive map of existing habitat and recreation lands, as well as those that are desirable for acquisition. Joint criteria would need to be developed to determine which lands would provide the greatest habitat and recreation benefits if they were acquired. Developing such a map, as well as the acquisition criteria, would require a very broad-based effort, extending beyond a few agencies, to include as many partners as possible. In addition, existing efforts that could provide information about habitat and recreation lands would need to be identified. A

Preliminary Draft – May 4, 2005

strategy for synthesizing that information, and for assigning roles of the entities in the overall strategy would need to occur.

Conclusion: There is not a single solution

Minor improvements in coordination have the advantage of being quicker and less costly to implement. They also cause the least amount of disruption to existing processes. However, minor improvements may not provide the degree of comprehensive coordination necessary.

More ambitious approaches have the potential to provide better decision-making, as state agencies and their partners would have a broader base of knowledge to work from, and a greater ability to establish priorities for future acquisitions. Over the long-term, the integration of the efforts of multiple partners into an overall effort, each having a particular mission, expertise, or resources, could result in a truly comprehensive understanding of the state's future habitat and recreation needs. But this kind of approach brings initial costs and disruptions to existing processes. It is a long-term, investment-oriented approach.

Of course, the scenarios outlined above are not exclusive approaches. Choosing options to improve communication between agencies does not preclude implementing measures to provide for greater transparency. There are elements within any one of the five scenarios that can be combined with elements within another to form a new option.

Land Acquisition Profiles

The section presents some basic information about habitat and recreation land acquisition funding statistics, in an effort to better define the issues related to differing levels – or scopes of coordination.

First, state agency acquisitions of private lands funded through WWRP are presented. Next, state agency acquisitions of private land funded through WWRP, as well as those that are funded outside WWRP through federal grants, are presented. Then, state agency acquisitions using WWRP, federal grants, and funding through the Trust Land Transfer Program are presented to explore the coordination issues related to focusing on the acquisition of both public and private lands.

The final part of this section provides a detailed case study of the comprehensive approaches to habitat and recreation land acquisitions by California and Florida.

- **A Look at the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program**



Do the requirements for coordination and strategic planning required by IAC administered grants amount to a statewide coordinated strategy?

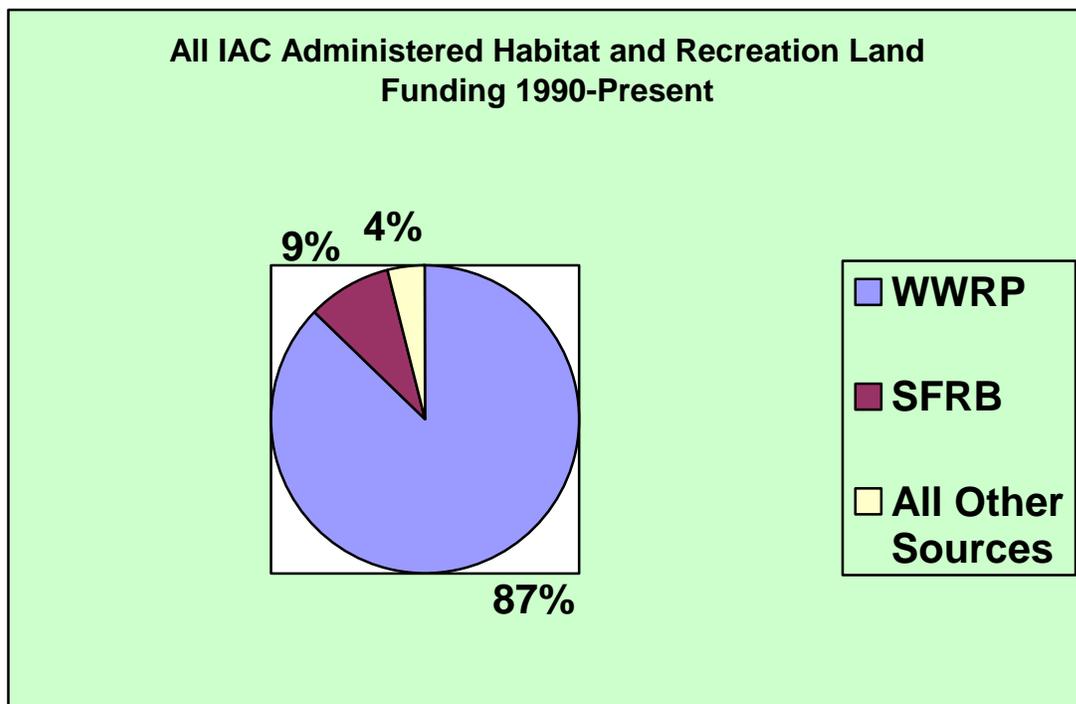
Because the majority of habitat and recreation land acquisitions are funded through just a few grant programs, this section takes a broad look at IAC grant programs in general, and the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program in particular, to see whether grant criteria can be effective for accomplishing – either in whole or in part - the statewide coordinated strategy objectives of SSB 6242.

Nearly all Washington State grant-funded programs that provide for habitat and recreation acquisition are administered by the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation (IAC), but since 1990 WWRP is by far the biggest source:

Preliminary Draft – May 4, 2005

Grant Funded Habitat and Recreation Land Acquisitions 1980 - 2005²

Grant Program	Amount Expended 1980-1989	No. Acres Acquired 1980-1989	Amount Expended, 1990 - present	No. Acres Acquired 1990-present	TOTAL \$	TOTAL Acres
WWRP	\$0	0	\$426,602,416	127,083	\$426,602,416	127,083
SFRB	0	0	43,263,392	14,070	43,263,392	14,070
LCWF	2,432,556	3,148	7,729,002	380	10,161,558	3,528
ALEA	1,411,306	870	4,332,700	1,057	5,744,006	1,927
NOVA	0	0	259,050	40	259,050	40
BFP	3,244,843	914	6,440,523	317	9,685,366	1231
FARR	0	0	70,000	160	70,000	160
YAF	0	0	1,200,000	11	1,200,000	11



After WWRP, only SFRB grants represent a significant percentage in the overall amount of grant-funded acquisitions. However, less than 1 % of SRFB grants are obtained by

² These amounts represent the estimated actual costs of acquisitions. Because grants typically require a match, the actual grant amounts are less. A realistic estimate of WWRP grant dollars used for acquisitions is approximately 50% of the cost, or approximately \$213 million. The estimate for SRFB grant dollars is approximately 85% of the cost, or approximately \$37 million.

Preliminary Draft – May 4, 2005

state agencies to fund land acquisitions – the vast majority of acquisitions through SFRB grants are by local governments or nongovernmental organizations.³

Subtracting the non-state agency acquisitions funded by SRFB grants, since 1990 nearly 96% of the three state agencies' grant-funded acquisitions have been funded in part by WWRP.

WWRP OVERVIEW

One of the WWRP program's two primary goals is "...to assist with the rapid acquisition of the most significant lands for wildlife conservation and outdoor recreation purposes before they are converted to other uses."⁴

Establishing Eligibility

Chapter 79A.15 RCW authorizes the IAC Board to adopt rules for establishing acquisition policies and priorities for both habitat conservation and recreation proposals. Manual #2 – Planning Policies, establishes the following planning requirements for all WWRP proposals, including acquisitions:

Goals and Objectives: A statement of the applicant's long range goals and a list of objectives that describe specific actions aimed at achieving each goal.

Description of Current Conditions: A description of agency authorities, the physical setting, and sphere of influence or service area. Include recreational use information and an evaluation of existing opportunities, including opportunities that are managed by agencies other than the applicant.

Demand and Need: An explanation of why actions are necessary and establishment of priorities for these actions.

Public Involvement: A description of how the planning process gave the public ample opportunity to be involved in development of the plan.

Capital Improvement Program: A current capital improvement program that covers a period of at least six years.

Official Adoption: Evidence that the document has been approved by the authority most appropriate to the plan's scope.

³ The above funding percentages for grant sources other than WWRP represent the percent of funding where WWRP was not used as matching funds. The WWRP percentages represent any acquisitions that may have a combination of WWRP and federal funds. The point here is that any grant that receives WWRP funding must meet the WWRP planning requirements.

⁴ RCW 79A.15.005

Preliminary Draft – May 4, 2005

State agencies are required to update their plans a minimum of once every six years. The process used by IAC to approve the plans is self-certification. In other words, the agencies are responsible for certifying that their plans meet the minimum planning criteria, and the self-certification form is submitted to IAC following adoption of the plan by the agency.

Choosing Projects

Chapter 79A.15 RCW establishes minimum criteria for prioritizing proposed acquisitions. Following is a partial list of those criteria:

Habitat Conservation

Community support
 Immediacy of threat to the site
 Uniqueness of the site
 Diversity of species using the site
 Quality of the habitat
 Long-term viability of the site
 Presence of threatened or endangered species

Recreation - Trails⁵

Community Support
 Immediacy of threat to the site
 Linkage between communities
 Linkage between trails
 Existing or potential usage
 Etc.

