
Public Lands Inventory

Status Report, December 2013



Abbreviations Used in the Report

Abbreviation	
BIA	Bureau of Indian Affairs
BLM	U.S. Bureau of Land Management
DNR	Washington Department of Natural Resources
ESSB	Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill
GIS	Geographic Information System
JLARC	Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee
Parcel Database	Washington State Parcel Database
Parks	Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission
RCO	Recreation and Conservation Office
UW-SEFS	University of Washington's School of Environmental and Forestry Sciences
WDFW	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Recreation and Conservation Office
PO Box 40917
Olympia WA 98504-0917

(360) 902-3000
TTD (360) 902-1996

www.rco.wa.gov



Summary

The Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) is required by the 2013–15 Capital Budget proviso (Section 3174 of ESSB 5035) to provide a centralized inventory of lands in Washington owned by federal, state and local governments, and by Native American tribes. This document constitutes the status report required in the budget proviso and due January 1, 2014.

In keeping with past public land inventories completed by RCO (under its prior name, the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation), this inventory is focused on natural resource and park lands. It will integrate data that currently exists in the 2012 Washington State Parcel Database, created and maintained by the University of Washington’s School of Environmental and Forestry Sciences, with updated information from state agency partners to meet the requirements of the proviso.

RCO has developed a project plan that incorporates a timeline, process, and partners to complete the inventory. RCO and its partners have agreed on key definitions, tasks, and the four main deliverables identified in the proviso. Executive guidance is provided by a steering committee chaired by RCO. This group includes executive managers from the state agencies integrally involved with the project. A technical advisory committee, also chaired by RCO, includes information technology and data management personnel from state agencies providing data for the project. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), the State Parks and Recreation Commission (Parks), and the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) are RCO’s partners working on the inventory update.

Portions of the RCO appropriation will support data review by state agencies, data integration tasks at the University of Washington, and the development of the inventory database and Web map application by a competitively selected contractor. Contracts and interagency agreements are in place to deliver the final product by July 1, 2014.

Background

Budget Proviso

The 2013–15 Capital Budget (Section 3174 of ESSB 5035) requires the RCO to provide a centralized inventory of lands in Washington owned by federal, state and local governments, and by Native American tribes (see the full text of the proviso in Appendix A).

This work is to be undertaken in collaboration with JLARC.

The proviso stipulates that the inventory must be web-accessible and include a Geographic Information System (GIS)-based interactive map. The inventory will allow users to find information about specific aspects of land ownership and to access summary information.

The inventory must include ownership, ownership type, location, and acreage. Lands will be categorized according to their principal use, including, but not limited to, developed recreation land, habitat and

passive recreation land, and revenue-generation uses. This will cover both intended use at the time of acquisition and current use. Acquisition costs and funding sources for lands acquired by state agencies will be included if acquired within the last ten years.

In addition, RCO will develop recommendations for standardizing biennial acquisition and disposal recordkeeping and identify a preferred process for centralizing acquisition data.

The proviso requires RCO to finalize the web-accessible interactive map and provide a final report to the Legislature by July 1, 2014.

Joint Legislative and Audit Review Committee Review

The public land inventory is a key component for a three-part review of public lands that the JLARC is required to complete. (Section 1001, ESSB 5035, 2013, the 2013-15 Capital Budget. See Appendix B). The JLARC review is due December 1, 2014.

The review includes: 1) the operating budget impacts of recreation and habitat land acquisitions by WDFW, DNR, and Parks over the past ten years; 2) the estimated economic benefits and costs from acquisitions of recreation and habitat lands; and 3) an analysis of differences in public land ownership among Washington's thirty-nine counties.

The public land inventory will provide key information for the JLARC review, especially for part one. Part one requires a review of state agency recreation and habitat land acquisitions, including location, number of acres, acquisition price, intended use at the time of acquisition, current use, and the sources of funding.

Previous Public Lands Inventories

The RCO, when it was known as the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation (IAC), provided the Legislature with a Public and Tribal Lands Inventory in 1999 and a Coordination Strategy for Habitat and Recreation Land Acquisition in 2005. These documents are available at links provided in Appendix D.

