

Habitat & Recreation Lands Coordinating Group

Date: June 12, 2018

Time: 9:00 AM – 12:30 PM

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

Attendees:

Cynthia Wilkerson	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
John Gamon	Washington Department of Natural Resources
Josh Giuntoli	Washington State Conservation Commission
Steve Hahn	Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission
Heather Kapust	Washington State Department of Ecology
Tom Bugert	The Nature Conservancy
Jeff Parsons	Puget Sound Partnership

Guests and Presenters:

Julie Sandberg	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Steve Hahn	Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission
John Gamon	Washington Department of Natural Resources

RCO Staff:

Wendy Brown	Washington Recreation and Conservation Office
Kaleen Cottingham	Washington Recreation and Conservation Office
Wyatt Lundquist	Washington Recreation and Conservation Office

Item 1: Welcome, Introductions, and Review of Agenda

Wendy Brown welcomed the members of the Habitat and Recreation Lands Coordinating Group (Lands group) and reviewed the agenda. This was followed by individual introductions and a quick update on the State Land Conservation and Acquisition Strategy.

Item 2: Forecast Forum – Agency Updates on Proposed Land Acquisitions and Disposals, 2019-21

Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO)

Ms. Brown introduced the agenda item and gave a brief update of current RCO work and our plan for the 2018-19 legislative session. RCO has officially commenced planning for the 2019 legislative session and 2019-21 budget. RCO will work with our two funding boards, Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) and Recreation and Conservation Funding Board (RCFB), as well as partner agencies to set budget request levels for all of our grant programs. Budget requests are due to the Office of Financial Management in early September 2018. In addition, RCO will likely submit some decision packages for increased operating funds related to funding the salmon recovery Lead Entities, the Governor’s Salmon Recovery Office, and an update to the Statewide Salmon Recovery Strategy.

Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission (State Parks) Projects

Steve Hahn reviewed land acquisition projects on behalf of State Parks, providing details about the acquired parcels such as local geography, history of a parcel, collaboration with sellers and landowners, and the purpose(s) for selecting a specific parcel. He highlighted properties including: Miller Peninsula State Park, Flaming Geyser State Park, Green River Gorge Conservation Area, Willipa Hills Trail State Park, Haley State Park, Joemma Beach State Park, Mount Spokane, Obstruction Pass State Park and two at Moran State Park. All proposed acquisitions would be fee simple acquisitions currently under private ownership. Eight sites remain undeveloped, and three currently have structures.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Projects

Julie Sandberg, Lands Division, presented projects on behalf of WDFW. She began with an overview of the agency's mission, strategic plan, and their land acquisition process.

Ms. Sandberg provided an overview of eleven acquisition projects. Each project summary included a description, a map of the proposed project area, relevance to the agency's mission, estimated amount of funding requested, the amount of funding granted, and a discussion. Projects from various areas were highlighted including: Seiku, Goat Mountain, Merrill Lake, Hoffstadt Hills, Chehalis River Floodplain, Grayland, Simcoe, South Sound Prairies, Oregon Spotted Frog Conservation Area, and the Cowiche Watershed.

Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Projects

John Gamon presented land acquisition projects on behalf of DNR. Mr. Gamon described DNR's acquisition process, largely driven by the priorities outlined in the agency's Natural Areas Plan.

Mr. Gamon provided an overview of acquisition projects. Each of the ten project summaries included a description, relevance to the agency's mission, a map of the proposed project area, the amount of funding requested, the amount of funding granted, and a discussion. Projects from various areas were highlighted, including: Lacamas Prairie Natural Area Preserve, Merrill Lake Natural Resources Conservation Area, Dabob Bay Natural Area, Mount Si Natural Resources Conservation Area, Stavis Natural Resources Conservation Area, Dewatto Natural Resources Conservation Area, Kennedy Creek Natural Area, Methow Rapids Natural Area Preserve, Mima Mounds Natural Area Preserve, and Steptoe Butte Natural Area Preserve.

BREAK 10:45 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Item 3: Member Updates

Ms. Brown stated that RCO's previously mentioned legislative budget proposals must first be approved by the funding boards before they can be moved forward. Our two funding boards will meet later this summer to adopt budget proposals. RCO also continues to monitor the budget development process at the Legislature and policy issues nationwide. Ms. Brown noted that the SRFB currently has one vacancy due to the recent passing of Board Member Nancy Biery.

Cynthia Wilkerson, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), provided an update on current department matters, including the hiring of a new WDFW director. Cynthia also re-iterated WDFW's current 30 million dollar budget shortfall and the past years efforts to find solutions and prepare for cuts. WDFW was mandated to work with a financial consultant to do a "0" based budget audit which found all funds are being spent accordingly. Cynthia also provided an update on her prescribed burn team, which has now been expanded to two teams.

Josh Giuntoli provided an update regarding the Washington State Conservation Commission's (WSCC). He shared information about their new farmland protection and acquisition program. Mr. Giuntoli said that the Conservation Commission would be going forward with a budget request to help with the new program. WSCC will be completing some long-term projects this year as funding comes together.

Steve Hahn provided an update on the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission (State Parks). They did not have much for a legislative update as they did not put forward a lot for requests last biennium. However, Mr. Hahn mentioned that State Parks has signed a lease with a contractor to renovate Saint Edwards Park in Seattle. This is something State Parks is very excited about and will be a great

community success when finished. He also mentioned they just transferred one of their parks in Port Townsend to a public entity for management and the park has improved substantially.

Heather Kapust provided a brief update on behalf of the Washington Department of Ecology. Ms. Kapust gave an update on current grant funding from the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program and mentioned that Washington State received 33% of the grants nationwide. Ms. Kapust also mentioned they have a new director of the Office of the Chehalis Basin, Andrea McNamara-Doyle.

Tom Bugert provided information on behalf of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) regarding the Community Forest Budget Proviso, PILT, floodplains by design & storm-water and a recent Outdoor Recreation Caucus (ORC) tour. The community forest budget proviso will help create a bridge between land trusts, environmental groups, public and DNR. Mr. Bugert also mentioned that the tour went quite well starting out in Lake Chelan and finishing in Wenatchee over the course of two days. The tour highlighted key areas in the region that bring economic activity into the community through recreation.

John Gamon shared that the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) continues to monitor bills that address conservation issues and recreational trust land, particularly trust land transfers. Mr. Gamon spoke specifically to natural areas when he was asked a question about DNR's land selection for those areas. Mr. Gamon mentioned DNR has a document he will provide the group called the Washington Natural Heritage Plan, which guides their land selection process.

Jeff Parsons provided an update regarding the Puget Sound Partnership's (PSP) budget and recent land acquisitions. PSP is also putting forward a request to create a Puget Sound Rapid Response Revolving Fund that would allow project grant applicants to frontload their grant dollars.

Item 4: Round Table Discussion

Wendy Brown, RCO, opened the discussion by suggesting the group return to their original statute which created the Habitat and Recreation Lands Coordination Group (HRLCG). Ms. Brown feels it is time for the group to re-evaluate their current work and compare it to their direction in statute to identify any areas of improvement or refocus. The group concurred, and Ms. Brown will add this to a future agenda. The board finalized by discussing new member recruitment and proposed recruiting Paul Jewell, Kittitas County Commissioner.

Meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

Next Quarterly Meeting:

September 18, 2018