Though fulfilling the planning requirements establishes eligibility for WWRP grants, individual grant applications are subjected to further evaluation criteria. For each grant category within the WWRP program (e.g. Critical Habitat, Natural Areas, State Parks), IAC has developed an evaluation score sheet to assist in ranking proposals. The score sheets reflect both the IAC Board's policies and the criteria found in Chapter 79A.15 RCW. The following is an example of the evaluation criteria for WWRP Critical Habitat proposals:

WWRP Critical Habitat Evaluation Summary		
Criteria	Evaluation Elements	Possible Points
Ecological and Biological Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The bigger picture ● Uniqueness/significance of the site ● Fish and wildlife species and or communities 	20
Species and Communities with Special Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Threat to species/communities ● Importance of acquisitions ● Ecological roles ● Taxonomic distinctness ● Rarity 	10
Manageability and Viability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Immediacy of threat to site ● Long-term viability ● Enhancement of existing protected land 	15
Public Benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Project Support ● Educational and/or scientific value 	5
Total Points Possible		50

⁵ Similar criteria are used for water access proposals.

Preliminary Draft – May 4, 2005

Many of the evaluation elements are designed to reward those proposals that are supported by prior planning, regional significance, and comparative need. For example, for this particular evaluation, the criteria “The Bigger Picture,” “Uniqueness/Significance of the Site,” and “Importance of Habitat Acquisition to Species/Community Protection or Recovery,” all emphasize how a proposal should be placed in the context of a broader, statewide focus:

The Bigger Picture: How is this project supported by a current plan (i.e. species management population plan, local, watershed, statewide, agency, or conservation)? What is the status of the plan? What process was used to identify this project as a priority? What specific role does this project play in a broader watershed or landscape picture? Is it part of a phased project? Is it a stand-alone site/habitat?

Uniqueness/Significance of the Site: Explain how the site is unique or significant on a global, regional, state, ecosystem, and/or watershed level. How unique is the site in relation to habitat quality, connectivity, diversity, rarity? How is the site important in providing critical habitat or biological function for wildlife species/communities? How does this site compare to others of the same type?

Importance of Habitat Acquisition to Species/Community Protection or Recovery: Describe the relative importance of habitat acquisition when compared to other protection or recovery tasks such as habitat restoration, captive breeding, translocation, regulatory protection, etc. Describe the distribution or range and, if known, the abundance of the species or community. Identify any recovery plans, conservation strategies or similar plans that include reference to this site.

Because IAC administered grants are generally subject to the same planning requirements, which includes a comprehensive planning element, a demonstration of demand and need, and evidence of public support and public involvement, these grant programs do in fact supplement existing agency regulations, policies and procedures. In the case of WWRP, which is the primary grant program for habitat and recreation land acquisitions, coordination and transparency are mandated by the grant approval process.

Relation of WWRP to Characteristics of a Coordinated Strategy

Relative to the requirements of SSB 6242, the above criteria set the context for a broader, coordinated approach to habitat and recreation land acquisitions. Because the majority of state acquisitions are funded through the WWRP program, and because these proposals are reviewed using the above criteria, agencies are required to address issues such as the regional significance of a proposal, or the role the acquisition would play “in a broader watershed or landscape picture,” or the “the importance of habitat acquisition when compared to other protection or recovery tasks.” In short, WWRP requirements ask the applicant to demonstrate the need for a proposed acquisition in a statewide context, where need is ranked according to the regional significance of the proposal, and comparative

Preliminary Draft – May 4, 2005

need is based on whether there are already sites performing the same function elsewhere in the state, etc.

Another aspect of the WWRP program that provides for a greater measure of coordination is the grant selection process. With the exception of projects funded through the State Parks category, all grant applications are reviewed and ranked by a panel of experts, including representatives from WDFW and DNR. The State Parks category proposals are reviewed by a panel of experts and State Parks' staff. Through this process, projects are selected for funding according to how well they compete against other projects on a statewide scale.

Once projects are ranked by the panel they are submitted to the IAC Board, which then submits the ranked list to the Governor. By statute, the Governor may not add projects to the list, but does have the authority to delete projects. Following approval of the list by the Governor, it is submitted in the Capital Budget Request to the legislature for review and approval. The legislature may also delete (but cannot add) projects from the list.

The requirement to submit the ranked WWRP list to the Governor and the legislature helps insure that future acquisitions are known in advance. Since WWRP acquisitions represent 96% of the land acquired by state agencies for habitat and recreation, most of those acquisitions are accomplished through a transparent process.

- Is WWRP the De Facto Statewide Coordinated Strategy?

If the legislature's primary concern is with the expansion of state ownership through the acquisition of private lands, is primarily concerned with those acquisitions that are occurring through state funding sources, and was not previously aware of the percentage of acquisitions funded through the WWRP program, or of the WWRP grant funding requirements, it is possible that this information may suffice to address many of the issues raised by SSB 6242. However, even within this narrowly defined scope, WWRP may lack certain elements envisioned by SSB 6242 that the legislature would like to enhance.

- Does WWRP require statewide, *interagency* coordination?

Though the planning requirements of WWRP ask for the regional significance, relative statewide importance, etc. of a particular proposal, there is not specifically a requirement to incorporate information from other agencies, let alone federal agencies, land trusts, etc. in the analysis of a particular acquisition. Though this may in fact happen, the extent to which the demonstration of demand and need for an agency's proposal is informed by the land holdings of other agencies is not a required outcome of the WWRP planning requirements.

The grant approval process does ensure some measure of interagency coordination, because panel experts are represented by state agencies. However, if the intent of SSB 6242 is a broad cross section of interagency coordination, the presence of WDFW &

Preliminary Draft – May 4, 2005

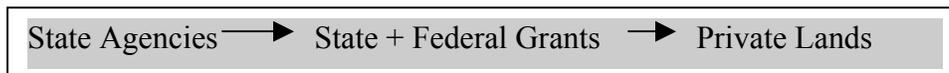
DNR on panels related to habitat conservation grants, and only Parks on panels related to State Parks grants, may not provide the degree of coordination necessary. To the extent that SSB 6242 would like to see the acquisition decisions of State Parks, WDFW, DNR integrated with one another, and perhaps with other agencies, nongovernmental organizations, etc., the current process for coordinating through WWRP may not be adequate.

- Do the planning requirements of WWRP have adequate criteria?

Though WWRP imposes general criteria requiring agencies to assess land acquisition proposals from a statewide perspective, there is no requirement for agencies to use the same criteria for what constitutes, for example, “regional significance.” Agencies are individually responsible for establishing this level of criteria, and there is no assurance the criteria used by individual agencies will result in an overall acquisition strategy that would provide the best conservation or recreation value and, by extension, result in the wisest expenditure of state funds.

To the extent that grant programs, and in particular WWRP, seek to acquire the best possible lands for habitat and recreation, and have criteria for achieving this goal, there is a strategy. If by “strategy,” however, the legislature is interested in a long-term strategy that prioritizes acquisitions farther out than a grant cycle, WWRP provide this level of coordination.