The RCO has the tabular public land database from the 1999 inventory; however, neither of the previous reports was developed in a format that is searchable or interactive. Therefore, this new approach will not technically be an update to that earlier data, but instead will rely primarily on 2012 data collected by the University of Washington.

Assumptions and Approach

Focused on natural resource and park lands

The proviso does not identify which public and tribal lands to include in the inventory, except that it specifically names principal use of these lands including, but not limited to, developed recreation land, habitat and passive recreation land, and revenue-generation use.

The proviso states that the RCO must update the public lands inventory, and past inventories focused on natural resource and park lands. For these two reasons, and because of the available time and funding,

this inventory will include natural resource and park lands owned by federal, state, and local governments, and by Native American tribes.

Using currently existing data

The RCO has made a key decision to rely on data that currently exists rather than spending time and money collecting the information anew. Integrating existing data sources is the most cost-effective and time-efficient method for completing the inventory.

A key resource is the existing Washington State Parcel Database, and it will be the basis of ownership and land use data to build the Public Lands Inventory. The University of Washington's School of Environmental and Forest Sciences (UW-SEFS), along with a consortium of other organizations, has developed the Washington State Parcel Database (Parcel Database) as a source of information on county tax parcels and state and federal ownership parcels (see <http://depts.washington.edu/wagis/projects/parcels/index.php>).

UW-SEFS collects and distributes parcel data from many sources and formats and has developed a technical process to normalize that data into a common format. As part of its research, UW-SEFS has characterized land ownership patterns across the state. UW-SEFS has produced the Parcel Database for 2007, 2009, 2010, and 2012. The 2012 version of the Parcel Database will form the basis of the Public Lands Inventory.

Lands included

The proviso requires the inventory to include lands owned by federal, state, local government, and tribal entities.

Federal

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) maintains ownership records for agencies managing federal lands. The data cover natural resource and park lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and others. The BLM currently contributes these data to the Parcel Database.

In the interests of time and cost efficiency, the RCO is not asking the BLM to update this information and will use information supplied to the 2012 Parcel Database.

State

Washington State has several agencies that own and manage natural resource and park lands. These agencies operate with different missions and policies for acquiring and disposing of state lands. The WDFW manages wildlife areas, water access sites, fish hatcheries, and game farms. The DNR manages state forest and trust lands, aquatic lands, natural resource conservation areas, and natural area preserves. Parks manages state parks lands.

State agencies will update the information in the 2012 Parcel Database so that the state lands data included in Public Lands Inventory will be up-to-date as of 2013. A portion of the RCO appropriation is supporting this review.

For the data on state agency acquisition costs and funding sources for the last ten years, the Public Lands Inventory will use data managed by the RCO. The RCO is the state's primary grant administrator for public recreation and habitat land acquisitions.¹ The RCO manages a tabular and geographic database and application system (PRISM) that includes information about grant-funded public land acquisition projects, including owner, date, cost, acreage, and intended use (www.rco.wa.gov/prism_app/about_prism.shtml). The PRISM database will provide key information for this effort.

Local Government

Washington State has 39 counties and over 280 cities and towns. The RCO is relying on county tax parcel data already compiled by the UW-SEFS for the 2012 Parcel Database.

To maximize time and cost efficiency, the RCO is not asking counties to provide updates.

Tribal

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) collects ownership records of tribal lands from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), and it contributes these data to the Parcel Database. These data include trust land boundaries, which are not delineated by parcel, but not other lands owned by tribes.

To maximize time and cost efficiency, the RCO is not asking the BLM, the BIA, or individual tribes to provide additional information and will use information from the 2012 Parcel Database.

Lands not included

As indicated above, this inventory update will focus on public lands that are considered natural resource or park lands. Including other land ownership categories, such as transportation, corrections, or higher education facilities would require more time and funds than are available through the proviso.

For some lands, data may not exist or may not be readily accessible. This is especially a risk for local government and tribal lands. In addition, some lands may not be included because data are incomplete or because executives and data managers have concerns about the potential release of private information. The final report will include recommendations for collection and maintenance of accurate data of these lands.

