

Manual 10b

Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program

Habitat Conservation Account

February 2024

Table of Contents

Section 1: Introduction	6
The Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program	6
Recreation and Conservation Funding Board.....	8
Who Makes Decisions.....	8
Where to Get Information.....	10
Grant Process and Timeline	10
Time Limits and Extensions.....	14
Section 2: Policies.....	17
Categories and Grants Offered.....	17
Eligible Applicants.....	21
Eligible Project Types	24
Eligible Project Activities.....	28
Environmental Requirements.....	31
Property Requirements	35
Other Requirements and Things to Know.....	38
Livestock Grazing.....	42
Public Access	42
Project Area Stewardship and Ongoing Obligations.....	45
Section 3: Money Matters.....	46
Grant Limits.....	46
Matching Share	48
Types of Match.....	51
Federal Rules	52
Records and Reimbursements.....	53
Section 4: Project Evaluation	54
How Project Evaluation Works	54
Evaluation Criteria	58
Appendix A: Species and Communities with Special Status.....	95

At a Glance

Critical Habitat

Purpose	The program provides grants to conserve areas important for the protection, management, or public enjoyment of wildlife
Who may apply?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local agencies • Federally recognized Native American tribes • Nonprofit nature conservancy organizations • State agencies
When are applications due?	May 1, 2024
When are grants awarded?	June 2025 estimated
What types of projects are eligible?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquisition • Development • Combination acquisition and development
What are the grant limits?	None
What must the project sponsor contribute?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local agencies, Native American tribes, and nonprofit nature conservancies: 50 percent • State agencies: No match required
Is a plan required?	A comprehensive habitat conservation plan is needed to apply. See <i>Manual 2: Planning Policies and Guidelines</i> . Plan is due March 1, 2024.
How is the project evaluated?	An advisory committee hears an in-person, virtual presentation and scores the project.
What's new this year?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added a cost increase policy for exceptional economic times. • Included in this manual existing rules about time limits, extensions, inspections, acknowledgments, and signs.

Natural Areas

Purpose	The program provides grants to conserve areas that have retained their natural character and are important in preserving rare or vanishing wildlife, geological, natural, historical, or similar features of scientific or educational value.
Who may apply?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonprofit nature conservancy organizations • State agencies
When are applications due?	May 1, 2024
When are grants awarded?	June 2025 estimated
What types of projects are eligible?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquisition • Development • Combination acquisition and development
What are the grant limits?	None
What must the project sponsor contribute?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonprofit nature conservancies: 50 percent • State agencies: No match required
Is a plan required?	You need a comprehensive habitat conservation plan to apply. See <i>Manual 2: Planning Policies and Guidelines</i> . Plans are due March 1, 2024.
How is the project evaluated?	An advisory committee evaluates a written application and scores the project.
What's new this year?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added a cost increase policy for exceptional economic times. • Included in this manual existing rules about time limits, extensions, inspections, acknowledgments, and signs.

Riparian Protection

Purpose	The program provides grants to conserve land along the water, as well as submerged land such as streambeds, which can provide functional habitat for salmon and other wildlife
Who may apply?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local agencies • Federally recognized Native American tribes • Nonprofit nature conservancy organizations • Salmon recovery lead entities • State agencies
When are applications due?	May 1, 2024
When are grants awarded?	June 2025 estimated
What types of projects are eligible?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquisition • Combination acquisition and development or combination acquisition, development, and restoration
What are the grant limits?	None
What must the project sponsor contribute?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local agencies, Native American tribes, salmon recovery lead entities, and nonprofit nature conservancies: 50 percent • State agencies: No match required
Is a plan required?	A comprehensive habitat conservation plan is needed to apply. See <i>Manual 2: Planning Policies and Guidelines</i> . The plan is due March 1, 2024.
How is the project evaluated?	An advisory committee hears an in-person, virtual presentation and scores the project.
What's new this year?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added a cost increase policy for exceptional economic times. • Included in this manual existing rules about time limits, extensions, inspections, acknowledgments, and signs.

State Lands Restoration and Enhancement

Purpose	The program provides grants to restore or enhance land owned by the State of Washington or held in trust by the State.
Who may apply?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State Department of Fish and Wildlife • State Department of Natural Resources • State Parks and Recreation Commission
When are applications due?	May 1, 2024
When are grants awarded?	June 2025 estimated
What types of projects are eligible?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restoration • Enhancement
What are the grant limits?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single site project: \$25,000-\$1 million • Multisite project: \$25,000-\$500,000
What must the project sponsor contribute?	No match required
Is a plan required?	A comprehensive habitat conservation plan is needed to apply. See <i>Manual 2: Planning Policies and Guidelines</i> . The plan is due March 1, 2024.
How is the project evaluated?	An advisory committee evaluates a written application and scores the project.
What's new this year?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added a cost increase policy for exceptional economic times. • Included in this manual existing rules about time limits, extensions, inspections, acknowledgments, and signs.

Urban Wildlife Habitat

Purpose	The program provides grants to conserve areas near cities important for the protection or public enjoyment of wildlife
Who may apply?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local agencies • Federally recognized Native American tribes • Nonprofit nature conservancy organizations • State agencies
When are applications due?	May 1, 2024
When are grants awarded?	June 2025 estimated
What types of projects are eligible?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquisition • Development • Combination acquisition and development
What are the grant limits?	None
What must the project sponsor contribute?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local agencies, Native American tribes, and nonprofit nature conservancies: 50 percent • State agencies: No match required
Is a plan required?	A comprehensive habitat conservation plan is needed to apply. See <i>Manual 2: Planning Policies and Guidelines</i> . The plan is due March 1, 2024.
How is the project evaluated?	An advisory committee hears an in-person, virtual presentation and scores the project.
What's new this year?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added a cost increase policy for exceptional economic times. • Included in this manual existing rules about time limits, extensions, inspections, acknowledgments, and signs.

Section 1: Introduction

This section covers the following:

- ✓ The Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program
- ✓ Recreation and Conservation Funding Board
- ✓ Who makes decisions
- ✓ Where to get information
- ✓ Grant process and timeline
- ✓ Time limits and extensions

The Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program

The Washington State Legislature created the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP)¹ in 1990 to accomplish two goals: acquire valuable recreation and habitat lands before they were lost to other uses and develop recreation areas for a growing population.

Today, WWRP provides funding for a broad range of projects that conserve wildlife habitat and working farms and forests, buy land for parks and trails, and develop outdoor recreational facilities. This landmark legislation and subsequent funding have come about through the support of the Governor, Legislature, and groups such as the many organizations comprising the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition.

Accounts and Categories

State law² divides WWRP funding into three accounts, which are further divided into categories with unique funding priorities, shown below.

¹Enabling legislation is in Revised Code of Washington 79A.15

²Revised Code of Washington 79A.15

Farm and Forest Account	10 percent
• Farmland Preservation Category	90 percent
• Forestland Preservation Category	10 percent
Habitat Conservation Account	45 percent
• Critical Habitat Category	35 percent
• Natural Areas Category	25 percent
• Riparian Protection Category	15 percent
• State Lands Restoration and Enhancement Category	10 percent ³
• Urban Wildlife Habitat Category	15 percent ⁴
Outdoor Recreation Account	45 percent
• Local Parks Category	30 percent ⁵
• State Lands Development and Renovation Category	10 percent ⁶
• State Parks Category	30 percent ⁷
• Trails Category	20 percent
• Water Access Category	10 percent ⁸

Each WWRP account and category receives a specified percentage of the money appropriated by the Legislature. While state law requires that these minimum percentages be met over the life of the program, it is the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board's intent generally to meet them, by category, each biennium. The board

³or \$3 million, whichever is less

⁴Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2019-27: 45 percent to local agencies, Native American tribes, and nonprofit organizations; 45 percent to state agencies; 10 percent to fully fund partially funded local agency, Native American tribe, and nonprofit organizations; then fully fund partially funded state agency projects, and apply any remaining amount to the next highest ranked project(s), regardless of sponsor.

⁵Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2016-52: 40 percent for acquisition costs and 60 percent for development costs.

⁶or \$3 million, whichever is less

⁷Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2016-52: 50 percent for acquisition costs and 50 percent for development costs.

⁸75 percent must be acquisition costs. Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.050 (2)(d)

may forego the statutory minimums in any one biennium, should circumstances warrant. The board's intent is to award grants to projects meeting the greatest need and with the potential to achieve the greatest benefit.

See section 2 for more details about each category.

Recreation and Conservation Funding Board

WWRP is administered by the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board, which is a governor-appointed board composed of five citizens and the directors (or designees) of three state agencies—Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Natural Resources, and Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission.

The Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) supports the board. RCO is a small state agency that manages multiple grant programs to create outdoor recreation opportunities, protect the best of the state's wildlife habitat and working lands, and help return salmon and orca from near extinction.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board recognizes its obligation to ensure its programs and policies are equitable and inclusive and has taken steps to address disparities. The board has resolved to continue to examine its policies and reach out to diverse partners to ensure that Washington's investments are not only for a few but reflect the board's values of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Read the board's [Resolution 2020-35](#) in full online.

Manual Authority

This manual is created under the authority granted to the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board in WWRP's enabling legislation and Revised Codes of Washington 79A.15. and 79A.25. It reflects the specific statutory requirements of Revised Code of Washington 79A.15, Title 286 of the Washington Administrative Code, and the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board's policies.

Who Makes Decisions

Staff Decisions

Staff will review grant applications to ensure they are complete, the projects are eligible to compete, the grant applicants are eligible to apply, and the match is certified. Staff also score objective evaluation criteria, such as those relating to Growth Management Act compliance. Finally, staff make routine grant management decisions about billings, reports, minor scope changes, short time extensions, and more.

Advisory Committee Decisions

Advisory committees evaluate grant applications and score them to create ranked lists of projects for the funding board to consider. Advisory committees also review proposed program policies and criteria changes, and in some cases make recommendations to the funding board or director about how funding should be distributed.

Director Decisions

The RCO director, or designee, makes many project decisions based on rules and board policies. The decisions range from authorizing payments, to approving cost increases, to approving payment of charges in excess of lower bids, to terminating projects.