- **Comparing Funding through the WWRP versus Federal Grants**

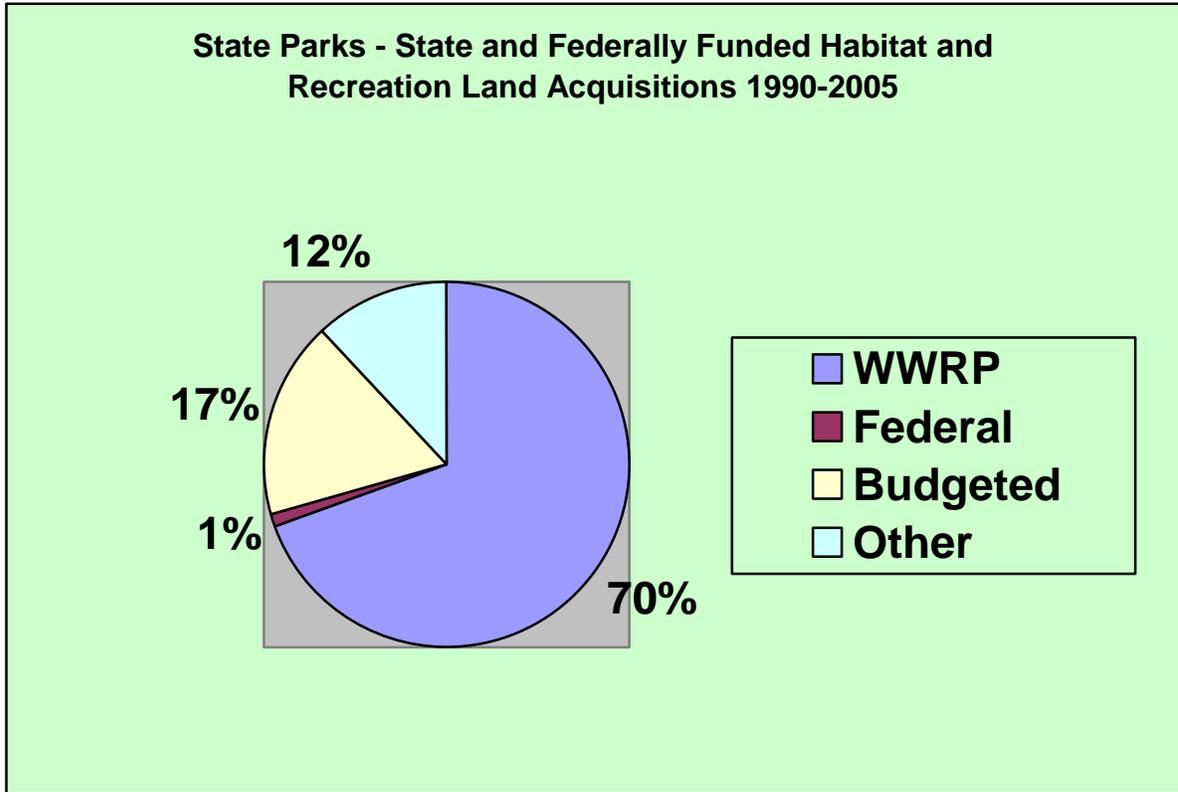


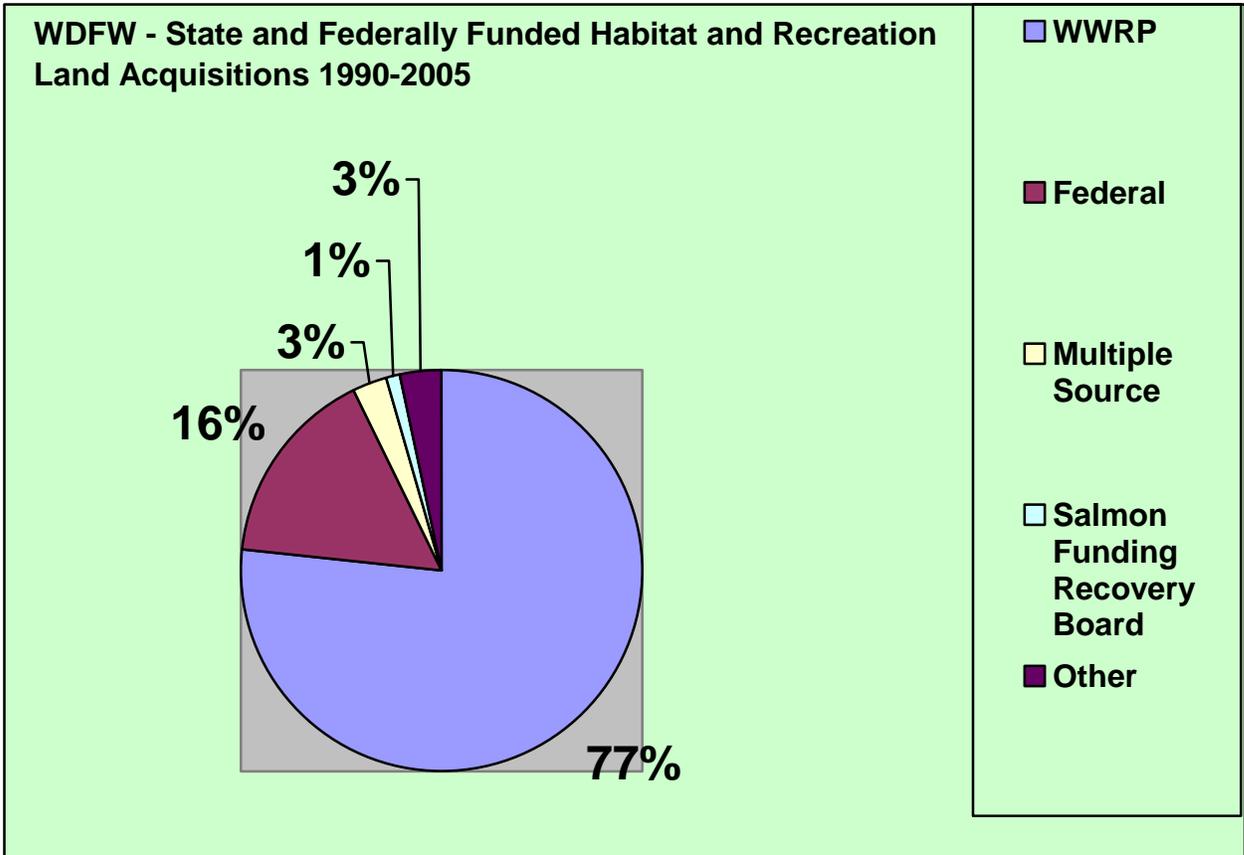
If WWRP does currently provide enough coordination to meet the legislature’s expectations for a statewide strategy, do enough habitat and recreation land acquisitions fall within the strategy, or are too many acquisitions occurring outside WWRP, which could in effect undermine effective coordination and strategic planning?

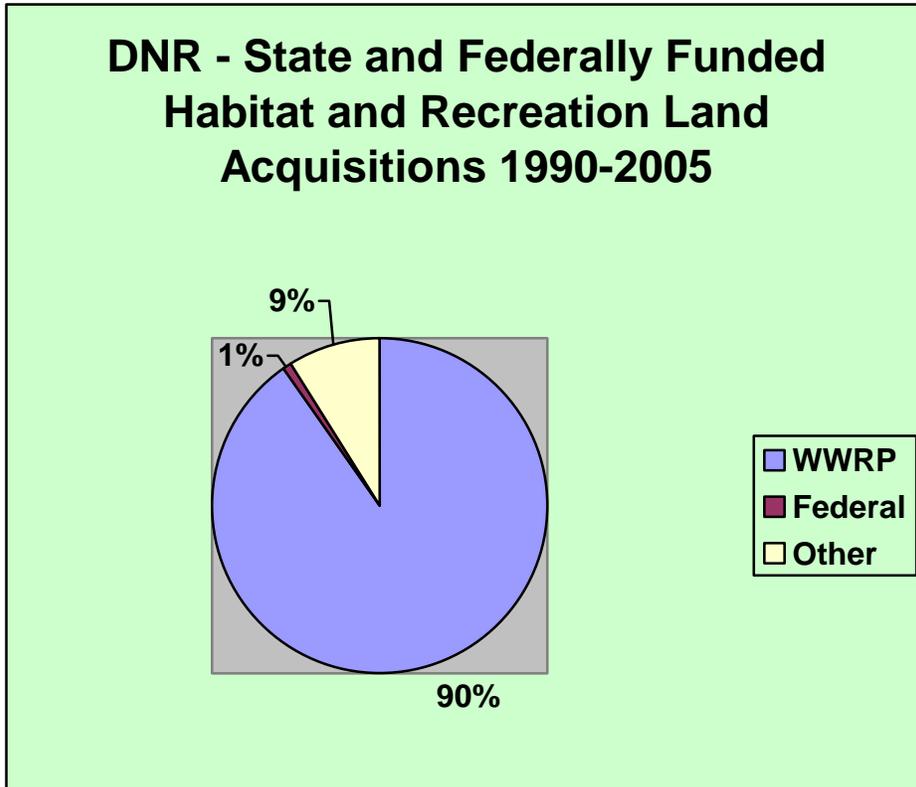
Though 96% of the IAC administered grants for habitat and recreation state agency land acquisitions are awarded through the WWRP program, this does not account for those acquisitions funded by other means. Federal grants are sometimes also used to acquire lands, and acquisitions that occur through these funding sources are not bound by WWRP planning requirements. Though all grants have their own requirements for the demonstration of need, there is no guarantee that federal grants will use the same criteria for funding, or result in acquisition decisions that are consistent with a coordinated strategy.

Preliminary Draft – May 4, 2005

The following charts show the percentages of funding for each of the state agencies' habitat and recreation land acquisitions since 1980, including acquisitions funded by federal programs:







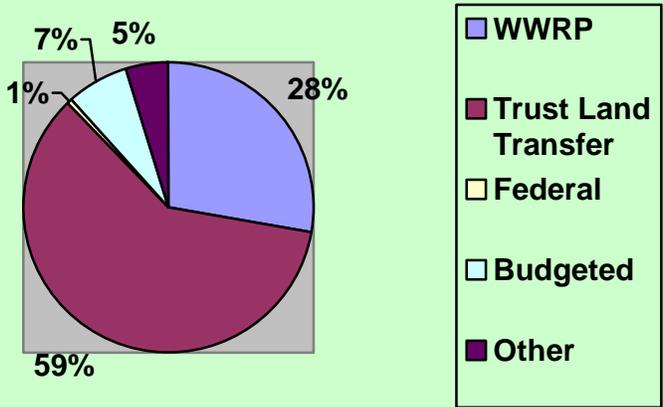
To be completed: Discussion of approaches the legislature might take to provide coordination for all acquisitions of private lands through both WWRP and federally-funded grants.