Opportunities and Risks

Updating the public lands inventory provides several opportunities for the state. This tool will be useful for helping the Legislature and the public decide where investments in land should be directed. It also will help state land managing agencies prioritize future land purchases.

¹ The WDFW, DNR and Department of Ecology also administer grant funds for habitat lands acquisition.

A current inventory will provide consolidated data for public lands information including specific areas and summary information. The project will afford better coordination among state agencies and other jurisdictions (e.g., counties and federal agencies) that own public land.

The development of this project has been designed to inform the work of the Habitat and Recreation Lands Coordinating Group by including a GIS-layer to show proposed future land acquisitions and disposals.

The completed public lands inventory will include recommendations to support biennial data collection and reporting and provide additional information on which policy makers may base decisions.

The project includes several risks. Any inventory of this type is only as good as the data it integrates, and data integration from multiple sources is complicated. Data may not exist, or may not be readily accessible (especially a risk for local, county, and tribal lands), and data may be incomplete. County executives and data managers have concerns about the potential release of private information. Finally, the timeline for this project is short.

Project Implementation

RCO developed a project plan that incorporates a timeline, process, and partners to complete the inventory. The Office of the Chief Information Officers vetted the approach and the RCO received permission to proceed.

RCO began bringing partners together to develop the approach to the project beginning in July 2013 (see Appendix C for list of participants). RCO and its partners are working to develop the additional public land ownership attributes required by the Legislature for inclusion in the inventory.

WDFW and DNR currently contribute ownership parcel data to the Parcel Database. Since the Parcel Database is not updated annually, RCO has developed interagency agreements with WDFW, DNR, and Parks for reviewing and updating their current ownership information into the Parcel Database to meet the requirements of the budget proviso.

Steering Committee

Executive guidance is provided by a steering committee chaired by RCO. This group includes executive managers from the state agencies integrally involved with the project: WDFW, DNR, JLARC, and Parks.

Technical Advisory Committee

Technical guidance is provided by a technical advisory committee chaired by RCO. This group includes IT and data management personnel from state agencies providing data for the project: UW-SEFS, WDFW, DNR, JLARC, and Parks.

UW-SEFS (Contractor)

Through the existing cooperative agreement between DNR and the University of Washington, the RCO is supporting improvements to the Washington State Parcel Database so that it can be used for this

project. Staff from UW-SEFS is integrating ownership data provided by state land management agencies into a 2013 state subset of the Washington State Parcel Database.

Developer: GeoEngineers (Contractor)

After a competitive selection process, RCO has contracted with GeoEngineers to be the Web developer for this project. The developer is integrating data from the sources identified above (RCO grant database, agencies' own acquisition information, and the Washington State Parcel Database) and developing a Web map application to show ownership, use, and acquisition patterns, and to tabulate those patterns graphically. The application will be GIS-based and interactive.

In addition, the developer will include layers of proposed future land acquisition sites for display on the Web map application. The information will incorporate future biennial State Land Acquisition Forecast report information compiled for the Habitat and Recreation Lands Coordinating Group.

Deliverables

RCO and its partners have agreed on key definitions, tasks, and the four main deliverables identified in the proviso.

Deliverable 1: Updated Centralized GIS Inventory of Public Lands in Washington

Provide an updated, centralized inventory of lands in Washington owned by federal, state and local governments, and by Native American tribes.

- Extract of acquisition grant data from PRISM database (RCO)
- Inventory of holdings with relevant attributes and 2013 updates (WDFW, DNR, Parks)
- Inventory of management areas (WDFW, DNR, Parks)
- Washington State parcel database with public land ownership attributes and 2013 federal and state updates (UW-SEFS)
- Public land ownership attributes (Developer: GeoEngineers)
- Public lands inventory database (Developer: GeoEngineers)
- Web map application (Developer: GeoEngineers)

Deliverable 2: Develop Recommendations for a Public Lands Inventory Database and Supporting Biennial Acquisition/Disposal Updates

Throughout the development of the GIS inventory of Washington's public lands (deliverable 1), the RCO and project partners will review the process to develop recommendations on how best to standardize public lands acquisition and disposal recordkeeping. This will help identify a preferred process for efficiently centralizing acquisition data so that it can be updated biennially.