A project sponsor may request that the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board reconsider a decision made by the director. To request reconsideration, the project sponsor must send a letter to the board chair at least sixty calendar days before a board meeting. The request is added to the board's meeting agenda and the project sponsor then may address the board at the meeting. The board's decision is final.

Board Decisions

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board makes the final decisions for funding, policies, and project changes, although some decisions it has delegated to the agency director.

Not a Public Hearings Board⁹

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board is not a public hearings board and does not decide land-use issues. To the extent possible, each project proposal should demonstrate adequate public notification and review and have the support of the public body applying for the grant.

More detailed information about board and director decisions is available in *Manual 3: Acquisition Projects*, *Manual 4: Development Projects*, and *Manual 5: Restoration Projects*.

⁹Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2006-13b

Where to Get Information

Recreation and Conservation Office
Natural Resources Building
1111 Washington Street
Olympia, WA 98501
[Email](#)

Telephone: (360) 902-3000
FAX: (360) 902-3026
Hearing Impaired Relay Service: Call 711
[Website](#)

Mailing Address

PO Box 40917
Olympia, WA 98504-0917

RCO grants managers are available to answer questions about this manual and grant programs. Please feel free to call. In addition, manuals, forms, and most other materials referenced in this manual are available on RCO's website on the [WWRP grant page](#).

Other Grant Manuals Needed

The manuals below provide additional information for grants and are available on the [grant manual page](#) of the RCO website. Each can be made available in an alternative format.

- Manual 2: Planning Policies and Guidelines
- Manual 3: Acquisition Projects
- Manual 4: Development Projects
- Manual 5: Restoration Projects
- Manual 7: Long-Term Obligations
- Manual 8: Reimbursements

Grant Process and Timeline

RCO offers grants in even-numbered years, in conjunction with the state budget. The grant process, from application to grant award, spans eighteen months, and is outlined below. While the order of the steps in this process remains consistent, visit the RCO website for precise dates.

Even-Numbered Years

Webinars. RCO conducts webinars (an online meeting) in the winter or early spring to provide information about the grant programs offered that year.

Planning Deadline. March 1 is the planning deadline for all programs. This ensures the applicant completes the planning process before applying for a grant. Agencies that apply for grants in the same year that their planning eligibility expires must ensure that their planning eligibility extends through the board meeting in which the projects first are considered.

RCO's website has a list of [eligible applicants](#). To verify or establish eligibility for a specific grant program, contact RCO's planning specialist.

Entering Applications. RCO strongly encourages the applicant to start the online application early. PRISM Online usually opens by March 1.

To enter an application, the applicant must sign up for a [SecureAccess Washington](#) account and submit a [PRISM account form](#). When using either of these databases for the first time, the applicant must complete a double sign-in.

1. Using SecureAccess Washington credentials, login to PRISM.
2. When redirected to the SecureAccess login page, enter the SecureAccess credentials.
3. When redirected to a one-time PRISM sign-in page, enter the PRISM login credentials.
4. The applicant will be directed back to the PRSM home page.

This double sign-in will happen only once. After completing the double sign-in, the applicant will use SecureAccess Washington credentials to log into PRISM.

To begin an application, log into PRISM Online and select the + *New Application* button to enter grant application information. RCO uses this information to assign an outdoor grants manager. This manager guides the applicant through the process, reviews application materials, helps determine whether a proposal is eligible, and may visit the project site to discuss site-specific details. Visit RCO's website to learn more about [PRISM's components and technical requirements](#).

Applications Due. Applications typically are due in early May of even-numbered years. The application includes the data entered into PRISM and all required attachments. The applicant should *submit* the application before the deadline. *The Check Application for Errors* button on the *Submit Application* screen will indicate which pages are incomplete. An incomplete application and an application received after the deadline will be rejected unless RCO's director has approved a late submission in advance. Follow the requirements in the Applicant's To-Do List online.

Technical Reviews. The applicant is encouraged to attend a technical review meeting to present the project virtually to a WWRP advisory committee and RCO staff. Staff review

the project to ensure it is eligible, identify any issues of concern, and provide feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal. The applicant makes an oral presentation, illustrated with maps, graphics, and photographs using PowerPoint.® Grants managers will review the application also and send comments to the applicant. The applicant then may make changes to improve the project, if needed. The applicant must complete all changes and resubmit the application by the technical completion deadline.

Note: RCO uses a written review process for the Natural Areas and State Lands Restoration and Enhancement Categories.

Technical Completion Deadline. RCO establishes a technical completion deadline by which the application must be in the final form. After this date, the applicant will not be able to make any further changes. RCO will score applicable evaluation criteria as of this date.

Board Submits Biennial Budget Request. The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board sends the Governor a recommended funding amount for WWRP for the next biennium.

Project Evaluation. The applicant makes virtual, oral presentation, illustrated with maps, graphics, and photographs in PowerPoint® to an advisory committee, which scores the proposal against a set of criteria approved by the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board. In the Natural Areas and the State Lands Restoration and Enhancement Categories, the same information is presented in writing only.

Post-Evaluation Conference. After project evaluations, RCO staff tabulate the scores and share the results with each advisory committee. The committees discuss the preliminary ranked lists and the application and evaluation processes. The public may join these advisory committee conference calls; however, to ensure a fair and equitable process, guests may not testify. Shortly after the conference call, staff post the preliminary ranked lists on RCO's website. The resulting ranked list of projects is the basis for the funding recommendation to the board.

Board Approves Project List. In an open public meeting, the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board considers the recommendations of the advisory committees and staff, written public comments submitted before the meeting, and public testimony at the meeting. The board then approves the list of projects for submittal to the Governor by November 1.

When considering a list of projects for submittal, the board will use both anticipated funding and project evaluation results to determine the length of the lists. The lists normally will exceed anticipated funding and will include alternate projects that could be funded if higher ranked projects fail or use less money than requested.. Applicants are

cautioned that the board's recommendation of project lists to the Governor is not the same as funding approval.

The funding board submits alternate projects in an amount equal to 50 percent of the dollar amount requested for each category. When possible, no fewer than six alternate projects are submitted.

Governor Approves Projects. Typically, the Governor's capital budget request to the Legislature includes funding for WWRP. The Governor may remove projects from the list recommended by the board but may not re-rank or add projects to the list.

Odd-Numbered Years

Legislature Approves Projects. When it develops the state capital budget, the Legislature considers the project lists submitted by the Governor. The Legislature may remove projects from the lists submitted by the Governor but may not re-rank or add projects to the list.

Project lists approved by the Legislature in any one biennium are to be completed, to the fullest extent possible within that biennium. Biennial project lists are active until all the funding is used or no feasible projects remain. If a biennial list is completed and money remains, it may be awarded to projects in future years.

Proof of Matching Funds. An applicant with match included in the application must provide proof of the availability of matching funds by the match certification deadline, which is at least one calendar month before board approval of funding.¹⁰

Board Awards Grants. After the Legislature and Governor approve the capital budget, the board makes the final grant awards in a public meeting. The applicant is encouraged, but not required, to attend.

Grant Agreements Issued. After grant awards, the applicant has two calendar months¹¹ to submit pre-agreement documents (checklist provided by grants managers.) RCO staff then prepares and issues the grant agreement. The applicant must return the signed agreement within three calendar months.¹² Once the agreement is signed, the applicant, now referred to as project sponsor, may begin the project, according to the terms of the grant agreement. Each agreement will be written and monitored for compliance by RCO staff. See *Manual 7: Long-Term Obligations* for more information.

Successful Applicant Webinar. After the board approves funding, RCO publishes online a recorded webinar for successful grant applicants. This webinar covers the sponsor's

¹⁰Washington Administrative Code 286-13-040(3)

¹¹Washington Administrative Code 286-13-040(4)

¹²Washington Administrative Code 286-13-040(5)

responsibilities to comply with the grant agreement, issues that might come up when implementing a project, billing procedures, amendments for changes and time extensions, closing project procedures, and long-term compliance.

Time Limits and Extensions

The sponsor must complete the funded project promptly. For this reason, RCO staff, with applicant assistance, establishes a timetable for project completion, including enforceable milestones and a project completion date. To avoid the risk of the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board or director withdrawing the grant, the board adopted the following guidance for each project phase.

Application Phase

An applicant must provide reasonable assurance that the project can be completed on time and meet milestones. Reasonable assurance may include such evidence as the following:

- Appraisals and review are completed.
- Designs are completed.
- Bid documents are prepared.
- Environmental assessment is completed.
- Hazardous substances review is completed.
- Option agreements are signed.
- Permits are in-hand.
- Property is in escrow.
- Waiver of Retroactivity is in-hand and signed.

At least one calendar month before the funding meeting, when requested by RCO, the applicant must provide written certification of matching fund availability.¹³

Applicants may only submit projects that are likely to be completed within four years.

¹³Washington Administrative Code 286-13-040(3)

Pre-Agreement Phase

- An applicant must submit the pre-agreement materials requested by RCO within two calendar months of funding approval.¹⁴
- With RCO staff assistance, the applicant must develop milestones, to be included in the grant agreement and a timeline that does not exceed two to three years.

Implementation Phase

To help ensure reasonable and timely project completion, accountability, and the proper use of funds, the sponsor will do the following:

- Develop milestones for project implementation that ensures timely completion as follows:
 - Acquisition (single site) projects 1-2 years
 - Acquisition (multisite) projects 2-3½ years
 - Combination projects 2-3½ years
(The acquisition portion must be completed in ninety days.
See "Combination Projects" below for more information)
 - Development projects 2-3 years
 - Restoration projects 3-3½ years
 - Exceptionally complex projects 3½ years.

RCO staff monitors critical project milestones (for example, ordering appraisals and reviews, starting construction). Unsatisfactory progress may be cause for project termination or other remedies (See the grant agreement section on termination and other remedies). Any RCO director decision may be appealed to the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board.