- **A Look at DNR's Trust Land Transfer Program**

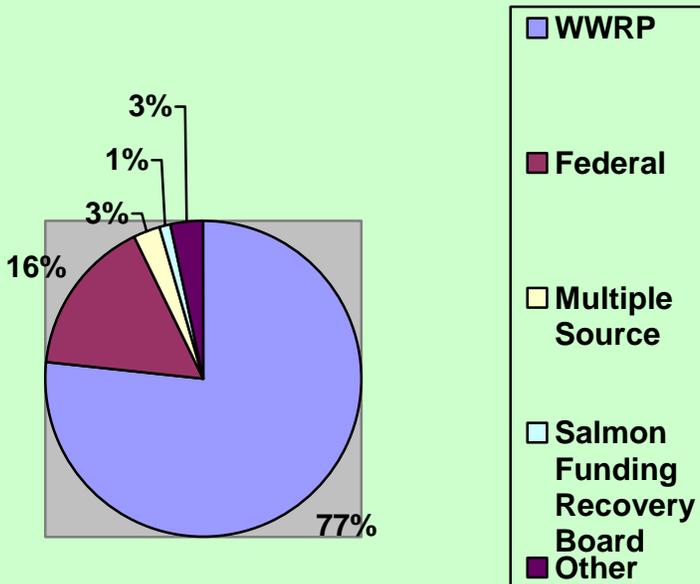


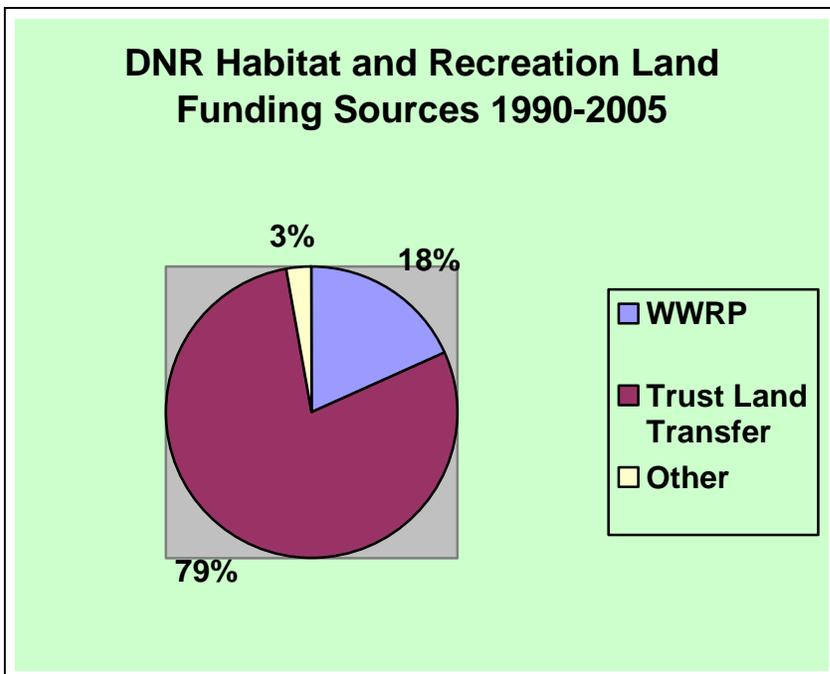
To this point the coordination emphasis has been on state agency grant-funded acquisitions of private lands. However, since its inception in 1989, DNR and Parks have acquired the majority of their new habitat and recreation lands through DNR's Trust Land Transfer Program. The following charts profile the percent of lands acquired by DNR, Parks, and WDFW through each of the funding sources discussed to this point:

Parks Habitat and Recreation Land Funding Sources 1990-2005



WDFW Habitat and Recreation Land Funding Sources 1990-2005





To be completed: Discussion of approaches the legislature might take to provide coordination of all habitat and recreation lands by state agencies, whether state or federally-funded, and whether the acquisition is of private or public land.

- **Comprehensive Strategies – A Case Study of California and Florida’s Approaches**



A central feature of SSB 6242 is the requirement to develop a statewide coordinated habitat and recreation lands acquisition strategy based on some form of needs assessment. A goal of the legislation is to ensure the “need” for a proposed acquisition is determined, at least in part, by assessing whether or not there are already “public lands serving those purposes in various areas of the state.”⁶ In addition, SSB 6242 calls for a consideration

⁶ Section 1(2)(b)(i): “Ensure that land acquisition and disposal decisions are based on a determination of need for recreational and habitat lands compared to existing public lands serving those purposes in various areas of the state;”

Preliminary Draft – May 4, 2005

of the policies, priorities and goals” that should apply to a coordinated strategy, and provides several possible examples.⁷

The comprehensive approach to coordination, especially one that is aiming to establish goals based on statewide “provisions for scenic areas and greenways, wildlife corridors, forest buffers, designated critical areas,” etc., will likely extend well beyond the activities of just a few agencies. And, as the number entities and planning efforts to coordinate into a single strategies increases, so do the options for coordinating them. For this reason, this section of the report presents a detailed case study as an example of how California and Florida have approached comprehensive coordination. The hope is that these case studies will provide a better understanding of the types of tools and the degree of coordination required to launch a comprehensive, needs-based habitat and recreation land acquisition strategy.

Though these are examples of two of the most comprehensive approaches among all the states (particularly Florida), it is worth bearing in mind an important point: Making habitat and recreation land acquisitions *completely objective and predictable* is not a realistic expectation. After 10 years worth of experience in the process, the Florida Advisory Council’s December 2000 report states:

“Selecting land for purchase by the state is not a science and requires some subjectivity.”

“There is no single “best” land to preserve.”

“The state has divided the land acquisition dollars among a number of agencies....In a perfect world, one would hope that each agency’s desired parcels of land would overlap and point to the same property. Indeed, substantial overlap among the programs does occur. But because the missions differ, agencies can and do buy different tracts of land for different reasons.”⁸

The California Legacy Project

“In its 1996 analysis of land conservation activities by state agencies, the California Legislative Analysts Office found that the state was unable to set clear conservation priorities because it lacked a comprehensive and cohesive statewide land conservation plan, suffered from poor coordination among departments, and had limited ability to formally evaluate conservation opportunities as they arose.

⁷ Section 1(2)(b)(v): “Consider what policies, priorities, and goals may apply to the statewide coordinated strategy. The report may consider population based goals for recreation needs, changes in use of public lands, provisions for scenic areas and greenways, wildlife corridors, forest buffers, designated critical areas, local, state, and federal wildlife protection plans, and multi-use functions of existing publicly owned lands.”

⁸ Report of the Florida Forever Advisory Council, December 2000, pp.2-3

Preliminary Draft – May 4, 2005

In response the California legislature mandated the creation of a new conservation planning program known as the California Legacy Project... ”⁹

Initiated in 1999, the California Lands Project (CLP) was created as a “distinctive new strategic planning process to provide consistent, statewide information and analyses that will help guide the state’s financial investments in resource conservation and restoration and will also promote effective conservation actions through partnerships with non-state organizations.”¹⁰

Administered by the California’s The Resources Agency, the CLP has three advisory committees:

1. *Stakeholder Advisory Committee*: Includes representatives from state level environmental organizations, ranching, farming, timber, local and regional governments, businesses, tribes, environmental justice organizations, and experts. This committee advises the Management and Executive Advisory Committees as well as The Resources Agency’s staff and consultants.
2. *Management Advisory Committee*: This committee includes state and federal agencies, non-governmental conservation organizations, foundations, and the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research. This committee advises the Executive Management Committee.
3. *Executive Management Committee*: Consists of the directors of the seven largest conservation-focused departments of the California Resources Agency. This committee has the lead role in identifying conservation priorities for The Resources Agency.

A feature of the CLP that is more or less a common feature among states that are working on long-term conservation planning is the incorporation of a *biodiversity assessment*. The biodiversity assessment will be, in part, a combination of a Resource Status and Trends (RSAT) assessment, and a “conservation criteria mapping process”. The RSAT’s primary objectives are 1) to assess the existing health of public lands and high priority natural resources, 2) to monitor trends in resource conditions, and 3) to facilitate strategic investment in improving resource conditions. The RSAT will use an *ecoregional approach* as a planning framework, which is another similarity between California’s efforts and other states. The conservation criteria mapping process will document areas according to categories like “species richness,” or “underrepresented habitats.”

In a report completed by the National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis, located at the University of California, Santa Barbara, titled “*A Framework for Setting Land Conservation Priorities Using Multi-criteria Scoring and an Optional Fund Allocation Strategy*,” the CLP has established a planning method for prioritizing acquisitions. An interesting feature of the strategy, which is a central feature of the objectives of the CLP, is the attempt to not only identify those lands that are good

⁹ “A Framework for Setting Land Conservation Priorities Using Multi-criteria Scoring and an Optimal Fund Allocation Strategy,” p.11.

¹⁰ Ibid, p.12.

Preliminary Draft – May 4, 2005

candidates for conservation, but to also prioritize them for acquisition based, in part, on the best investment value of state funds. A “marginal value” approach is used to evaluate an acquisition, based on the incremental progress the acquisition would make toward achieving conservation goals, measured against the cost of site conservation.¹¹ The report concedes the marginal value approach is not useful for long-term goal setting, but is rather a tool for prioritizing acquisitions at the stage where limited funds make it necessary to decide between competing projects.

In the short-term, the CLP is attempting to improve the quality of data related to conservation planning. As an example, note the CLP’s list of accomplishments in this area for 2003:

Improving Data for Conservation Planning:

- Began an inventory of state and federal conservation easements and added data to public lands ownership map
- Updated public ownership and private conservation lands map
- Developed a "How-to-Guide" and user-friendly methodology for annual updates of the public ownership database
- Updated database on existing and emerging conservation plans
- Finalized coordinated, statewide vegetation classification and mapping standards
- Developed statewide wetlands map based on agreed-upon classification system
- Began to incorporate riparian habitats into the statewide wetland inventory
- Completed survey of relevant datasets developed by counties and regional councils of government
- Developed and refined data layers for aquatic biodiversity and urban open space.¹²

As the CLP has moved toward a centralized form of conservation planning it has implemented the “*Digital Conservation Atlas*.” The Digital Conservation Atlas is an interactive map – an ArcIMS Internet Map Server - that allows the user to access geographic information in a variety of ways. The information spans agencies, including the Departments of Conservation, Fish and Game, Forestry and Fire Protection, Parks and Recreation, Water Resources, the State Coastal Conservancy and the Wildlife Conservation Board. The map also provides access to information about non-profit organizations, including a layer that maps the location of all the land trusts in the state.