- Public lands inventory recommendations (RCO, WDFW, DNR, Parks, UW-SEFS)
- State land acquisition forecast recommendations (RCO, WDFW, DNR, Parks, UW-SEFS)
- Technical review of public lands inventory recommendations (Developer: GeoEngineers)
- Technical review of state land acquisition forecast recommendations (Developer: GeoEngineers)
- Preliminary state land acquisition forecast database (Developer: GeoEngineers)

Deliverable 3: Status Report

This document constitutes the interim status report, due January 1, 2014.

Deliverable 4: Final Report

Due July 1, 2014. The final report, along with the launching of the interactive Web-site, will conclude this project.

What's next?

All the pieces are now in place for the key steps of data review and integration. This will be followed by creation of the GIS-based and interactive Web map application to show ownership, use, and acquisition patterns. The application will be GIS-based and interactive, which will allow comprehensive data analysis.

The public lands inventory will show a statewide picture of what habitat and recreation land the state owns, including how much money has gone toward acquisitions over the past 10 years. The tool will be useful for helping the Legislature and the public decide where investments in land should be directed. It also will help state land managing agencies prioritize future land purchases, and the information will be used by JLARC to complete the economic reviews.

In addition to the Web site containing the inventory, the project will culminate in a final report to the Legislature.

Appendix A: RCO proviso

Sec. 3174. FOR THE RECREATION AND CONSERVATION FUNDING BOARD

Public Lands Inventory

The appropriation in this section is subject to the following conditions and limitations: The recreation and conservation office, in collaboration with the joint legislative audit and review committee, shall:

- 1) Provide an updated, centralized inventory of lands in Washington owned by federal, state, and local governments, and by Native American tribes.
 - a) The inventory must be in a Web-accessible format, including a GIS-based interactive map that allows users to find out information about specific areas. The data must be standardized to allow summary information to be accessible.
 - b) The inventory must include the following information:
 - (i) Ownership (federal; state, by state agency; local government; and tribal);
 - (ii) Ownership type (fee simple or easements);
 - (iii) Location;
 - (iv) Acreage;
 - (v) Principal use of these lands (intended use at the time of acquisition and current use) including, but not limited to, developed recreation land, habitat and passive recreation land, and revenue-generation uses; and
 - (vi) Acquisition costs if acquired by state agencies over the last ten years, including acquisition funding sources.
- 2) Develop recommendations for standardization of acquisition and disposal recordkeeping on a biennial basis, including identifying a preferred process for centralizing acquisition data.
- 3) Submit a status report on the inventory to the appropriate committees of the legislature by January 1, 2014, and a final report by July 1, 2014.

Appropriation:

State Building Construction Account—State	\$200,000
Prior Biennia (Expenditures)	\$0
Future Biennia (Projected Costs)	\$0
TOTAL	\$200,000

Appendix B: JLARC proviso

Sec. 1001. FOR THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE AUDIT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

Review of Public Lands

The appropriation in this section is subject to the following conditions and limitation: The appropriation is provided solely for a three part study of public recreation and habitat lands. Parts two and three of the study must be conducted under contract with a qualified economist at one of Washington's public universities.

- 1) Part one of the study is a review of the operating budget impacts of recreation and habitat land acquisitions by the departments of fish and wildlife, natural resources, and by the state parks and recreation commission over the past ten years. The review must describe the separate acquisitions by each agency, including the location, number of acres, the acquisition price, a general description of the land, the intended use of the land at the time of acquisition, and the source or sources of funding for the acquisition. The report must also identify the current use of the land and whether the current use matches the intended use at the time of acquisition. The review must estimate the current biennial operating budget costs to manage the land acquired and what the estimated capital and operating budget costs are to put the land to its intended use if that has not yet occurred.
- 2) Part two of the study is a review of estimated economic benefits and costs from acquisitions of recreation and habitat lands. The study must review and summarize the available literature describing and quantifying the economic benefits and costs of public recreation and habitat lands. The study must evaluate the reliability and validity of measures used by federal and state agencies to estimate the economic benefits of recreation and habitat lands.
- 3) Part three of the study is an analysis of differences in public land ownership among Washington's thirty-nine counties. The analysis must report the number of acres and percentage of total acres in each county owned by federal, state, tribal and local governmental agencies by the following categories:
 - a) Developed recreation land,
 - b) Habitat and passive recreation land,
 - c) Timber lands,
 - d) Agricultural lands, and
 - e) Other public lands.