- Begin project implementation quickly and aggressively to show measurable progress towards meeting the milestones.
- Submit a reimbursement request at least once a year.¹⁵
- Submit progress reports at intervals as designated by the RCO grant agreement

¹⁴Washington Administrative Code 286-13-040(4)

¹⁵Washington Administrative Code 286-13-040

Every June 1, RCO reviews the status of a project that is incomplete three or more years from the date of funding approval. RCO will ask the sponsor to provide assurances that the project will be completed on time, such as the following:

- Executed purchase and sale agreements.
- Proof of permitting approvals.
- Awarded construction contracts.
- Progress on other significant milestones listed in the grant agreement.

If satisfactory assurances are not provided, the director may terminate the project.

Extensions

The director may approve a project up to four years. When one Recreation and Conservation Funding Board grant is used to match another, RCO staff will use the earliest grant to determine the four-year window.

Requests for extensions that would exceed four years may be referred to the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board for action.

Extension requests must be in writing and provided to RCO not less than sixty days before expiration of the project's completion date.¹⁶ The request must justify the need and commit to a new set of specified milestones.

Project Completion

The grant agreement end date will be written into the grant agreement. It is the date that is the end of the period of performance and all project work must be complete and may be extended only when authorized by the board or director.

When a project is completed, the sponsor must submit the final bill, final report, and supporting documents needed to close the project as specified in the agreement.¹⁷ If the bill and documentation are not submitted within six months of the end date in the agreement, the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board may terminate the agreement without payment.

¹⁶Washington Administrative Code 286-13-040(8)

¹⁷Washington Administrative Code 286-13-040(7)

Section 2: Policies

This section covers the following:

- ✓ Categories and grants offered
- ✓ Eligible applicants
- ✓ Eligible project types and activities
- ✓ Environmental requirements
- ✓ Property requirements
- ✓ Other requirements and things to know
- ✓ Livestock grazing
- ✓ Public access
- ✓ Project area stewardship and ongoing obligations

Categories and Grants Offered

Habitat Conservation Account Categories

This manual contains guidelines for WWRP categories in the Habitat Conservation Account. See RCO website for WWRP [manuals about other accounts and grant categories](#).

Critical Habitat Category

This category provides grants to acquire and develop habitat for wildlife including game and non-game species; food fish; shellfish; and freshwater, anadromous, and other fish including habitat for endangered, threatened, or sensitive species.

- Includes habitats such as wetlands, forests, shrub-steppe, deer and elk winter range, and riparian zones, and habitats for saltwater or freshwater fish and shellfish.
- May include public use for both consumptive and non-consumptive activities.
- May include acquisition for species protection or enhancement.

- May include limited development of public facilities such as roads, trails, parking, restrooms, signs and kiosks, and fences.
- Must be accessible for public recreation and outdoor education. See the board's public access policy for allowed limitations to public access.
- May include costs for developing stewardship plans.
- Does not allow for habitat creation, enhancement, or restoration.
- Does not allow renovation of facilities.

Natural Areas Category

These grants provide funding to acquire areas set aside to protect high quality, representative, native ecosystems; unique plant or animal communities; habitat for endangered, threatened, or sensitive species; rare geological features; or features of significant scientific or educational value.

- Must have retained most of its natural character.
- Must be managed primarily for resource preservation, protection, and study.
- May include limited development of public facilities, such as trails, roads, parking, restrooms, signs and kiosks, and fences.
- Must be accessible for public recreation and outdoor education. See the board's public access policy for allowed limitations to public access.
- May include costs for developing stewardship plans.
- Does not allow for habitat creation, enhancement, or restoration.
- Does not allow renovation of facilities.

Riparian Protection Category

This category provides grants to acquire land adjacent to a water body or its submerged lands. By law, riparian habitat may include shorelines, near-shore marine habitat, estuaries, lakes, wetlands, streams, or rivers. Grant requests must include land acquisition but also may include funding for restoration.

- **Must** include acquisition of real property (fee title, easement, or lease).
- May include functional habitat for salmon and other wildlife species.
- May include restoration or enhancement of the property to be acquired.

- May include costs for developing stewardship plans.
- May include conservation easements or leases for land enrolled in the Conservation Enhancement Reserve Program (CREP). Leases must be for at least twenty-five years.
- May include limited development of low impact, public access facilities, such as trails, roads, parking, restrooms, signs and kiosks, and fences.
- Must be accessible for public recreation and outdoor education. See the board's public access policy for allowed limitations to public access.

State Lands Restoration and Enhancement Category

These grants provide funding to restore or enhance existing habitat and natural area lands owned¹⁸ by the State Parks and Recreation Commission, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, or the Department of Natural Resources.

Restoration means a project that brings a site back to its historic function as part of a natural ecosystem or improving the ecological functionality of a site.

Enhancement means to improve the ecological functionality of a site.

- May include habitat enhancement or creation.
- May include reintroduction of native vegetation.
- May include altering or removing structures.
- May include wetlands, forests, shrub-steppe, riparian zones, saltwater or freshwater habitats, or other ecosystems or habitats native to Washington State.
- Must be accessible for public recreation and outdoor education. See the board's public access policy for allowed limitations to public access.
- Should be managed primarily for resource preservation and protection.

Urban Wildlife Habitat Category

These grants provide funding to acquire or develop quality native habitat near urban and urbanizing communities. A primary goal of this category is to increase human's interaction with nature by providing close-to-home opportunities for nature-based activities. Other

¹⁸May include leased lands or easements that meet the Recreation and Conservation Office's control and tenure requirements. See *Manual 4: Development Projects*.

goals are to connect habitats, increase landscape permeability, enhance resilience to future climatic impacts, and protect the benefits provided by nature, such as clean air and water.¹⁹

To be eligible in this category, the land must be in one of the following areas:²⁰

- Within five miles of the designated urban growth area of a city or town with a population of 5,000 or more
- Within five miles of a designated urban cluster²¹ with a population of 5,000 or more
- Within five miles of an adopted urban growth boundary in a county that has a population density of 250 people per square mile or greater.

RCO has developed a [map](#) to help determine if the project proposal meets the eligibility criteria.

Projects in this category may do the following:

- Provide habitat for wildlife, including food fish, shellfish, or freshwater or marine fish.
- May serve as a corridor for wildlife movement in and through existing populated areas.
- May include limited development of public facilities, such as trails, parking, restrooms, signs and kiosks, and fences.
- Must be accessible for public recreation and outdoor education. See the board's public access policy for allowed limitations to public access.
- May include costs for developing stewardship plans.
- Does not allow for habitat creation, enhancement, or restoration.
- Does not allow renovation of existing facilities.

¹⁹Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2019-27

²⁰Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2019-27

²¹"Urban Clusters" are designated by the U.S. Census Bureau to represent a densely developed core of census tracts and/or census blocks that meet minimum population density requirements. In general, these urban areas represent high population density and urban land use resulting in a depiction of the "urban footprint." (see <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/guidance/geo-areas/urban-rural/2010-urban-rural.html>). The Washington State Office of Financial Management's Small Areas Estimates Program produces annual population and housing estimates for urban clusters using data extrapolated from the official April 1 population estimates.

Choosing a Grant Category

A grant applicant submits a proposal to a specific WWRP category. The applicant should attempt to find a grant category that best fits the project, considering the goals and evaluation criteria. RCO staff reviews the applicant's choice and recommends any changes. The applicant may appeal staff's decision to change categories to RCO's director and, if necessary, the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board.

A WWRP project will be evaluated only in one category. At the applicant's discretion, a project appropriate to more than one category may be divided into stand-alone projects and submitted separately. The applicant must determine the best category for the project by the technical completion deadline, unless otherwise authorized by the director.

Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants²² for each category are shown below.

Critical Habitat, Riparian Protection, and Urban Wildlife Habitat Categories

- Cities, counties, towns
- Federally recognized Native American tribes
- Nonprofit nature conservancies²³
- Special purpose districts, port districts, or other political subdivisions of the state that provide services to less than the entire state
- State agencies (Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission and Washington Departments of Enterprise Services, Fish and Wildlife, and Natural Resources).²⁴

²²Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.010 and 79A.15.040(4-6).

²³Nonprofit nature conservancies means organizations as defined by Revised Code of Washington 84.34.250

²⁴Other state agencies not defined in Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.010, such as the Departments of Transportation and Corrections, may enter into interagency agreements with state agencies to apply in partnership. Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.040(5)

Natural Areas Category

- Nonprofit nature conservancies²⁵
- State agencies (Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission and Washington Departments of Enterprise Services, Fish and Wildlife, and Natural Resources)

State Lands Restoration and Enhancement Category

- State agencies (Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission and Washington State Departments of Fish and Wildlife and Natural Resources)

Applicant Requirements

Nonprofit Organizations²⁶

Nonprofit nature conservancy corporations or associations must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- Be registered in the State of Washington as a nonprofit as defined by Revised Code of Washington 84.34.250
- Consistent with Revised Codes of Washington 24.03.220, 24.03.225, and 24.03.230, identify a successor organization fully qualified to ensure management continuity of any WWRP grants received by the corporation or association.
- Demonstrate at least three years of actively managing projects relevant to the types of projects eligible for funding in the applicable WWRP category. "Actively managing projects" means performing the tasks necessary to manage an on-the-ground habitat conservation project, such as negotiating for acquisition of property rights, closing on an acquisition, developing and implementing management plans, designing and implementing projects, securing and managing the necessary funds regardless of fund source, and other tasks.
- Provide a copy of articles of incorporation and bylaws including any amendments.

²⁵Nonprofit nature conservancies means organizations as defined by Revised Code of Washington 84.34.250

²⁶Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2016-13

Legal Opinion for First-time Applicants

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board requires all organizations wishing to apply for a grant for the first time to submit a legal opinion that the applicant is eligible to do the activities below. The legal opinion is required only once to establish eligibility.

- Contract with the State of Washington and/or the United States of America.
- Meet any statutory definitions required for Recreation and Conservation Funding Board grant programs.
- Receive and spend public funds including funds from the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board.
- Acquire and manage interests in real property for public conservation or outdoor recreation purposes.
- Develop and/or provide stewardship for structures or facilities eligible under board rules or policies.
- Undertake planning activities incidental thereto.
- Commit the applicant to statements made in any grant proposal.