Funding for the CLP has been through legislative appropriation. The original appropriation for the 1999-2000 fiscal year was \$1 million, but was subsequently reduced to \$250,000. Two million dollars were appropriated for each of the fiscal years 2000-01 and 2001-02, but due to budget reductions this amount was reduced by approximately 15 percent each year. These figures represent the amount invested as a “start up” cost to develop the tools and the knowledge base as a prerequisite to an acquisition strategy.

¹¹ A Framework..., p.9.

¹² From the CLP Web Site.

Preliminary Draft – May 4, 2005

The long-range strategy of the CLP is to develop the tools (maps, web site, etc.), as well as a conservation planning framework, to guide the development of a conservation strategy that encompasses the activities of organizations both public and private, and at all levels of government. It is worth quoting in full the general guiding principles that were used in developing the planning framework:

1. *Flexibility.* We expect that regional conservation strategies will be developed through collaborative processes engaging a representative cross-section of stakeholders with varying criteria and desired outcomes. Any methodology should help to reveal multiple alternatives and solutions.
2. *Accessibility.* CLP methods and products should be comprehensible to both experts and non-expert stakeholders. While we do not expect the lay public to understand the details of the various measures and models, the public does need to know what kind of evidence and reasoning are being used to prioritize investment of public funds and should be able to interpret CLP products.
3. *Explicitness.* Terms must be defined unambiguously, data inputs and outputs must be obvious and well documented, and the methods must be clear, accountable, and repeatable by others.
4. *Feasibility.* The prioritization method must be practicable, using existing knowledge, data and information.
5. *Enhanceable over time.* CLP methods must be robust to changes in data and improvements in models and analytical approaches.
6. *Driven by theory, data and knowledge.* Often conservation priorities are established by polling “experts.” Engaging expert knowledge and judgment is key to successful conservation planning. CLP planning should strengthen and support analysis of specialists and local experts by synthesizing appropriate data and information over entire planning regions.
7. *Encompassing of ecological and socioeconomic considerations.* It is important to recognize that there are social, economic, and ecological tradeoffs in pursuing and particular resource conservation strategy. CLP should aim to the maximum extent possible to represent and quantify those tradeoffs.
8. *Evaluated by effective performance monitoring.* The CLP method should identify specific measures of success and performance targets that are readily observable to pre- and post-project monitoring.¹³

Florida Forever

The Florida Forever program is the outgrowth of several earlier efforts, spanning a period of 15 years. The first such effort, begun in 1990, was the “*Closing the Gaps Project.*” As the lead organization for the project, the Florida Fish & Wildlife Commission completed an ambitious 246 page report identifying all the habitat areas in Florida that would need to be protected to ensure that the state’s biodiversity is maintained.¹⁴

¹³ Ibid, pp. 12-13.

¹⁴ James Cox, Randy Kuntz, Maureen MacLaughlin, Terry Gilbert: “Closing the Gaps in Florida’s Wildlife Habitat Conservation System,” 1994.

Preliminary Draft – May 4, 2005

Employing a computerized GIS system, the project mapped the entire state to identify strategic habitat conservation areas. The estimated cost of this project was \$1.2 million.

In 1995 the Florida Legislature amended Florida statutes to incorporate greenways into the responsibilities of the Department of Environmental Protection, and established the *Florida Greenways Council*. At an estimated cost of \$1 million, and with a deadline of 1999, the “*Statewide Greenways Planning Project*” was initiated as a joint effort between the Department of Environmental Protection and the University of Florida, with guidance from the Florida Greenways Commission (est. 1993), the Florida Greenways Coordinating Council (est. 1995), and the Florida Recreational Trails Council (est. 1979). In general, the purpose of the Greenways Planning Project was to plan for both habitat and recreational needs. According to the Final Report, “The [Greenways] Commission’s over-riding recommendation and intent was that Florida should make a concerted effort now to create a Statewide System of Greenways linking existing and proposed conservation lands and trails.”¹⁵ At 323 pages, the final report included statewide, GIS-based maps and recommendations for biking, hiking, multi-use and paddling trails.

The Ecological Network is similar in purpose to the California Legacy Project. It is also the foundation of the Florida Forever acquisition project. Both the Closing the Gaps Project and the Greenways Planning Project appear to have been data sources for The Ecological Network, which represents a refinement of the previous two efforts. As a comprehensive assessment of the state’s significant ecosystems and habitats, it provides an overarching planning framework within which a statewide, interagency conservation and acquisition strategy can emerge.

The Ecological Network covers the following areas:

- Ecological communities
- Strategic habitat conservation areas
- Biodiversity hotspots
- Areas of conservation interest
- Potential natural areas
- Land use
- Existing and proposed conservation lands
- Roadless areas
- Road densities
- Aquatic preserves
- Outstanding Florida waters
- Shellfish harvesting waters
- Wild and scenic rivers
- National estuarine research reserves
- Coastal barrier lands
- 100 year floodplains
- Significant aquifer recharge areas

¹⁵ Phase II Final Report Statewide Greenways System Planning Project, p.7.

Preliminary Draft – May 4, 2005

The Ecological Network employed a four-step GIS decision support model to identify and prioritize conservation lands. Step one was to combine GIS layers such as habitats for focal species, priority ecological communities, wetlands, etc., to produce a map with multiple overlays. Second, from the composite map, “ecological hubs” were selected based upon their high ecological integrity potential, according to criteria such as no intensive land uses, no high road densities, no areas with potential for edge effects (i.e. more than 180 meters from urban land uses), and greater in size than 2,000 hectares. Third, linkages were identified between ecological hubs to create connectivity. Last, the hubs and linkages were combined to create the Ecological Network.

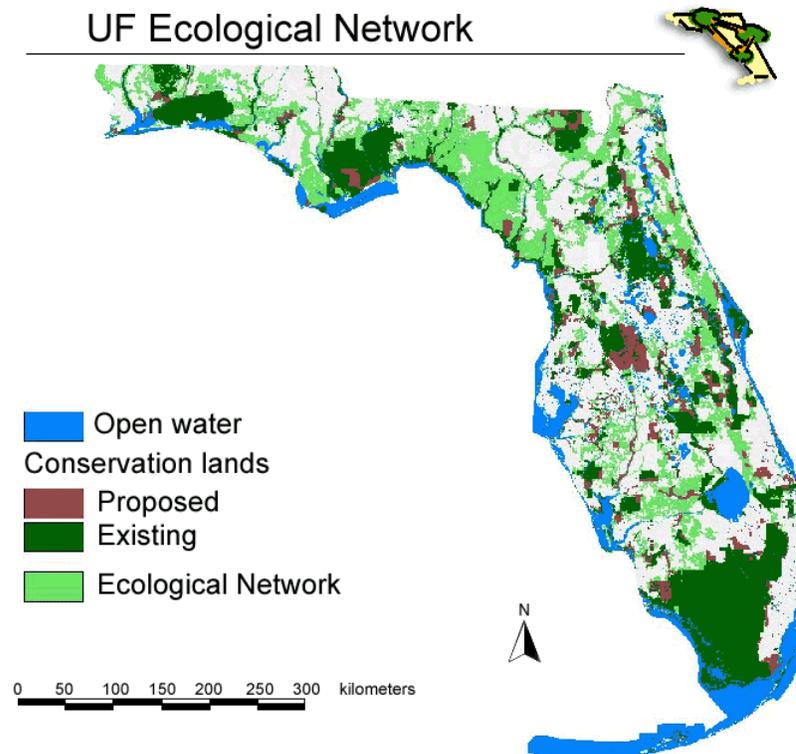


Figure 1 - The Ecological Network as it appears on the web.

Upon completion, the Ecological Network amounted to approximately 23 million acres, representing 57.5% of the state. Twelve million of the acres identified were already public lands, or lands protected by non-governmental organizations such as The Nature Conservancy. Approximately 11 million acres were in private ownership. Presumably, these 11 million acres would be the subset of the Ecological Network that is the focus of the Florida Forever acquisition program.

“Florida Forever” is the acquisition arm of The Ecological Network. Begun as a 10-year program in 2001, with a \$3 billion budget, the program is specifically geared toward land and water resource acquisition. Florida Forever is a continuation of a similar, previous 10-year \$3.2 billion effort, known as Preservation 2000. The program is funded through bonds, which were authorized by an act of the Florida Legislature in 1999.

Preliminary Draft – May 4, 2005

Although the final approval authority for acquisitions rests with the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund, Florida Forever primarily receives guidance and direction from the *Acquisition and Restoration Council* and the *Florida Forever Advisory Council*. The Acquisition and Restoration Council is comprised of citizen representatives, as well as five state agency representatives. Recommendations of the Acquisition and Restoration Council are taken to the Governor and Cabinet. The Florida Forever Advisory Council assists in the development of planning criteria, objectives and performance measures, and policies to meet the overall objectives of the Florida Forever Act.

