

2009 UPDATE ON STATUTORY TASKS

Action items in this update elaborate on those in the action plan.

Action Item 1 – Review agency land acquisition and disposal plans and policies to help ensure statewide coordination of habitat and recreation land acquisitions and disposals.

Focus: To compare existing agency acquisition and disposal authorities, objectives and tools and to promote better interagency coordination, implementation, and data-sharing. By evaluating agency approaches to acquisition and disposal planning, the lands group can better understand the purposes of agencies' land acquisition planning, whether agencies are doing redundant work, whether they are taking advantage of opportunities to work more cooperatively and efficiently, and how they are communicating with each other and partners.

Progress

- Developed a matrix of acquisition and disposal planning information from the Department of Natural Resources, Department of Fish and Wildlife, and State Parks and Recreation Commission to help compare approaches to acquisition and disposal activities.
- Gathered recommendations from state agencies, federal partners, and non-government organizations about acquisition and disposal planning at the April 29, 2009 work session.
- Posted work session summary, recommendations synthesis, panel presentations, and other documents on lands group Web site.

Action Item 2 – Produce an interagency, statewide, biennial forecast of habitat and recreation land acquisitions and disposal plans.

Focus: To collect and publish information about habitat and recreation lands that agencies plan to acquire in each upcoming biennium. Data will be collected and made available in June of even years to inform state and local planning processes. A detailed biennial forecast report will be posted online with a companion Geographic Information System (GIS)-based statewide biennial forecast map.

Progress

- Determined timelines for collecting and publishing information.
- Developed prototype method for collecting forecast information.
- Identified the information to include in the report and map.
- Determined format for report and map.
- Submitted forecast proposal to the lands group for approval.

- Coordinated with data-focused subgroup to build the forecast map (ongoing).

Action Item 3 – Establish procedures for publishing the biennial forecast of acquisition and disposal plans on Web sites or other centralized, easily accessible formats.

Focus: To make the biennial forecast and forecast map accessible to state agency planners, local governments, the public, and the Legislature.

Progress

- Reviewed options for publishing the forecast.
- Developed a prototype to address the short-term needs of the project, which will be vetted with stakeholders at the annual forum.
- Coordinated with the data-focused subgroup to develop the map (ongoing).
- Presented forecast map prototype at the first coordinating forum.
- Submitted proposal to the lands group for approval.

Action Item 4 – Develop and convene an annual forum for agencies to coordinate their near-term acquisition and disposal plans.

Focus: To create a platform for agencies to coordinate habitat and recreation acquisitions and disposals. Agencies will meet twice in each biennium. The odd-year forum will coordinate acquisition and disposal projects funded in the current biennium. The even-year forum will coordinate grant requests for the upcoming biennium.

Progress

- Submitted proposal to the lands group for approval.
- Hosted the first State Land Acquisition Coordinating Forum on July 16, 2009 to compare 2009-2011 funded projects.
- Identified coordination opportunities.
- Facilitated networking between the Department of Natural Resources, Department of Fish and Wildlife, and State Parks and Recreation Commission about identified coordination opportunities.
- Organized next, even-year forum to coordinate grant requests for the 2011-2013 biennium.

Action Item 5 – Develop a recommended method for interagency GIS-based documentation of habitat and recreation lands in cooperation with other state agencies using GIS.

Focus: To present habitat and recreation acquisition and disposal information in an accessible GIS-based format. The task will focus on using the annual forum and biennial forecast processes to identify agency and stakeholder GIS-based data needs, to standardize the data, and to present it in an accessible way (biennial forecast statewide and vicinity maps). After the first forecast is published, the focus will shift to developing recommended alternatives and strategies for coordinating GIS-based documentation of state agency land acquisitions and disposals. Finally, with remaining time, the work group will begin a pilot project to centralize acquisition and disposal data of one or two areas in the state. The mapping layers will be presented by land function rather than by ownership.

Progress

- Coordinated with other subgroups (ongoing) to identify the information that needs to be collected and other subgroup needs.
- Developed prototype of biennial forecast map.
- Collected suggestions for improving GIS-based documentation from forum participants.
- Conducted first data-focused workshop to refine work plan priorities, resources, and timelines required to complete this task (data focus workshops ongoing).

Action Item 6 – Develop recommendations for standardization of acquisition and disposal record keeping; including identifying a preferred process for centralizing acquisition data.

Focus: To recommend standards for keeping records of habitat and recreation land acquisitions and disposals. The task will use the annual forum and biennial forecast processes to identify what agencies and stakeholders want to see about acquisitions and disposals, and will collect, standardize, and report that data in the biennial forecast report and map. Next, the work group will develop recommendations for centralizing habitat and recreation land acquisition and disposal data. It will host a workshop to identify options and will consider other work group needs for monitoring the success of acquisitions, coordinating federally-funded acquisitions and disposals, and inventorying potential public lands into habitat and recreation land management status. Finally, with remaining time, the work group will begin a pilot project to standardize data for one or two areas in the state.