Planning Requirement²⁷

To be eligible for a grant, the applicant must submit a comprehensive habitat conservation plan that has been adopted by the applying organization's governing body. This helps ensure projects have been through a public process and were prioritized by the community. Plans must be accepted by RCO by March 1 in even-numbered years.

Once RCO accepts the plan, the applicant is eligible to apply for grants for up to six years from the date the applicant organization adopted the plan. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that plans and documents are current. For further information, consult *Manual 2: Planning Policies and Guidelines*. Co-sponsors also should consult the Joint and Cooperative Projects section in *Manual 3: Acquisition Projects*, *Manual 4: Development Projects*, or *Manual 5: Restoration Projects*.

²⁷Washington Administrative Code 286-13-035(1)

Eligible Project Types

Acquisition Projects

An acquisition project is one that purchases or receives a donation of fee or less-than-fee interests in real property. These interests include, but are not limited to, conservation easements, access and trail easements, covenants, water rights, leases, and mineral rights. Acquisition of less-than-fee interests must be for at least fifty years and may not be revocable at will. Properties must be developed within five years from the date the property was acquired.

Management of riparian habitat along rivers, streams, and other flowing waters should comply with recommendations established in [Management Recommendations for Washington's Priority Habitats: Riparian](#) produced by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Any lands that have been acquired with WWRP grants by the Department of Fish and Wildlife²⁸ or the Department of Natural Resources²⁹ are subject to a payment in lieu of real property taxes and an additional amount for control of noxious weeds.³⁰

Guidelines for acquisition projects are in *Manual 3: Acquisition Projects*.

Multiple Parcel Acquisition Projects

An applicant submitting an acquisition project must identify the specific parcels of land to be purchased. Occasionally, an applicant will target areas with a large number of parcels, intending to acquire only some of them. The multisite acquisition strategy is designed to give clarity to elected officials, the public, WWRP advisory committees, and the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board about which properties will be acquired, while giving agencies flexibility to acquire the highest priority lands.

The applicant should identify all parcels³¹ being considered for acquisition. If this would create a hardship for targeted landowners or would jeopardize acquisitions, the applicant instead may identify a geographic envelope containing all parcels under consideration and provide written descriptions of how the parcels will be prioritized for acquisition within the envelope.

Proposed parcels should be contiguous with one another or contiguous with property currently protected through public or nonprofit ownership. Parcels may be non-contiguous

²⁸Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.040(7)(a) and 77.12.203

²⁹Revised Code of Washington 79.15.040(7)(b), 79.70.130 and 79.71.130

³⁰Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.040 (7)(a-b)

³¹Applicants must comply with the landowner acknowledgement policy. See *Manual 3: Acquisition Projects*.

if the applicant can demonstrate that acquiring land anywhere within the geographic envelope will achieve the goals of the project.

RCO staff may request that the applicant targeting acquisitions in more than one geographic envelope or containing non-contiguous parcels submit separate grant applications. In making the determination, staff shall consider the distance between geographic envelopes or non-contiguous parcels, political jurisdictions involved, similarity of ecological features, and difficulty in evaluation.

The applicant must provide written acquisition strategies in the application as well as maps of the envelope. The strategies should show how the applicant will approach selecting parcels to pursue and what will be done if negotiations are not successful. The acquisition strategies should be based on factors such as ecological significance, threat, access, land management issues, real estate issues, degree of completion of the sites, location of parcels previously acquired, and landowners.

During the evaluation of a grant proposal, evaluators may recommend that conditions be placed on a project to ensure there are not significant scope changes resulting from the applicant acquiring parcels with lower conservation values than those presented at project evaluation.

If the applicant anticipates that a project may have opposition from communities or local elected officials, the applicant should work to resolve concerns as soon as possible.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Leases

The Riparian Protection Category provides grants for acquisition of conservation easements and leases under the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). Leases must be for a minimum of twenty-five years.

The Washington State Conservation Commission may submit one application for more than one CREP project and receive a master contract with RCO. Local conservation districts must partner with the Conservation Commission to receive funding for CREP projects. The title holder or lease holder under a CREP agreement must meet the relevant program eligibility requirements.

Development Projects

A development project is construction or work resulting in new elements including, but not limited to, structures, facilities, or materials to enhance outdoor recreation resources. Guidelines for development projects are in *Manual 4: Development Projects*.

Restoration and Enhancement Projects

A restoration project is one that brings a site back to its historic function as part of a natural ecosystem or improves the ecological functionality of a site. A restoration and enhancement project brings a site back to its historic function as part of a natural ecosystem or improves the ecological functionality of a site or a larger ecosystem. Improvements may include benefiting fish stocks. Guidelines for restoration projects are in *Manual 5: Restoration Projects*. Restoration and enhancement projects are eligible in the Riparian Protection and State Lands Restoration and Enhancement Categories only.

Combination Projects³²

Combination projects involve two or more of the following project types: acquisition and development or restoration. To help ensure that a combination project with an acquisition component is finished on time, at least one month before the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board considers approval of funding, the applicant must secure the property by one of the following methods:

- Acquisition under the Waiver of Retroactivity policies and procedures (*Manual 3: Acquisition Projects*).
- Have property in escrow pending grant approval. Closing must occur within ninety days after the funding meeting.
- Obtain an option or purchase and sale agreement on the property that extends past the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board funding meeting. Execution of the option or agreement must occur within ninety days after funding.

If the acquisition is for a less-than-fee interest and if not already acquired via a Waiver of Retroactivity, then the applicant also must provide draft copies of all leases or easements to RCO for review. Execution of the leases or easements must occur within ninety days after the funding meeting.

For the acquisitions to remain eligible, sponsors must follow all the requirements and procedures outlined in *Manual 3: Acquisition Projects*.

³²Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2004-08

Other Considerations

Multisite Restoration or Enhancement Projects

State Lands Restoration and Enhancement Category Only

To be considered a multisite project, the project must meet the following criteria:

- All elements must be for similar habitat improvements (for example, wetland restoration, shrub steppe enhancement, etc.). No combinations of significantly different habitats are allowed.
- All elements must be in no more than two adjacent counties and/or within the same natural area or wildlife area.
- Funding for each site may total no more than \$250,000.
- No more than five sites may be included in a single project.

Phased Projects

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board recommends that the applicant discuss phasing a very expensive and large-scale project with RCO staff. Phased projects are subject to the following parameters:

- Approval of any single phase is limited to that phase. No approval or endorsement is given or implied toward future phases.
- Each phase must stand on its merits as a viable or complete habitat site and is not dependent on the completion of future phases or work.
- Each phase must be submitted as a separate application.

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board may consider progress and sponsor performance on previously funded project phases when making decisions on a current project proposal.

If two or more projects are ranked equally through the evaluation process, the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board will give preference to a project that has had a previous phase funded by the board.³³

³³Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2007-27

Eligible Project Activities

Incurring Pre-agreement Costs³⁴

RCO may reimburse a sponsor for certain allowable expenses incurred before the start date of a grant agreement. However, any costs associated with the preparation or presentation of the grant application are ineligible.

For an acquisition project, most incidental costs incurred before a RCO grant agreement are reimbursable. Land costs are not allowable as a pre-agreement cost unless a Waiver of Retroactivity has been approved. See *Manual 3: Acquisition Projects*.

For restoration and development projects, preliminary costs necessary to get a project ready for the construction phase (i.e., architecture and engineering, permits) are reimbursable. The sponsor may not incur any construction cost before the period of performance in the agreement, except those defined by the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board. See *Manual 5: Restoration Projects* and *Manual 4: Development Projects* for further information.

Acquiring Property

Acquiring property includes purchasing or receiving a donation of fee or less-than-fee interest in real property. Incidental costs related to acquisition are eligible. Additional rules for land acquisition are in *Manual 3: Acquisition Projects*.

Developing Facilities

The Habitat Conservation Account allows for limited development of passive public outdoor access facilities in most categories. Complete guidelines for development projects are in *Manual 4: Development Projects*. Eligible project elements include the following:

- Fences
- Interpretive kiosks and signs
- Park furniture, such as benches and tables
- Parking
- Paths
- Restrooms
- Roads

³⁴Washington Administrative Code 286-13-085

- Viewing shelters

Restoring Habitat

Guidelines for restoration and enhancement projects are in *Manual 5: Restoration Projects*. Eligible project elements include the following:

- Ecological restoration
- Equipment and boot decontamination facilities
- Estuary and shoreline restoration
- Fencing, gates, and signs
- In-stream habitat such as bank stabilization, channel reconfiguration, and woody materials placement
- In-stream passage improvements
- Habitat enhancement such as native plantings and invasive plant removal
- Removal of structures like bulkheads, dikes, levees, tide gates, and piling
- Site augmentation to establish restoration elements
- Transplanting and re-vegetation
- Upland erosion control

Aquatic restoration projects should follow the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's aquatic habitat guidelines for water crossings, stream restoration, and stream bank protection.

- [Water Crossing Design Guidelines](#)
- [Integrated Streambank Protection Guidelines](#)
- [Stream Habitat Restoration Guidelines](#)

Developing a Site Stewardship Plan

Critical Habitat, Natural Areas, Riparian Protection, and Urban Wildlife Habitat Categories

Development of a site stewardship plan is an eligible cost activity. An applicant may request up to 1 percent of the total project cost or \$10,000, whichever is less. An outline for the stewardship plan must be submitted with the grant application and, at a minimum, it must contain the following elements:

- Long-term stewardship goals and objectives
- Monitoring goals and objectives
- Restoration goals and objectives (if applicable)
- Short-term land management goals and objectives
- Description of the project area, including the following:
 - U.S. Geological Survey quadrant map and county assessor's parcel map
 - Map³⁵ showing all human-made and natural features
 - Narrative description of the property
 - Photographs taken at permanent photograph points
- A detailed stewardship plan implementation budget that also identifies the source of funding.

Ineligible Project Elements

Several sources are used to determine project eligibility, including Revised Code of Washington 79A.15. The following project elements are ineligible for funding consideration:

- Animal species introduction or propagation, other than biological controls for invasive species, etc.
- Concessionaire buildings or concessionaire space in existing or proposed structures.
- Cost not directly related to implementing the project such as indirect and overhead charges.