Though land acquisition is a central feature of Florida Forever, the program provides funds for a range of capital projects, including initial removal of invasive plants, construction of facilities, trails, “or any other activities that serve to restore, conserve, protect, or provide public access, recreational opportunities, or necessary services for land or water areas.”¹⁶ In the December 2000 report of the Florida Forever Advisory Council it is also noted that as the follow up to Preservation 2000, the Florida Forever Act sought to make some adjustments in the priorities of Florida’s strategy. First, there is now more of an emphasis on acquisitions in urban areas, and second, the legislature has encouraged the use of less-than-fee-simple methods.¹⁷

The Florida Forever Program is similar to Washington State’s Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP), in that it has a prescribed allocation formula for how funds will be distributed. A key difference, however, is the funds are allocated by agency, rather than by habitat and recreation categories:

1. Department of Environmental Protection:		
a. Florida Forever Lands	35 percent	\$105 million.
b. Recreation and Parks	1.5 percent	\$ 4.5 million.
c. Greenways and Trails	1.5 percent	\$ 4.5 million.
2. Water Management Districts	35 percent	\$105 million.
3. Florida Communities Trust	24 percent	\$ 72 million.
4. Department of Agriculture/ Forestry	1.5 percent	\$ 4.5 million.
5. Fish and Wildlife Conservancy	1.5 percent	\$ 4.5 million.

The dollars allotted to each program may be used for activities related to acquisition, including appraisals and surveys. Also, up to 1.5 percent (\$4.5 million) of the Florida Forever Fund “shall be made available for the purpose of management, maintenance, and capital improvements....”¹⁸

The implementation of the Florida Forever program is accomplished through a division of responsibilities among state agencies and programs. The Department of Environmental Protection is charged with the overall administration of the program. The Department of State Lands performs all the functions related to land acquisition, from

¹⁶ FS 259.03(3).

¹⁷ P.1.

¹⁸ FS 259.032(11)(b).

Preliminary Draft – May 4, 2005

initial negotiation to obtaining title. The Florida Natural Areas Inventory provides scientific data, and technical decision making tools.

Other areas of interest as they relate to SSB 6242 are the provisions for Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT), required public meetings, and provisions for allowing private citizens to have their properties removed from the proposed acquisitions list.

Florida's PILT program reserves money from the Conservation and Recreation Lands Trust Fund to pay for "all actual tax losses," in counties with a population of 150,000 or fewer. Compensation is based on the actual amount of taxes paid on the property for the previous three years.¹⁹

Before making recommendations to the Governor, the Acquisition and Restoration Council is required to hold at least one public meeting on a proposed purchase "in areas of the state where major portions of such land are situated." A report of the public meeting is required along with the Council's recommendation.²⁰

Within 90 days of receiving a certified letter from the owner of a property who objects to being included in an acquisition list, "where such property is a project or part of a project which has not been listed for purchase in the current year's land acquisition work plan," the property must be deleted from the list.²¹

The Florida Forever program employs a *Conservation Needs Assessment* to prioritize acquisitions. Developed by the Florida Natural Areas Inventory, the Conservation Needs Assessment is intended as the primary tool to assist the Florida Acquisition and Restoration Council in setting priorities and recommending acquisitions to the Governor. The first Assessment, published in December 2003, is a combined technical report, and an Arcview map comprised of 14 data layers. The Assessment is structured to reflect the 34 performance measures approved by the Florida Advisory Council and adopted into statute by the Florida Legislature. Up to 5 percent of available funds in any given year can be allocated to the Natural Areas Inventory "to be used for the initiation and maintenance of a natural areas inventory to aid in the identification of areas to be acquired...."²²

Florida Forever boasts being "the world's largest conservation land buying program," having purchased over a million acres in the following areas over the last five years:

"...over 400,000 acres of Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas (FWCC), over 760,000 acres of habitat conservation areas (FNAI), nearly 560,000 acres of ecological greenways (OGT), over 120,000 acres of under-represented natural communities, over 270,000 acres of natural floodplains, nearly 500,000 acres to protect significant water bodies, over 24,000 acres of fragile coastline, over

¹⁹ FS 259.032(12).

²⁰ FS 259.07.

²¹ FS 259.032(15).

²² FS 259.032(5)

Preliminary Draft – May 4, 2005

520,000 acres of functional wetlands, nearly 153,000 acres of significant groundwater recharge areas, over 170,000 acres of land to support priority recreational trails, and over 350,000 acres of sustainable forest land... of course, these acreages overlap to include over 1 million acres acquired since 1999... we've also protected over 700 archaeological & historic sites and over 620 listed species locations of 190 different state-listed species."²³

Two aspects of the Florida Forever project particularly significant to this report are the *Florida Forever 5-year plan*, and the *Priority Projects List*. By statute, the Acquisition and Restoration Council, acting on behalf of the Board of Trustees, must “develop and execute a 5-year plan to conserve, restore, and protect environmentally endangered lands, ecosystems, lands necessary for outdoor recreational needs, and other lands... This plan shall be kept current through continual reevaluation and revision”²⁴ The 5-year plan sets the longer-term context for acquisition planning. An iterative document that is updated annually, the 5-year plan contains a comprehensive narrative summary of the state’s proposed acquisition areas, as well as a prioritized list of future acquisitions.

The Priority Projects List is a short-term acquisition priorities list reflecting proposed acquisitions for the upcoming year.²⁵ Again, by statute, acquisitions should occur, to the greatest extent practicable, in the order of priority that they appear in the priorities list.²⁶

Another feature of the Florida Forever program is the Forever Status Reports, available on the Florida Forever web site. The status reports, which are in essence financial statements, are broken down by state agency. They detail appropriations, expenditures, acres acquired, anticipated acquisitions, and cash needs.²⁷ The status reports are generated by the Land Management Uniform Accounting Council, comprised of the Directors of the Divisions of State Lands, Recreation and Parks, the Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas, and the Office of Greenways and Trails. The requirement is for a specific cost accounting related to the expenditure of funds from the Florida Forever program:

“All land management activities and costs must be assigned to a specific category, and any single activity or cost may not be assigned to more than one category. Administrative costs, such as planning or training, shall be segregated from other management activities... Specific management activities and costs must initially be grouped, at a minimum, within... resource management, administration, new facility construction, and facility maintenance.”

²⁸

²³ Florida Forever website.

²⁴ FS 259.04(1)(a).

²⁵ See Appendix XX

²⁶ FS 259.04(1)(c).

²⁷ See Appendix XX.

²⁸ FS 259.037.

Recreation Planning

To this point the discussion has been primarily directed toward strategies for habitat lands. From the standpoint of an initial assessment, a characterization of habitats should ultimately provide the basis for both a habitat and recreation strategy. This is because the initial assessment should identify the features of habitat lands that place them in various categories, ranging from those that are threatened, or perhaps contain an endangered species, to those that are capable of supporting species health or diversity, while at the same time allowing for multiple uses, including recreation. In simplified terms, through a process of elimination, where the most sensitive lands are removed from consideration for multiple uses, the lands remaining emerge as the planning framework for developing a recreation plan and an acquisition strategy. Florida's Greenways Planning Project appears to have followed this pattern.

While the initial assessment can provide a planning framework for both habitat and recreation planning, once the assessment is completed, developing an acquisition strategy for habitat lands will differ in many respects from an acquisition strategy for recreation lands. The primary reason for this is the degree to which recreation is dependent on social values and demand, whereas habitat needs are primarily driven by science, as well as requirements to protect habitats and species in their existing environments.

At the local level, it is common for parks acquisition planning to be driven by population-based standards, combined with public input into park planning processes. Generally, population-based standards will determine park needs based on the amount of acres per thousand in population. The number of acres per thousand will vary, depending on whether the type of park (or park facility) is a ball field, or neighborhood park, or open space. In addition, there is usually a minimum standard based on proximity. In many plans you will see an accessibility standard that (for example) no one in the community should be farther than ¼ mile from a neighborhood park.

At the state level, however, it is relatively rare to see population-based standards employed for parks planning. The National Recreation and Parks Association no longer publishes standards for parks and recreation needs based on population.²⁹ A state's needs as a "community" are much harder to conceive through a top-down, uniform set of standards.

Because parks and recreation need is driven by demand, the successful approach to planning for future needs must incorporate a high degree of public participation into the process. This was a prominent feature of the Florida Greenways project.

²⁹ Jim Eychaner, "Population-Based Goals for Recreation – Discussion Draft," p.1

Preliminary Draft – May 4, 2005

Lessons Learned from Other States

It is impossible to know what you need until you know what you have.

Reviewing the efforts of California and Florida, it becomes apparent that implementing a statewide coordinated strategy requires its own strategy, and implementation of the strategy requires time, resources, and money. Florida’s program of statewide coordinated planning has had fifteen years to reach its current level of maturity as an acquisition program, and it has been blessed with a budget far exceeding other states’ conservation planning and acquisition efforts. In the six years that California’s CLP has been in effect, many useful documents have been produced to further the objectives of coordinated planning, but the program is still only in its intermediate stages.

	California	Florida
Assessment (s)	Source Status and Trends	Identifying the Gaps
		Always Planning Assessment
		Ecological Network
Acquisition Criteria	Framework for Setting Land Conservation Priorities...	Conservation Needs Assessment
Mapping	Mapping – “The “Digital Atlas”	Mapping of Strategic Conservation Areas,
Public Interface	Website	Website
Stakeholder Involvement	Stakeholder, Management & Executive Advisory Committees	Stakeholder Involvement & Restoration Council
		Establish a Forever Advisory Council
Short-term Acquisition Plan	Completed	Final list, published on web site
Long-term Acquisition Plan	Completed	Final plan, published on web site

A key lesson to learn is a quality acquisition program does not occur at once. It requires a coherent organizational structure, an initial statewide assessment of habitat and recreation needs and, once those needs are documented, a tool for prioritizing among those needs. And most of these elements must occur consecutively, not simultaneously. In other words, an initial assessment is

Preliminary Draft – May 4, 2005

necessary before a system for prioritizing future needs can be developed, and a system for prioritizing future needs must be in place before an actual list of acquisition priorities can be developed. Each step is a foundation for the next, and each step requires a significant commitment of time for the development of criteria to address a wide range of social, economic and scientific issues. In the cases of California and Florida, a significant investment was made in developing a comprehensive plan and GIS-based mapping tools. In addition, Advisory Committees were formed to guide the planning efforts from both a technical and policy perspective.