Progress

- Reviewed existing land classification methods, relative to land function, for state parks.
- Reached initial agreement among some agency representatives about what constitutes “habitat,” “recreation,” and “combined use” lands. Additional focus group sessions will continue vetting these land function definitions among agency technical leads and others.
- Coordinated with Work Group 1 to identify agency data needs.
- Identified key reporting needs and created a template for standardizing data that will be presented at the forum and incorporated into the biennial forecast.

- Coordinated with other subgroups to identify data needs (ongoing).

Action Item 7 – Develop an approach for monitoring the success of acquisitions.

Focus: To develop recommendations for creating a monitoring data system that addresses the following questions:

1. What was the original purpose of the acquisition?
2. Has the original purpose been fulfilled?
3. What efforts has the agency made to coordinate the acquisition and disposal with others?

Progress

- Narrowed scope of task to collecting short-term, non-qualitative data for agencies and others to use in making short- and long-term decisions.
- Identified information to collect from agencies to address monitoring questions,
- Identified two-step process for collecting monitoring information from agencies.
- Coordinated with data-focused subgroup to build plans for the data system (ongoing).

Action Item 8 – Identify and commence a dialogue with key state and federal partners to develop an inventory of potential public lands for transfer into habitat and recreation land management status.

Focus: To engage state and federal partners in a dialogue to develop an inventory of potential transfer lands including consideration of the Department of Natural Resources' trust land transfer process. The subgroup will first assess what information already is available about lands for potential transfer into habitat and recreation land management status.

Progress

- Assigned Department of Natural Resources, Department of Fish and Wildlife, and State Parks and Recreation Commission to identify key state and federal partners to contact.
- Developed timeline to propose inventory plan to the Department of Natural Resources by June 2010.

Action Item 9 – Review existing and proposed habitat conservation plans regularly to foster statewide coordination and save costs.

Focus: The scope of this task is limited to clarifying what Habitat Conservation Plans (HCP) are and not developing a full HCP monitoring process. The focus will be on working with federal partners to learn how HCPs are reviewed by federal agencies. The work group will examine existing procedures for agency coordination related to HCPs.

Progress

- Identified the scope of the task.

Action Item 10 – Revisit the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board’s and Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program’s planning requirements to determine whether coordination of state agency habitat and recreation land acquisition and disposal could be improved by modifying those requirements.

Focus: To examine how the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program planning requirements can be used to coordinate how agencies plan with consideration of local communities. The scope is focused on examining if the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program is installing the transparency and coordination the lands group legislation emphasizes.

Progress

- Identified why the Farmland Preservation Program is currently exempt from planning requirements.
- Examined other laws and rules that involve planning requirements.
- Concluded that a statutory change isn’t necessary to meet the intent of the legislation.
- Identified other ways planning requirements could be changed to encourage coordination and transparency.

Action Item 11 – Develop options for centralizing coordination of habitat and recreation land acquisition made with funds from federal grants. The advantages of the following options, at a minimum, must be developed:

- Requiring that agencies provide early communication on the status of federal grant applications to the board, the Office of Financial Management, or directly to the legislature.
- Establishing a centralized pass-through agency for federal funds, where individual agencies would be the primary applicants.

Focus: To develop options for ensuring federally funded acquisitions are coordinated consistently with state funded acquisitions. The 2005 Towards a Coordinated Strategy report states, “Because federally-funded acquisitions are the most likely to occur ‘outside’ state processes, such as the WWRP planning and approval process, keeping other state agencies, the Legislature and other interested parties apprised of federal grant proposals would improve the quality of planning and coordination between the agencies.”

Progress

- Coordinated with data-focused subgroup (ongoing).
- Developed some pros and cons for providing centralized, pass-through system for federally funded acquisitions.
- Developed some pros and cons of requiring agencies to provide early communication on federal grant status.
- Examined other methods for providing early communication.
- Identified key questions agencies need to answer in order to coordinate federally funded acquisitions.
- Identified information that should be included in the lands group data system.

Action Item 12 – To ensure timely completion of the duties assigned to the habitat and recreation lands coordinating group, the director shall submit yearly progress reports to the Office of Financial Management.

Focus: To submit comprehensive annual reports to the Office of Financial Management, apprising it of the progress of specific lands group tasks.

Progress

- Drafted, reviewed, and submitted a director-approved annual report in December 2008.
- Coordinated with other subgroups and documented work group meeting and event summaries to capture progress and ideas for reporting.
- Drafted 2009 annual report.
- Submitted 2009 annual report to lands group for approval.

Action Item 13 – Before January 1, 2012, the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board shall make a formal recommendation to the appropriate committees of the legislature as to whether the existence of the habitat and recreation lands coordinating group should be continued beyond July 31, 2012, and if so, whether any modifications to its enabling statute should be pursued. The board shall involve all participants in the habitat and recreation lands coordinating group when developing the recommendations.

Focus: To keep records of the progress of the lands group as to each task to identify specific recommendations for the final formal report.

Progress

- Coordinated with other subgroups and documented work group meeting and event summaries to capture progress and ideas for reporting.
- Presented progress reports to the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board to keep it apprised of lands group progress.
- Identified some specific recommendations from subgroups to include in the report.