³⁵Further guidance provided in appendix F of *Manual 3 Acquisition Projects*.

- Crop plantings.
- Environmental cleanup of illegal activities (removal of contaminated materials, derelict vessels, trash, methamphetamine labs, etc.).
- Fish or wildlife production facilities, such as fish hatcheries, for the production of sport fish populations.
- Indoor facilities such as community centers and environmental education or learning centers.
- Multisite projects, except for the those listed as eligible under the “Multisite State Lands Restoration and Enhancement Projects” section.
- Offices, shops, residences, and meeting and storage rooms.
- Operation and maintenance costs.
- Properties acquired via a condemnation action of any kind. On multi-parcel acquisitions, a sponsor may acquire those parcels that cannot be purchased from a willing seller via condemnation using only non-WWRP funds. Complete documentation of parcels acquired by WWRP funding versus those acquired entirely by sponsor funds under condemnation must be maintained and available. The value of parcels acquired via condemnation may not be used as match. Note that development or restoration projects on property previously acquired via condemnation are eligible.
- Specific projects identified as mitigation as part of a habitat conservation plan approved by the federal government for incidental take of endangered or threatened species, or other projects identified for mitigation purposes. Also see *RCO Manual 3: Acquisition Projects*, *Manual 4: Development Projects*, and *Manual 5: Restoration Projects* for exceptions.

Environmental Requirements

Environmental Benefits

An applicant for Habitat Conservation Account project must provide a written statement of the environmental benefits³⁶ of the proposed project. This statement will be given to evaluators for consideration during the review.

³⁶Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.065

Cultural Resources Review

Governor's [Executive Order 21-02](#), *Archaeological and Cultural Resources*, requires that state agencies review acquisition and construction projects for potential impacts to cultural resources, which are defined as archeological and historical sites and artifacts, and traditional tribal areas or items of religious, ceremonial, and social uses. The goal is to ensure that reasonable action is taken to avoid, minimize, or mitigate harm to those resources.

The federal government, through section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, requires similar compliance for projects with federal involvement, for example, projects on federal land, with federal funds, or requiring a federal permit.

Review Process

RCO facilitates review under the Governor's executive order. Federal agencies facilitate review under the National Historic Preservation Act. If the federal review covers the entire RCO project area, there is no additional review needed to meet state requirements. Both processes require review, analysis, and consultation with the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation and affected Native American tribes.

RCO evaluates all projects before funding and initiates consultation with the affected tribes and the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation. An applicant should not initiate consultation with either of these groups. The review may require the sponsor to conduct cultural resources surveys or may add requirements to the grant agreement.

An applicant should budget for cultural resources work for most projects. The costs of a cultural resources investigation are highly dependent upon the size, scope, and location of the project. RCO encourages the applicant to work with qualified cultural resources professionals to estimate costs. The Association for Washington Archaeology' maintains a [list of qualified consultants](#) on its website. Costs for compliance actions (e.g., survey, monitoring, permitting, redesign, and mitigation) are eligible for reimbursement and should be included in the grant application.

Any required cultural resources investigations or documentation must be complete before the sponsor may start any ground-disturbing activities, such as demolition, planting, or installing signs. Ground disturbance or demolition started without approval are breaches of the grant agreement. Typically, cultural resources approval will be authorized as part of the Notice to Proceed.

For an acquisition project, cultural resources requirements must be completed before final reimbursement will be made.

State Agency Lands

Cultural resources compliance for projects on lands owned or managed by the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, or the Washington Department of Natural Resources, is the responsibility of the respective agency regardless of the sponsor. The sponsor must provide RCO with documentation of compliance with the Governor's executive order or section 106 before a Notice to Proceed will be issued or acquisition will be paid in full.

See *RCO Manual 3: Acquisition Projects*, *Manual 4: Development Projects*, or *Manual 5: Restoration Projects* for additional details on the RCO cultural resource review process.

Invasive Species

The Washington Invasive Species Council developed [protocols](#) for preventing the spread of invasive species while working in the field. The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board encourages the grant sponsor to consider how the project may spread invasive species and work to reduce that possibility. Invasive species can be spread unintentionally during construction, maintenance, and restoration activities. Here are examples of how it could happen:

- Driving a car or truck to a field site and moving soil embedded with seeds or fragments of invasive plants in the vehicle's tires to another site. New infestations can begin miles away as the seeds and fragments drop off the tires and the undercarriage of the vehicle.
- Working in streams and moving water or sediment infested with invasive plants, animals, or pathogens via boots, nets, sampling equipment, or boats from one stream to another.
- Moving weed-infested hay, gravel, or dirt to a new site, carrying the weed seeds along with it, during restoration and construction activities. Before long, the seeds germinate and infest the new site.

The key to preventing the spread of invasive species is twofold: Use materials that are known to be free of invasive plants or animals in the project and clean equipment both before and after the job. Equipment to clean should include, but not be limited to, footwear, gloves, angling equipment, sampling equipment, boats and their trailers, and vehicles and tires.

Sustainability³⁷

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board encourages grant sponsors to design and build sustainable projects to maximize the useful life of what they build and do the least amount of damage to the environment.

The board encourages sponsors to use sustainable design, practices, and elements in their projects. Examples may include use of recycled materials; native plants in landscaping; pervious surfacing material for circulation paths, access routes, trails, and parking areas; energy efficient fixtures; onsite recycling stations; and composting.

Climate Change³⁸

Climate change is expected to profoundly affect Washington's natural and recreation resources in myriad ways. In the Northwest, this likely will include changes to precipitation patterns and the timing of stream flows, reduced snowpack and water supplies, shifts in species ranges and distribution, changes to the timing of events such as flowering and egg laying, sea level rise, increased insect outbreaks, tree mortality and risk of wildfire, and impacts to human health and quality of life. These impacts are expected to accelerate in coming years, and taken together, will fundamentally alter certain ecological processes, challenge the survival of vulnerable species and ecosystems, and pose increasing risks and hazards to human communities.

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board invests public funds to acquire the most significant lands in Washington for wildlife conservation and outdoor recreation purposes before they are converted to other uses, and to develop public recreational facilities that meet the needs of present and future generations of all Washingtonians.

With this mission and purpose, the board acknowledges the risks a changing climate pose to its investments and the opportunity for the investments to increase community resiliency; mitigate greenhouse gasses, the primary driver of climate change; and continue to provide Washington residents with a high quality of life. The board encourages project sponsors to consider future climatic impacts to the projects they propose for funding through climate-smart planning and design. Sponsors also are encouraged to share lessons, best practices, and their approaches to addressing climate change with the board so that together the collective capacity of the state to address this global challenge can be built.

³⁷Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2011-22 and 2014-06

³⁸Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2019-29

Puget Sound Projects

The law³⁹ prevents the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board from funding any project in the Habitat Conservation Account that conflicts with the Puget Sound Partnership's *Action Agenda*. A project may conflict with the *Action Agenda* if it results in water quality degradation in Puget Sound or the loss of ecosystem processes, structure, or functions, and the impacts are not mitigated fully using state-approved protocols.

An applicant for a project in the Puget Sound area, which is defined as the geographic areas within Water Resource Inventory Areas 1 through 19, inclusive, must include in the adopted resolution or application authorization (state agency applicants) a statement certifying that the project is not in conflict with the *Action Agenda*.

The law⁴⁰ requires the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board to give funding consideration to projects in this program that are referenced in the *Action Agenda*. An applicant for a project in the Puget Sound area may address a question in the evaluation criteria⁴¹ that considers whether the project is referenced in the *Action Agenda* or is a priority in other comprehensive plans or strategies. There are no additional points for this question, but the evaluator has the ability within the current scoring system to give points based on the answer to this question. The [Action Agenda](#) may be found on the Puget Sound Partnership's website.

Property Requirements

Reviewing the Project with the Local Jurisdiction⁴²

Before applying for a grant to acquire property, an applicant must review the proposed project with the county or city with jurisdiction over the project area. The applicant then must provide documentation that the applicant has conferred with the local county or city officials. The jurisdiction's legislative authority may submit a letter to the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board stating its support of, or opposition to, the project. The board shall make the letter available to the Governor and the Legislature when submitting its prioritized project list as part of RCO's biennial capital budget request. The applicant must complete this local review for each new application even if resubmitting a project from a previous grant cycle.

³⁹Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.040(9)

⁴⁰Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.040(8)

⁴¹"Ecological and Biological Characteristics," see the detailed scoring criteria for Critical Habitat, Natural Areas, and Urban Wildlife Habitat. "Planning" for Riparian Protection and State Lands Restoration projects.

⁴²Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.110

To meet this requirement, the applicant must demonstrate that the conferral⁴³ process has begun by providing each member of the county commission or city council with a packet including all the following information:

- A cover letter referencing Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.110 along with a request to confer with the city or county officials about the project. The letter must state the option for the county or city to send a letter to the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board stating its position on the project. A sample letter is available in the [Acquisition Project Toolkit](#) on RCO's website.
- The project description as it will be submitted in the grant application.
- A location map.
- A parcel map of the proposed acquisition.
- The geographic envelope of the proposed project if the project sponsor is pursuing a multisite acquisition strategy.

A copy of the packet must be attached to the project application in PRISM before the application deadline.

The applicant also must document that the conferral process took place. The documentation must be attached to the project application in PRISM before the technical completion deadline and must include all the following:

- Conferral dates.
- Name and title of each person participating in the conferral process and that person's relevant organization.
- A list or map of acquisition properties under consideration.
- A list of the county or city official's key questions or concerns.
- A description of any project revisions resulting from the conferral process.
- A summary of any relevant follow-up actions.

A sample documentation form is available in the [Acquisition Tool Kit](#) on the RCO website.

⁴³Confer is defined as a dialogue between project sponsors and local county or city officials with the purpose of early review of potential projects. The dialogue may include any matter relevant to a particular project, which may include, but need not be limited to: project purpose and scope; project elements; estimated project cost; costs and benefits to the community; plans for project management and maintenance; and public access.