Washington State – Assessing our Current Status

Though Washington State does not presently have a comprehensive statewide approach for its habitat and recreation lands, there are many efforts underway by entities, both public and private, in the areas of habitat and recreation planning, land acquisition, and a variety of other activities. In addition, many kinds of data-based maps have been developed, such as the ecoregional maps of The Nature Conservancy, to assist planners and decision makers engaged in habitat and recreation planning.

The problem confronting Washington is figuring out how to first identify, then to combine, the information from efforts past and present. An example of a planning effort underway at the moment, where an attempt has been made to combine information from other planning efforts, is the Salmon Recovery Planning coordinated the Governor's Salmon Recovery Office. These plans have drawn on the work going into Watershed Planning under HB 2514, Sub-basin Planning under the Northwest Conservation and Coordinating Council, as well as habitat and restoration and protection strategies developed by lead entities under HB 2496.

However, across the state, integration of planning efforts is the exception, and not the rule. Even with the present Salmon Recovery Planning efforts, there is no single repository for the information, where, for example, the knowledge gained from salmon recovery planning can be combined with information concerning fish, wildlife and plant habitat obtained from other efforts. There is not a database to incorporate salmon recovery information as one layer in a multi-layered, multi-species, statewide composite of information. And there is not a common planning framework – some entities use WRIAs, some use ecoregions, and others use jurisdictional boundaries. One is left to wonder how information obtained from combining the work of (for example) salmon recovery planning, watershed planning, WDFW's species recovery plans, and statewide parks and trails plans (should they be developed) would shape a conservation strategy and, ultimately, an acquisition strategy.

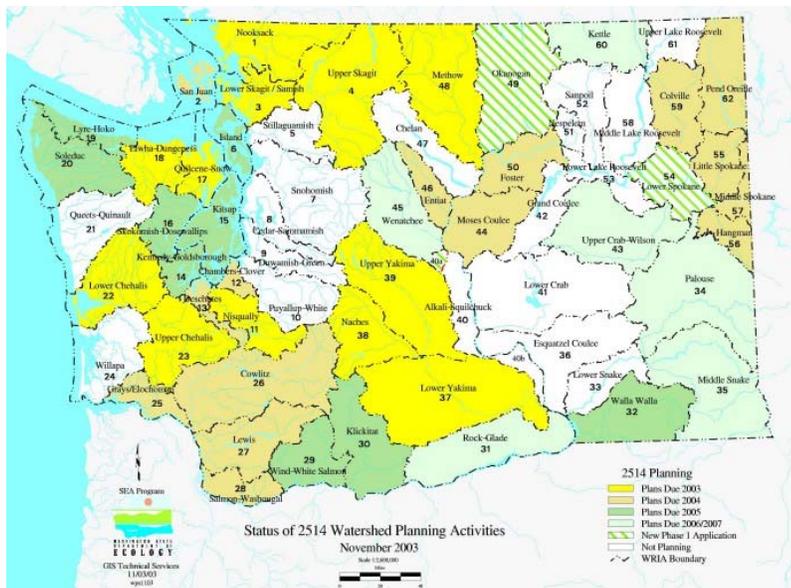


Figure 2 - 2514 Planning Areas

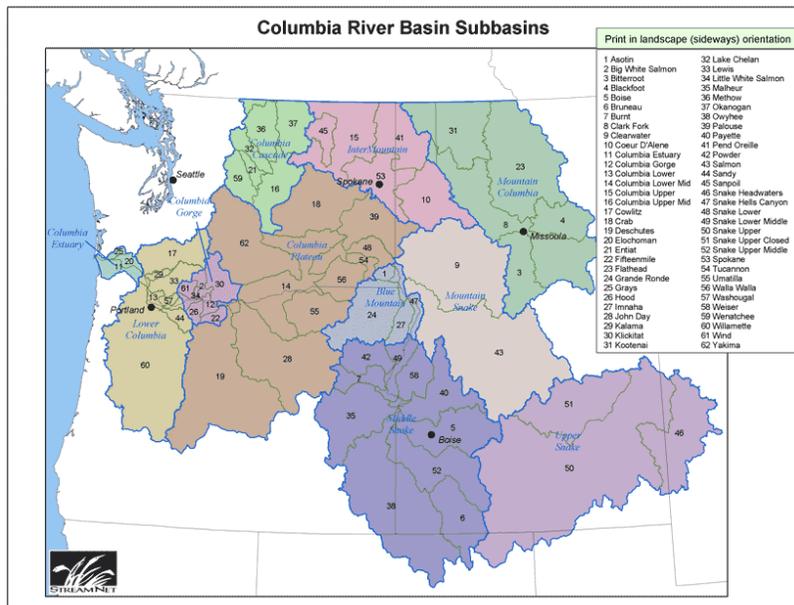


Figure 3 - Columbia River Sub-basin Planning Areas

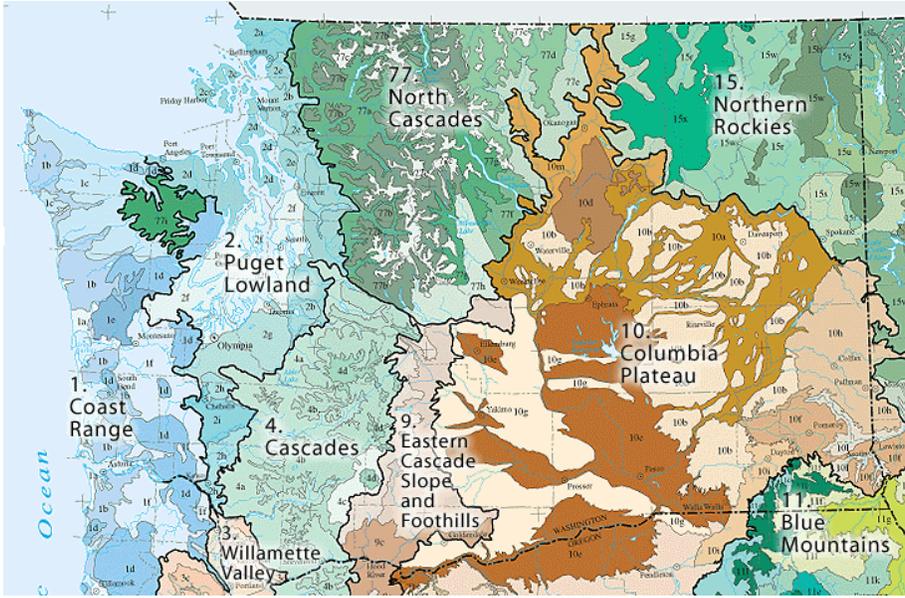


Figure 4 - Ecoregions of Washington State

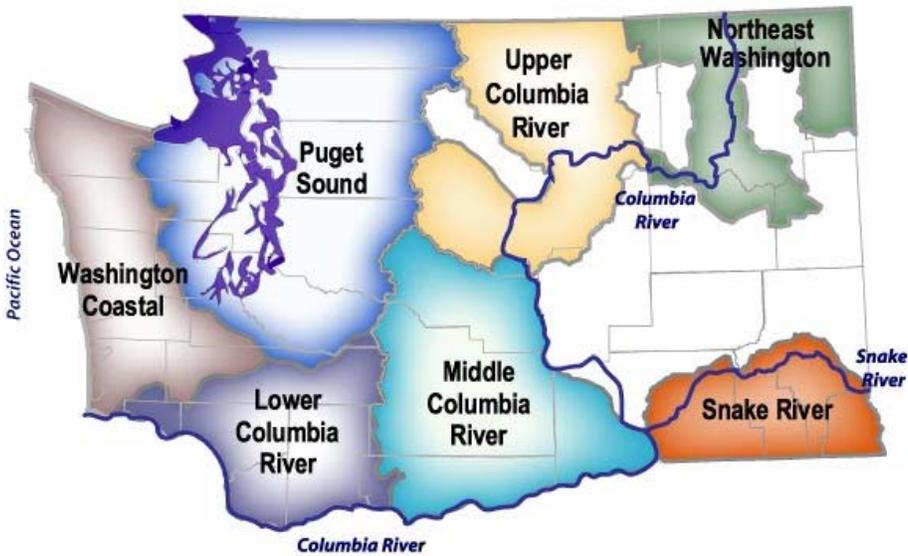


Figure 5 - Salmon Recovery Planning Areas

Preliminary Draft – May 4, 2005

The question before Washington, relative to issues posed by SSB 6242, is “how do we combine this information and these resources, and what would be involved?”

- *The Washington State Biodiversity Strategy*

One promising initiative underway is the Washington State Biodiversity Strategy, headed by the Washington State Biodiversity Council. Established by Governor’s Executive Order No. 04-02, the Biodiversity Council was one of the recommendations of the Washington Biodiversity Strategy Report, published October 1st, 2003.