The analysis must evaluate the hypothesis that higher amounts or percentages of acres of public lands in the categories above are detrimental to measures of economic vitality in the county. Measures of economic vitality should include taxable sales per capita, median household income, median per capita income, annual employment growth, and unemployment rate. The study should control for other relevant location related factors including elevation, population size and density, urban or rural status,

and proximity to major transportation hubs such as commercial airports and seaports. The study should include a review and compilation of literature and studies on this topic.

(4) The report must be submitted to the appropriate policy and fiscal committees of the legislature by December 1, 2014.

Appropriation:

State Building Construction Account—State	\$320,000
Prior Biennia (Expenditures)	\$0
Future Biennia (Projected Costs)	\$0
TOTAL	\$320,000

Appendix C: Participants

Steering Committee

Agency	Name		Title
RCO	Kaleen	Cottingham	Director
	Nona	Snell	Policy Director
	Sarah	Gage	Policy and Special Projects Manager
	Greg	Tudor	IT Manager
WDFW	Joe	Stohr	Director of Operations
	Clay	Sprague	Lands Manager
DNR	Lenny	Young	Executive Management Supervisor
	Jed	Herman	Conservation, Recreation & Transactions Division Manager
JLARC	Keenan	Konopaski	Legislative Auditor
	John	Woolley	Deputy Legislative Auditor
PARKS	Don	Hoch	Director
	Steve	Hahn	Lands Program Manager

Technical Advisory Committee

Agency	Name		Title
RCO	Greg	Tudor	Information Technology Manager
	Sarah	Gage	Policy and Special Projects Manager
WDFW	Shelly	Solomon	Information Technology Specialist
	Elyse	Kane	Property and Acquisition Specialist
	Brian	Hall	Information Technology Specialist
DNR	Lowell	Thacker	Information Technologist
PARKS	Kathryn	Scott	Information Technology Specialist
UW-SEFS	Luke	Rogers	Research Scientist

Appendix D: Previous Reports

2001 Public Lands Inventory

- [The 1999 Public and Tribal Lands Inventory \(2001\)](http://www.rco.wa.gov/documents/plip/FinalReport.pdf)
<http://www.rco.wa.gov/documents/plip/FinalReport.pdf>
- [Inventory Data Report](http://www.rco.wa.gov/documents/plip/InventoryDataReport.pdf) (Appendix to The 1999 Public and Tribal Lands Inventory)
<http://www.rco.wa.gov/documents/plip/InventoryDataReport.pdf>
- [Landowners Reporting Acreage](http://www.rco.wa.gov/documents/plip/landowner_reporting.pdf) (Appendix to The 1999 Public and Tribal Lands Inventory)
http://www.rco.wa.gov/documents/plip/landowner_reporting.pdf
- [County Profiles](http://www.rco.wa.gov/documents/plip/County_Profiles.pdf) (pages B27–B66 of Inventory Data Report)
http://www.rco.wa.gov/documents/plip/County_Profiles.pdf

2005 Report

- [Toward a Coordination Strategy for Habitat and Recreation Land Acquisitions in Washington State](http://www.rco.wa.gov/documents/hrlcg/LandsFinal.pdf) (2005)
<http://www.rco.wa.gov/documents/hrlcg/LandsFinal.pdf>
- [Appendices](http://www.rco.wa.gov/documents/hrlcg/TowardCoordStrategyAppedices.pdf) to Toward a Coordination Strategy for Habitat and Recreation Land Acquisitions in Washington State (2005)
<http://www.rco.wa.gov/documents/hrlcg/TowardCoordStrategyAppedices.pdf>