A local government proposing to acquire property within its own political boundaries meets this requirement by submitting the adopted resolution that is required with the RCO grant application before the application deadline. A local government proposing to purchase property outside its jurisdiction (e.g., a city acquiring property outside its city limits or a county acquiring property within a city's limits) must comply with the conferral requirement.

Landowner Acknowledgement for Acquisition Projects

As part of any grant application for acquisition of real property, the applicant must demonstrate that the landowner is aware of the applicant's interest in buying property rights. The applicant may meet this requirement by completing one of four options as detailed in *RCO Manual 3: Acquisition Projects*.

Control of the Land (Development or Restoration Projects)

To protect investments made by the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board and to assure public access to those investments, the sponsor must have adequate control of a project site to construct, operate, and maintain the area for the term required by the grant program and grant agreement. This control and tenure may be through land ownership, a lease, use agreement, or easement. See *Manual 4: Development Projects* or *Manual 5: Restoration Projects* for more information.

Projects on State-owned Aquatic Lands

If a project will occur over, in, or alongside a navigable body of water, an authorization to use state-owned aquatic lands may be needed.

All marine waters are, by definition, navigable, as are portions of rivers influenced by tides. Navigable rivers and lakes are those determined by the judiciary, those bounded by meander lines, or those that could have been used for commerce at the time of statehood. The Department of Natural Resources' aquatic land managers will help the grant applicant determine if the project will fall on state-owned aquatic lands and provide more information on its authorization process. See the [land manager coverage map](#) online for contact information for the Department of Natural Resources aquatic land managers.

If the project is on state-owned aquatic lands, the grant applicant will need to secure a lease or easement (use authorization) to use those lands from the Washington Department of Natural Resources. Securing a lease or easement may take up to a year. RCO requires the executed lease or easement within sixty days after board funding approval to show control and tenure for the site. The lease or easement is required before the project will be placed under agreement, unless RCO's director approves an extension in advance. Review the control and tenure requirements in *Manual 4: Development Projects* or *Manual 5: Restoration Projects*.

The following online resources may be helpful to review:

- [Grant Projects on State-owned Aquatic Lands](#)
- [Leasing State-owned Aquatic Lands](#)
- [Boundaries of State-owned Aquatic Lands](#)
- [Caring for Washington's Nearshore Environments](#)

Department of Natural Resources' Review of Project Scope

A local government applicant that needs to secure a use authorization meeting board policy must do all of the following:

- Meet with the Department of Natural Resources to review the proposed scope of work.
- Complete a Joint Aquatic Resource Permit Application (JARPA) and give a copy to the Department of Natural Resources.
- Attach to the grant application a Scope of Work Acknowledgement Form (signed by the Department of Natural Resources) by the technical completion deadline.

A state agency applicant must follow the same procedure when developing a new facility where one currently does not exist. RCO will coordinate an interagency, in-person review of proposals for all other state agency projects.

Other Requirements and Things to Know

Carbon and Ecosystem Service Credits⁴⁴

Land acquired or encumbered with an RCO grant may be enrolled in carbon credit and other payments for ecosystem service programs. These programs issue credits or direct payments to landowners for activities such as protecting land, planting trees, or improving management practices that reduce, sequester, or prevent future carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions. Read more information in *RCO Manual 3: Acquisition Projects*.

⁴⁴Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2021-02

Number of Grant Proposals Allowed

In general, RCO does not limit the number of grant proposals from a single applicant during the biennial grant cycle. However, each proposal must be for a different scope of work. Each application must stand alone on its own merits with a viable, conservation effort and not be dependent on other projects or future phases of work.

A grant proposal for the same project or scope of work may be submitted to another RCO grant program only if it is being used as match. Each proposal must identify the other RCO matching grant proposal. RCO recommends an applicant contact RCO staff to discuss options for phasing a costly, interrelated, or complex project proposal.

Accessibility

Facilities or elements⁴⁵ constructed with RCO grants and sponsor match are required by law to be accessible regardless of whether there are specific standards adopted in the State Building Code, Americans with Disabilities Act, or Architectural Barriers Act, as amended. Other federal laws, guidelines, and best practices also may apply to achieve accessibility. In case of conflict between minimums, the one providing the most access shall prevail. RCO shall have final determination.

RCO encourages a sponsor to exceed the minimum accessibility standards and use a design principle that maximizes universal accessibility for all. See *Manual 4: Development Projects* and the RCO website for detailed information about how to make the facility meet [accessibility requirements](#). Plans, project applications, cost estimates, and construction drawings must reflect compliance with facility access and signing requirements.

Competitive Bid Requirements⁴⁶

Grant sponsors shall follow current state procurement procedures or write their own. When buying things, grant sponsors shall provide open and free competition, to the maximum extent practical. Be aware of organizational conflicts of interest. Contractors that develop specifications, requirements, statements of work, invitations for bids, or requests for proposals cannot be hired for the resulting work. Grant sponsors receiving federal money also must follow federal laws and regulations.

⁴⁵A facility is all or any portion of buildings, structures, site improvements, elements, and pedestrian routes or vehicular ways located on site. An element is an architectural or mechanical component of a building, facility, space, or site (2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design, Department of Justice, September 15, 2010).

⁴⁶RCO's grant agreement standard terms and conditions, Compliance with Applicable Law and Procurement Requirements.

Fees and Income

User or other fees may be charged for areas and facilities acquired or developed with RCO grants. See *Manual 3: Acquisition Projects*, *Manual 4: Development Projects*, or *Manual 5: Restoration Projects*, and Washington Administrative Code 286-13-110 for more information.

Inspections

The sponsor shall provide the right of access to the project area to RCO to conduct pre-award inspections. After project funding, this access is expanded to include RCO, or any of its officers, or any other authorized agent or official of the State of Washington or the federal government, at all reasonable times, to monitor and evaluate performance, compliance, and quality assurance as specified in the grant agreement. Normally, RCO staff conducts four types of project site visits:

- **Pre-award.** Made during the application phase, normally with the applicant to assess the project area and scope of work for eligibility concerns and compatibility with the grant program.
- **Interim.** This inspection, normally coordinated with the sponsor, is made sometime during the project implementation phase to help resolve any apparent or anticipated problems and to monitor project progress.
- **Final.** Before final acceptance of the contractor's work or accepting a project as complete, the sponsor shall request a final inspection by RCO. This request must be made only after the project is complete, architects and engineers have made their inspections, and defects have been corrected. It should be scheduled near project completion but still within the performance period of the contractor. The project must be constructed and functional as described in the grant agreement. The final inspection will review the following:
 - Completion of the project scope of work as described in the agreement.
 - Site appearance and construction quality.
 - Location of the funding or grant program acknowledgement sign. See *Grant Program Acknowledgement and Signs*, below.
- When RCO staff's final inspection verifies that the project is complete, the final payment, including retainage, will be made.
- **Compliance.** Performed about every five years to ensure the site is managed and maintained as specified in the grant agreement.

Grant Program Acknowledgement and Signs⁴⁷

Acknowledgement

Sponsors must acknowledge Recreation and Conservation Funding Board funding assistance, by program if possible, in all projects. This includes the following:

- Written acknowledgement in any news release or publication developed or modified for the funded project.
- Verbal acknowledgement during all ground-breaking and dedication ceremonies.

A sponsor should notify RCO at least two weeks before any project dedication ceremony and thirty days in advance if an RCO representative or speaker is requested at the ceremony.

Signs

The sponsor must provide prominent placement of signs at entrances and other locations unless exempted by board policy or waived by the RCO director. The sponsor may build such signs to harmonize with an existing design standard or request a standard acknowledgement sign from RCO.

For sponsor's developing its own signs, below are suggestions for how to incorporate appropriate acknowledgement:

- Funding provided by the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program.
- Grant funding from the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program made available by the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Funding Board.

Funding acknowledgement signs must be posted before the grant agreement end date and final reimbursement. RCO may provide free funding acknowledgement signs for this grant program upon request. A sponsor must provide proof of the funding acknowledgement by attaching photographs or other evidence to PRISM.

Additional Rules and Instructions

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board may issue additional or modified rules, instructions, interpretations, and guides from time to time as it believes necessary for the effective conduct of the grant program. Such changes may apply to all projects. Whenever possible, sufficient lead time will be given between the announcement and the effective date to minimize impacts to projects already in process at the time of announcement.

⁴⁷Washington Administrative Code 286-13-120

Public Disclosure Rules

RCO records and files are public records that are subject to the Public Records Act.⁴⁸ More information about the [RCO's disclosure practices](#) is available on the website.

Livestock Grazing⁴⁹

In the Critical Habitat Category, livestock grazing is allowed on funded project sites provided that the grazing does not diminish the essential purposes of the grant and either of the following conditions are met:

- Grazing is included in the grant agreement and project evaluation materials
- Grazing is a continuing use of the project area.

Livestock grazing must be managed in accordance with a site-specific management plan that incorporates current laws, rules, and guidelines to protect or enhance the health of species targeted by the grant. Grazing management plans must include a duration and periodic renewal schedule.

Leases or permits issued by the grant sponsor for livestock grazing are allowed in this grant category. Leases must be equivalent to market rate and managed in accordance with RCO policies on concessions and leases in RCO manuals.⁵⁰

Income generated on the project site must be managed in accordance with RCO policies on income and income use in RCO manuals.⁵¹

Requests for livestock grazing that do not meet the criteria in this policy or are on board-funded project sites in other grant categories or programs must be reviewed under the Allowable Uses Framework in RCO manuals.⁵²

Public Access⁵³

Unless otherwise provided for in Revised Code of Washington 79A.15, a project receiving a WWRP grant for development, recreational access, or fee-simple land acquisition must be accessible for public recreation and outdoor education.

⁴⁸Revised Code of Washington 42.56

⁴⁹Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2012-21

⁵⁰The information is in Manuals 3 or 4. Choose the manual for the project type.

⁵¹The information is in Manuals 3, 4, or 5. Choose the manual for the project type.

⁵²The information is in Manuals 3, 4, or 5. Choose the manual for the project type.