The Biodiversity Strategy Report was mandated by Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 6400 (ESSB 6400), which was passed by the Washington Legislature in 2002. The Strategy Report contains 22 recommendations to improve biodiversity in Washington. Many of these recommendations resonate with the issues raised by SSB 6242, as well as the examples of other states’ comprehensive strategies that have been examined previously:

1. *Create a 30-year vision that includes benchmarks for conserving Washington’s biodiversity. In addition to a public education strategy, the vision will include the following “statewide and ecoregional priorities and benchmarks for conservation of land and water:”*
 - a. *Representative examples of all distinct native communities.*
 - b. *Maintain ecological and evolutionary processes.*
 - c. *Maintain viable populations of native plants and animals and other essential elements of biodiversity....*
 - d. *Identify blocks of natural habitat, including aquatic and marine habitat, large enough to be resilient.*

The elements of the 30-year vision listed above are similar to the initial assessment completed by California and Florida. Biodiversity assessments were an integral piece in developing a map of habitat and recreation lands, which in turn facilitated the development of a comprehensive strategy. Inclusion of these priorities and benchmarks sets the tone for future work.

2. *Use Science-based ecoregional assessments to identify conservation priorities. Two key features of this recommendation are the use of ecoregions as a statewide planning framework, and the development of conservation priorities. The development of conservation priorities is an essential component in developing a meaningful acquisition strategy.*
3. *Encourage state agencies to be more responsive to biodiversity conservation. This recommendation calls for agencies to continue participating in the development of a biodiversity strategy, as well as to incorporate important components into their land management planning.*

Preliminary Draft – May 4, 2005

4. Maintain a technical subcommittee to contribute to and report on data improvement priorities. *Of particular interest is the role of this subcommittee in developing “uniform definitions and mapping classifications.”*
 5. Develop good scientific data and mapping products for all levels of planning. *Self explanatory as an essential component of a coordinated strategy.*
- *Washington GAP Analysis*

[Not Complete]

- *DNR, WDFW & The Nature Conservancy – Ecoregional Assessments*

[Not Complete]

- *Statewide Recreational Planning*

There is currently no recreational counterpart to Washington’s biodiversity strategy. The State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), published by the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation, is a useful document for identifying recreational trends on a statewide scale. The document is also important for identifying deficiencies in recreational opportunities on a large scale, but it does not get to the level of specificity required for developing an acquisition plan.

As mentioned earlier in this report, the State Parks “Centennial 2013” vision establishes a general framework for developing a comprehensive strategy, but the vision is not presently linked with any other plans, such as SCORP, and there is no element of the vision that identifies geographic areas where efforts should be focused for acquisition.

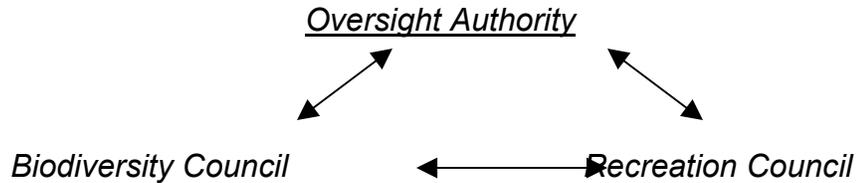
An aspect of a statewide recreation plan to consider for future planning is the interrelatedness of habitat and recreation planning at a basic level. Information acquired from the biodiversity assessment would also be useful as a base map for recreation planning. Again, referring back to the Florida Greenways Planning Project, the purpose of that effort was to identify habitat and recreation needs. To accomplish a similar objective in Washington State might require an expansion of the criteria used in the Washington biodiversity assessment to incorporate categories of habitat land that are capable of achieving multiple objectives, i.e. habitat conservation and recreation.

Implementation of a statewide recreation strategy would not have to be entirely incorporated into the efforts of the Biodiversity Council. In fact, from the standpoint of a final strategy that incorporates both habitat and recreation values,

Preliminary Draft – May 4, 2005

it might be more effective to have a Recreation Council as a counterpart to the Biodiversity Council. Though the two Councils would be expected to work together to complete a comprehensive habitat and recreation needs assessment, neither Council would be in a position to effect a bias into the development of assessment criteria or the planning process.

Making such Councils equal partners implies the need for an oversight authority to direct the work of the Councils:



Conclusions

Washington State is not unique in the challenges it faces regarding the state's management of habitat and recreation programs. States across the country have identified lack of coordination among agencies, and the absence of a long-term comprehensive plan for lands acquisition, as two areas needing further attention.

Improving communication and cooperation between agencies extends beyond organizational structure. California's The Resource Agency is the umbrella agency for all departments involved with habitat and recreation; yet California embarked on a comprehensive coordinated strategy, in part, because the various departments under The Resource Agency were not working together.

Agencies with differing missions, enormous challenges, and tight budgets, generally find it difficult to consistently see beyond their immediate issues and concerns. Beyond the immediate work demands that keep agencies focused on internal matters, the development of a statewide, interagency perspective is also a cultural challenge. This is in part an artifact of the mission and duties imparted to most of the agencies at the time they were created by the legislature. Though the agencies have been given statewide duties, historically they have not been tasked to take a certain type of statewide perspective, where they see one of their fundamental responsibilities as working with other agencies to accomplish a greater mission. Getting agencies to see their roles in this way, and to balance individual agency mandates against the need to sacrifice a certain amount of autonomy for the good of the state as a whole, is a cultural change in perspective that cannot be accomplished overnight.

Preliminary Draft – May 4, 2005

One approach by California and Florida has been to mandate accountability measures to ensure the agencies are working as closely together as possible. Second, Advisory Council's with authority have been employed, where the council provides guidance and a certain amount of oversight to the agencies, but is primarily answering to the governor and legislature.

At the same time, legislatures in the states who have implemented a more coordinated strategy have made it easier for the agencies (in the long run) by funding the programs and developing the tools necessary to make better decisions. The investment in comprehensive habitat and recreation land assessments, combined with GIS-mapping tools, has made it easier for agencies to communicate and cooperate because they have a common reference for prioritizing their decisions.

A Strategy for Coordination ...

...Or a Coordinated Approach...

...Or a Coordinated Strategy?

Earlier in this report recommendations were made that would facilitate the development of a coordinated acquisition program. The recommendations relating to a standardized acquisition process, including standardized tracking of acquisition data, and the use of a centralized database, would facilitate the type of information sharing that would be essential for agencies to begin communicating and coordinating their land acquisition decisions on an interagency, statewide scale. These are primarily short-term recommendations that can be implemented quickly, and should result in improved predictability and transparency of agency acquisition programs. These improvements would make it easier for the agencies, the public, and elected officials to know more about acquisitions and disposals, and the reasons behind them. However, these measures alone will not result in a comprehensive, needs-based approach. These short-term improvements are primarily process oriented. They are in essence a **strategy for coordination**. **Options 1 and 2** in the next section, which focus more or less on state agencies existing processes, represent strategies for coordination.

An intermediate approach, one which would implement the elements of the strategy for coordination, and then go a few steps farther, is what this report terms the **coordinated approach**. In a coordinated approach, the agencies would primarily harness *existing information* to develop a framework for habitat and recreation planning and acquisition. **Option 3** of the next section, which would call for additional planning, and possibly joint decision making between agencies, is in essence a coordinated approach to land acquisitions.

Under this approach, existing habitat³⁰ and recreation plans of the agencies be converted from plans that merely *identify*, for example, the known distributions of a particular species, into a plan for acquisition. To accomplish a prioritized statewide acquisition strategy, *all* the habitat plans, first within a particular agency, and then across agencies,

³⁰ Include any plans relating to fish, wildlife, and plant species.

Preliminary Draft – May 4, 2005

would need to be brought together. One can picture it as a series of overlays. As an example, imagine a map depicting the known ranges of sage grouse, pygmy rabbits, and every other species for which WDFW has written species recovery plans. It seems unlikely that the overlay of geographic information from 45 plans would not result in areas of overlap, where the acquisition of land would result in the protection of multiple species. From the standpoint of setting acquisition priorities, those areas with the greatest amount of overlap, representing the greatest number of species from a multitude of species recovery plans, would emerge as top priorities for acquisition.

While the coordinated approach would likely result in greater predictability, it would still fall short of a needs-based program. There would be no set of standard criteria for prioritizing future acquisitions, other than the fact that there may be areas of overlap in the maps produced by this exercise. An area with several overlaps might not be as important as an isolated area with an endangered species or a unique habitat. There is no guarantee that this approach would consistently lead to good conservation decisions, or a wise investment of funds, though it would likely be better than no approach at all.

To progress from a coordinated approach to a *coordinated strategy*, however, would be an exponential leap. Recommendations pertaining to the development of a coordinated strategy are presented in **Option 4** of the next section. A coordinated strategy, as we have seen from earlier examples, must strive to be comprehensive. And a comprehensive strategy cannot be limited to just a few agencies. A comprehensive strategy will seek coordination among all agencies and all other entities, private, non-governmental, and at all levels of government.

There are two questions to consider in deciding whether or not to ultimately pursue a coordinated strategy. First, “Do we know whether the current methods for determining when to acquire or dispose habitat and recreation land are resulting in the best possible outcomes?” Second, “If the answer to the first question is “no,” then is Washington State investing its money wisely?”