

# Habitat & Recreation Lands Coordinating Group

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**Date:** February 23, 2017

**Time:** 9:00 AM – 11:30 AM

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

## **Attendees:**

Clay Sprague	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
Jeff Parsons	Puget Sound Partnership
Hannah Clark	Washington Association of Land Trusts

## **Guests and Presenters:**

Leslie Connelly	Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office
Eric Thomas	Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee
Rachel Murata	Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee
Suzanna Pratt	Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee
Lou-Anne Daoust-Filiatrault	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition

## **RCO Staff:**

Wendy Brown	Washington Recreation and Conservation Office
Kaleen Cottingham	Washington Recreation and Conservation Office
Wendy Loosle	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.

## **Item 2: Member Updates**

### **Round Table Updates: 2017 Legislative Session**

Ms. Brown provided information about bills of interest to the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) this legislative session. RCO submitted its largest salmon-related capital budget request to date at approximately \$230 million. The request for the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program is \$120 million. The total RCO capital budget request is approximately \$460 million. RCO continues to monitor the budget development process at the Legislature and policy issues nationwide.

Steve Hahn shared that the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission (State Parks) did not submit any agency request legislation this year, highlighting the Discover Pass and other bills of interest to the agency regarding land acquisitions and deferred maintenance policies. Mr. Hahn provided an update regarding the State Parks' central reservation system; State Parks is seeking a vendor to update the system. Additionally, State Parks is undertaking a large hiring effort across the state.

Josh Giuntoli provided an update regarding the Washington State Conservation Commission's (WSCC) agency request legislation and bills of interest. He shared information about land acquisitions of interest to the WSCC that have encountered some obstacles due to landowner issues.

Clay Sprague, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), shared that he is retiring and Cynthia Wilkerson will officially take his position on March 1. He provided an update on WDFW bills of interest and budget requests, highlighting networking efforts with stakeholders and legislators to support their agency's legislation. Mr. Sprague updated the group on the payment in lieu of taxes (PILT) funding request, noting that WDFW submitted a proposal to fully fund PILT; however, it was not supported in the Governor's budget.

Lou-Anne Daoust-Filiatrault shared information about the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition (WWRC) lobby day, well-attended by advocates, legislators, and the public. She also briefly updated the group on collaborations with the Washington Association of Land Trusts regarding conservation easement issues.

John Gamon provided an update regarding the Washington Department of Natural Resources' agency request legislation and bills of interest. The current agency focus is on fire issues and forest health; they are monitoring bills that address conservation issues, recreational trust land, seed certification, and Discover Pass updates. Additionally, DNR continues to monitor bills that may affect natural area preserves and habitat areas.

Jeff Parsons provided an update regarding the Puget Sound Partnership's (PSP) agency request legislation and bills of interest. One bill, which passed through the House, reduces the frequency of science plan and action plan updates to once every four years. Another bill would add funds to replace federal money that PSP no longer receives to support salmon recovery and monitoring. Salmon recovery programs continue to be a focus for PSP as the agency balances priorities and responding to stakeholders' needs. Mr. Parsons also highlighted current legislative session issues of interest, including a concept regarding conservation easements versus acquisitions, impacts of school levies, and bond capacity increases.

Hannah Clark updated the group on recent activities of the Washington Association of Land Trusts (WALT). The organization recently held a lobby day, February 22, focused strongly on recreation, conservation, and salmon recovery programs. The organization is also working to educate others on their position of the concept of conservation easements versus acquisitions. They continue to engage legislators and stakeholders to inform them with examples and of on-the-ground projects that may be affected.

Director Cottingham provided an update on Blanchard Mountain, of which RCO has 1.5 million to support efforts should they be called upon. She and Leslie Connelly also shared information about the development of a multiple benefits policy that will impact RCO grant projects and funding.

### **Item 3: Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee: WWRP and State Land Acquisition Study**

Eric Thomas, Rachel Murata, and Suzanna Pratt, Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC), presented an update regarding the JLARC study currently underway focused on measuring the outcomes of habitat and recreation acquisitions and regulations, a comparison of six east and west counties, and assessment of agencies' land stewardship programs. The main updates included the now published study questions and that six study counties have been selected: Asotin, Clark, Jefferson, King, Kittitas, and Okanogan. The team described their anticipated analysis process, including a description of the study questions and study areas. The team is set to present their findings to the committee in December 2017.

### **Item 4: State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) Update**

Leslie Connelly, RCO Policy Specialist, shared progress made to update the SCORP. RCO contracted with Eastern Washington University to develop a new online survey that was sent to the general public in January; the data collected will feed directly into the statewide plan. Ms. Connelly shared highlights

from the survey about trends, needs identified, user preferences and demand, and recreation activity types. She summarized updates to the 2017 survey, project budget, a timeline for implementation and report development, and process improvements. The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board will take part in the process by discussing the SCORP plan and strategy in May 2017, reviewing the draft plan in July 2017, and making a decision in October 2017.

#### **Item 5: WDFW/DNR/Parks Unified Plan**

Ms. Brown summarized the goals of the unified plan that is commissioned in response to the WWRP studied completed in late 2015. The contributing agencies identified four existing plans that will provide the basis for the combined effort to develop a strategy for acquisitions, identify overlap, and determine opportunities to coordinate. A draft plan will be available in June 2017 for the group to provide feedback.

#### **Closing**

Ms. Brown proposed a survey for the group that will help assess current meeting structure and support RCO in preparing for meetings and ensuring that the group is addressing topics of need and interest. She also informed members that, due to Senator Parlette's retirement, the agency is seeking a new legislative sponsor.

Ms. Loosle described a proposal for converting the biennial Acquisition Forecast Report to an online format using ArcGIS mapping tools. She is seeking feedback from current users to identify what elements of the report are most important, as well as volunteers to serve on a focus group that will provide guidance on new features as they are designed and implemented.

**Meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.**