⁵³Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2018-06

Limiting or Restricting Public Access

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board authorizes limiting or restricting public access to a project area, in a project area, or a portion of a project area, for the following reasons:

- Protection of critical, important, and sensitive species, habitats, or ecosystems.
- Preservation of rare or vanishing flora or fauna; or sensitive, threatened, or endangered species; or those proposed for threatened or endangered status, or otherwise a candidate for a listing status review; or a unique species or ecosystem.
- Protection of an environmentally sensitive area and to preserve the ecological integrity of a landscape or water body.
- Protection for the safety of the public. For public safety closures, the sponsor must identify a specific hazard with known consequences to visitors. As appropriate to protect the public, before any public safety closure, the sponsor must first attempt to address public safety problems with common practices such as signs, increased patrols, fencing, or moving infrastructure (parking lots, trails, etc.) where practical.
- Protection of water quality.
- Protection of significant research and education values and resources that might otherwise be compromised by public access, and areas where there is active research or education. These include public access limits described in The Natural Area Preserves Act.⁵⁴
- Protection of historical or cultural resources. However, the sponsor shall allow exemptions to limits on public access in the case of cultural and spiritual uses that do not damage or otherwise adversely affect the protected resources. These exemptions shall occur only if authorized by the landowner.

Additional Public Access Policies

- **Conservation Easements.** Although public access is encouraged, this policy does not apply to areas purchased under a conservation easement or similar less-than-fee-simple method.
- **Constraints:** Where restricting public access is authorized by this policy, such restriction shall be as narrowly constrained as possible to achieve the identified protection goal. Where year-round limits on public access are in place, the sponsor

⁵⁴Revised Code of Washington 79.70

must have considered and rejected on a sound basis a partial closure (such as limited in time or geography).

- **Credentials.** Allowing access only to a specific group or class of the public based on credentials or profession shall not be considered public access.
- **Nondiscrimination.** A sponsor shall not discriminate on the basis of age, race, creed, color, sex or gender, religion, national origin, disability, marital status, or sexual orientation.
- **Priorities.** Conservation shall be the primary focus of projects in the Habitat Conservation Account, but exclusion of the general public should be avoided.
- **Providing Facilities.** Providing public access to the project area does not mean that developed facilities must be provided.
- **Public Access.** Public access means that the general public has regular access to, and use of, the grant-funded project area at reasonable hours and times of the year.
- **Restoring Access.** When the rationale for limiting public access is no longer valid, the area shall be made available for public access.
- **Signs.** Where restricting public access is authorized by this policy, the requirement to post signs identifying the area as open to the public is waived.

If requested by RCO, the sponsor must provide adequate justification for any limits on public access in project areas. The justification shall include the items in “Approving Additional Limits to Public Access on Case-by-Case Basis” section.

Approving Additional Limits to Public Access on Case-by-Case Basis

To limit public access for reasons other than those listed above, the board delegates its authority⁵⁵ to approve such limits on public access to the RCO director or designee. In these cases, the sponsor must provide, and RCO shall review, a written request that includes the following:

- Clearly delineates the area where public access shall be limited.
- Clearly identifies each specific resource (area, habitat, species, type of water, etc.) in need of protection from public access.
- Demonstrates that public access likely (probable, high chance of occurring) will have a substantive negative impact to the resources.

⁵⁵Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.030(5)

- Describes the type and duration of public access restrictions.
- Describes how the public was involved in the sponsor's decision-making.

Project Area Stewardship and Ongoing Obligations⁵⁶

An RCO grant comes with long-term obligations to maintain and protect the project area⁵⁷ after a project is complete. The long-term obligations are in RCO's grant agreement. A [sample grant agreement](#) may be found on RCO's website.

RCO recognizes that changes occur over time and that some facilities may become obsolete or the land needed for something else. The law discourages casual discards of land and facilities by ensuring that the grant sponsor replaces the lost value when changes or conversions of use take place.

In general, the project area funded with an RCO grant must remain dedicated to the use as originally funded, such as outdoor recreation, habitat protection, farmland preservation, forestland preservation, or salmon recovery purposes, for as long as defined in the grant agreement. For development and restoration projects, the period is determined by the type of control and tenure provided for the project.

A conversion occurs when the project area acquired, developed, or restored with RCO grant funding is used for purposes other than what it was funded for originally. See RCO *Manual 7: Long-Term Obligations* for a discussion of conversions and the process required for replacement of the public investment. Non-compliance with the long-term obligations for an RCO grant may jeopardize an organization's ability to obtain future RCO grants.

After a project is complete (that is, after RCO's final reimbursement and acceptance of the project), RCO documents that were signed by the sponsor continue to govern the project area described in the boundary map for which funds have been granted.

Changes may be made only with the prior approval of the board. If a compliance issue arises, RCO staff works with the sponsor to resolve the issue. Unresolved, identified issues could result in restrictions on applying for or receiving future grants.

⁵⁶Revised Code of Washington 79A.25, Washington Administrative Code 286, RCO's grant agreement standard terms and conditions, and *Manual 7: Long-term Obligations*.

⁵⁷Washington Administrative Code 286-04-010(19). Project area is the geographic area that delineates a grant-assisted site which is subject to application and grant agreement requirements.

Section 3: Money Matters

This section covers the following:

- ✓ Grant limits
- ✓ Matching share
- ✓ Types of match
- ✓ Federal rules
- ✓ Records and reimbursements

Grant Limits

Recreation and Conservation Funding Board grants are intended to expand the applicant's existing capacity and not replace funding that would have been used for a project without the grant.⁵⁸

The board establishes grant limits for its programs. The grant limits for each category are shown below. WWRP funds may not exceed 50 percent of a project's total cost, except for state agency projects.

- Critical Habitat, Natural Areas, and Urban Wildlife Habitat Categories have no minimum or maximum grant amounts that may be requested.
- The Riparian Protection Category requires a grant request to be at least \$25,000. There is no maximum amount.
- The State Lands Restoration and Enhancement Category allows grant requests from \$25,000 to \$1 million for a single site project and from \$25,000 to \$500,000 for a multisite project.

⁵⁸Washington Administrative Code 286-13-045(6)

Funding Priorities

Urban Wildlife Habitat Category Only⁵⁹

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board adopted a policy to provide a more equalized distribution of funds between state agencies and local entities. Grants will be awarded as follows:

- First, 45 percent to local agencies, Native American tribes, nonprofit organizations, and salmon recovery lead entities
- Second, 45 percent to state agencies
- Third, 10 percent to fully fund partially funded local agency, Native American tribe, and nonprofit organizations
- Then fully fund partially funded state agency projects, and apply any remaining amount to the next highest ranked project(s), regardless of sponsor.

Cost Increases

By declaration of the board, during exceptional economic times, the RCO director may use unspent funds to approve cost increases up to ten percent of the total project amount. In addition, unspent funds are prioritized in the following order: finish funding partially funded projects, approve pending cost increases, then funding alternates on the board-approved ranked lists.⁶⁰

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board will not reimburse more than the sponsor's actual out-of-pocket expenditures.

All Projects: Administration, Architecture, Engineering

Direct administrative costs for acquisition of real property are limited to no more than 5 percent of the total acquisition cost.

Administrative (including architecture and engineering) costs for development, renovation, and restoration projects are limited to 20 percent of the total development, renovation, and restoration project cost.

⁵⁹Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2019-27

⁶⁰Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2023-16

Additional information about eligibility and reimbursement maximums for these elements is contained in the administrative costs sections of *Manual 3: Acquisition Projects*, *Manual 4: Development Projects*, and *Manual 5: Restoration Projects*.

Matching Share

Match is the project sponsor's contribution to a project. By requiring a match for grants, the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board intends to foster and demonstrate local commitment to the projects and to spread the money from the grant program to a greater number of projects.⁶¹

Local Agencies, Native American Tribes, Nonprofit Conservancies, and Salmon Recovery Lead Entities

By statute, local agencies, Native American tribes, eligible nonprofit organizations, and salmon recovery lead entities must contribute matching resources at least equal to the amount of the grant requested.⁶² For example, if an applicant requests a \$250,000 grant, the applicant must contribute \$250,000 for a total project cost of \$500,000. This is called providing a 50 percent or one-to-one matching share.

Applicants must provide a minimum of 10 percent of the total cost of a project in the form of a local contribution, not from a state or federal source. This policy does not apply to Native American tribes.⁶³ For example, if a total project cost is \$500,000, the applicant must provide \$50,000 in matching share from a local source such as local government appropriation, cash, grants, or in-kind donations.

State Agencies

State agencies do not need to provide a match.⁶⁴ However, all applicants are encouraged to contribute matching shares and reduce government cost.

Eligible Match

Applicant resources used to match board funds must be eligible in the specific WWRP, category, and may include any one or more of the following:

- Appropriations and cash
- Bonds—council or voter

⁶¹Washington Administrative Code 286-13-045(2)

⁶²Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.060 (4), 79A.15.120(7)

⁶³Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2005-24

⁶⁴Washington Administrative Code 286-13-045(5)

- Conservation Futures
- Corrections labor
- Donations—the value of using donated cash, equipment, labor, land, materials, property rights, or services (see the “Types of Match” section below)
- Force account—the value of using sponsor’s equipment, labor, or materials (see the “Types of Match” section below)
- Grants—federal, state, local, and private (see the “Types of Match” section below)
- Local impact and mitigation fees (see the “Types of Match” section below)
- Proceeds of a letter of credit or binding loan commitment
- Other Recreation and Conservation Funding Board grants that meet the requirements outlined below.

Not Allowed as Match

- Costs that are not eligible for grant assistance.
- Costs that are not necessary or an integral part of the project scope.
- Costs that are double counted. (A cost incurred by a sponsor in a project that already has been reimbursed or used as match on one RCO project shall not be used as a match on another RCO project.)
- Cost associated with meeting a mitigation requirement unrelated to the funded project. See “Mitigation Funds as Match” below.
- Existing sponsor assets such as real property or developments.

Big Matches Earn Evaluation Preference⁶⁵

At the first meeting when projects are considered, the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board may give a Habitat Conservation Account project preference for funding, if between the time the project is evaluated and the first meeting when the project is considered, the applicant secures and certifies a matching share of \$2 million or more in non-state funds and the matching share would be lost if the project did not receive the WWRP grant.

⁶⁵Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2008-08

Match Requirements

Before the board awards the grant, the required match must be secured so the project can move forward

All matching resources must meet the following criteria:

- Be an integral and necessary part of the approved project.
- Be part of the work identified in the application and grant agreement.
- Be for eligible work types or elements.
- Be committed to the project.

RCO rules governing projects apply to the grant applicant's match. For example, if a grant applicant uses donated land as a match, RCO rules requiring the land to remain in conservation use forever apply to the donated land as well.

Except for grant applications submitted within the same biennium, matching resources or board grants committed in one board-funded project must not be used as match in another board-funded project.⁶⁶

The board may require the applicant to provide a portion of its matching resources in local resources.⁶⁷

Match Availability and Certification

To help ensure Recreation and Conservation Funding Board project is ready for implementation upon approval, the applicant must have matching funds available for expenditure before the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board approves funding. The applicant must sign and submit a Certification of Match Form to ensure the project is included in the funding recommendation. The applicant is advised to plan ahead for a project with match dependent on a citizen vote or passage of a ballot measure. This certification is due at least one calendar month before Recreation and Conservation Funding Board action.⁶⁸ The form and deadlines for certifying match are on the RCO website.

RCO may declare a project ineligible if there is no guarantee that matching funds are available. That project may be passed over in favor of a project with the match in place. Such decisions are based on the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board's confidence in the applicant's ability to have the match in place when required.

⁶⁶Washington Administrative Code 286-13-045(7)

⁶⁷Washington Administrative Code 286-13-045(4)

⁶⁸Washington Administrative Code 286-13-040(3)

When another Recreation and Conservation Funding Board grant is used as match, the certification of match will be tentative, conditioned on receipt of the other grant or on the sponsor providing the match from other resources. To prevent a backlog of unspent grants, the sponsor must finish the project by the earliest completion date of the two grants.⁶⁹

Types of Match

Donations

Donations are eligible only as matching funds and are not reimbursable. This means RCO will not pay more than the sponsor's out-of-pocket expenses. Valuing donations of equipment, labor (including inmates, community service labor, and volunteers), and material is discussed in *Manual 8: Reimbursements*. RCO strongly encourages the applicant to secure written confirmation of all donations planned as match and to attach the donation letters to the PRISM Online application.

Donated land must expand existing habitat lands or stand on its own as a viable conservation area. Review *Manual 3: Acquisition Projects* before taking title to property that will be donated and used as match. Manual 3 outlines the requirements for valuing the property and for securing a donation statement from the seller.

Force Account

Force account refers to use of a sponsor's staff (labor), equipment, or materials. These contributions are treated as expenditures for billing purposes.

Other Grants

In some cases, a sponsor may use funds awarded from another grant program as its match. For example, section 6 funds administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service might be used to match WWRP grants. Other grants are eligible if the purposes are similar and grant sources do not restrict or diminish the use, availability, or value of the project area. These grants are eligible only as matching funds and are not reimbursable.

The eligibility of federal funds to be used as a match may be governed by federal and state requirements and thus will vary with individual program policies.

The applicant must clearly identify in the grant application all grants to be used as match. RCO will help determine if the source is compatible with Recreation and Conservation Funding Board grants.

⁶⁹Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2004-08 and 2006-13b

Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Grants as Match⁷⁰

Another Recreation and Conservation Funding Board grant may be used to help meet the match requirements if the following conditions apply:

- The grants are not from the same Recreation and Conservation Funding Board grant program.
- Only elements eligible in both grant programs may count as match.
- Each grant is evaluated independently and on its own merits, as if the match were coming from elsewhere.
- The applicant must provide a minimum of 10 percent of the total costs of the eligible elements being matched. This sponsor match may not be from federal or state funds, and may include in-kind contributions. This policy does not apply to Native American tribes or state agencies.
- The grant applications are submitted in the same biennium.⁷¹

For evaluation scoring purpose, an RCO grant used as match will not count toward the award of matching share points.⁷²

Matching resources also must conform to the deadlines discussed in section 1, "Grant Process and Timeline."

Mitigation Funds as Match

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board allows use of impact fees and mitigation cash payments, such as money from a fund established as a mitigation requirement, as match if the money has been passed from the mitigating entity to an eligible applicant, and the board's grant does not replace mitigation money, repay the mitigation fund, or in any way supplant the obligation of the mitigating entity.

Federal Rules

For all projects funded with federal funds or other grants that are used by RCO as match to a federal source, grant administration is governed by [Part 200-Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards](#) and RCO may require additional information.

⁷⁰Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2006-04

⁷¹Washington Administrative Code 286-13-045

⁷²Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2015-02

Records and Reimbursements

Sponsors Must Pay First

RCO pays grants through reimbursement. A sponsor may request reimbursement only after paying employees and vendors. RCO does not provide money before vendors are paid.

Except as otherwise provided below, RCO will pay only at the percentage identified in the grant agreement after the sponsor has presented an invoice documenting cost incurred and compliance with the provisions of the grant agreement.

RCO will not pay more than the sponsor's out-of-pocket costs.

Reimbursement shall not be approved for any donations, including donated land.

RCO may pay an escrow account directly for RCO's share of the approved cost of land and related costs if the sponsor indicates a temporary lack of money to buy the land on a reimbursement basis. Before release of RCO grants into escrow, the sponsor must provide RCO with a copy of a binding agreement between the sponsor and the seller, all required documentation, and evidence of deposit of the sponsor's share, identified in the grant agreement, into an escrow account. See *Manual 3: Acquisition Projects* for more information on escrow payments.

Billing procedures are explained further in *Manual 8: Reimbursements*.

Records

The sponsor must keep detailed records of all funded project costs including force account values and donated contributions. Refer to *Manual 8: Reimbursements* for details and instructions regarding audits, record retention, and documents required for reimbursement.

Audits

All records relevant to projects funded by the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board must be on file with the grant sponsor and are subject to audit by the State and inspection by RCO. If the auditor's inspection of the records discloses any charges incorrectly claimed and reimbursed, cash restitution of the incorrect amount must be made to the board.

Section 4: Project Evaluation

This section covers the following:

- ✓ How project evaluation works
- ✓ Evaluation criteria by category

How Project Evaluation Works

The evaluation process begins when the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board adopts the evaluation process⁷³ and evaluation criteria during public meetings.

The RCO director appoints people to serve on advisory committees to evaluate the grant proposals. Representatives from the Department of Ecology, Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Department of Natural Resources also serve on each of these advisory committees.⁷⁴

In recruiting members for the committees, RCO seeks to appoint people who possess a statewide perspective and are recognized for their experiences and knowledge of habitat acquisition, conservation, restoration, stewardship, and fish and other wildlife management in Washington.

The director may appoint *ex officio* members to the advisory committees to provide additional representation and expertise. Below is a list of the advisory committees. Visit RCO's website for [membership and other details](#).

- Habitat Acquisition Advisory Committee reviews and evaluates projects in the Critical Habitat, Natural Areas, and Urban Wildlife Habitat Categories.

⁷³Washington Administrative Code 286-13-020

⁷⁴Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2014-07

- Habitat Restoration Advisory Committee reviews and evaluates projects in Riparian Protection and State Lands Restoration and Enhancement Categories.

For the **Critical Habitat, Riparian Protection, and Urban Wildlife Habitat Categories**, an applicant prepares a PowerPoint presentation to address the evaluation criteria and delivers it to the advisory committee during a virtual, oral presentation.⁷⁵ Advisory committee members may ask follow-up questions before they score the grant proposal. The virtual online presentation process is broadcast live on YouTube for the public, but the public is not invited to comment.

The advisory committee then scores the grant application using the responses to the criteria, graphics included in the application or provided during the presentation, and summary application materials.

For the **Natural Areas and State Land Restoration and Enhancement Categories**, the applicant prepares written responses to address the evaluation criteria. Advisory committee members individually review the written responses, graphics included in the application, and summary application materials, and score the project.

At the same time, RCO staff score the objective sections of the application, such as the amount of matching share the applicant is providing and conformance to growth management planning. Staff scores are based on information submitted by the applicant and obtained from the state Office of Financial Management and the state Department of Commerce.

For all categories, scoring is confidential. The advisory committee's and staff scores are combined for an application's total evaluation score. The resulting ranked lists are the basis for funding recommendations that the RCO director submits to the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board, which makes the final decision about funding in public meetings.⁷⁶ The public is given an opportunity to comment on the grant proposals before the board makes its decision.

There are some variations of this process. See below.

Evaluating Projects

Growth Management Act Compliance

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board considers an organization's compliance with the Growth Management Act when awarding grants for public facilities.⁷⁷ The board gives preference through evaluation scoring to town, city, and county applicants who are

⁷⁵Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2006-13b and 2023-24

⁷⁶Washington Administrative Code 286-13-050

⁷⁷Revised Code of Washington 43.17.250

required to plan under the Act.⁷⁸ Scoring for compliance with the Act and other staff-scored evaluation criteria is based on the organization's status as of the category's technical completion deadline. RCO uses information reported by the Washington State Department of Commerce for scoring Act compliance. Agencies in compliance receive a zero score on the question, out-of-compliance status results in a minus one score.

At the time of application, the applicant should consult its organization's planning department or contact the Washington State Department of Commerce's [Growth Management Division](#) to determine its compliance statuses. If the organization is out of compliance, this advance inquiry may give the organization time to change its status before the technical completion deadline. RCO is not responsible for changing an organization's compliance status with the Growth Management Act.

Supplemental Materials

In identified categories, the applicant completes and submits the Species or Communities with Special Status table, an expanded project description, and an environmental benefits statement⁷⁹ for each grant application. The environmental benefits statement is required for all categories in the habitat conservation account. See the [Applicant's To-Do List](#) for details. These items will be shared with the advisory committee.

Evaluating Natural Areas and State Lands Restoration and Enhancement Projects

In these categories, the applicant **submits written responses** to evaluation criteria as part of the PRISM Online application and prepares the following additional materials and attaches them to PRISM:

- A maximum of a two-page PDF for graphics (photographs, graphs, etc.)
- Regional and site location maps.
- A site restoration plan.
- A complete Species or Communities with Special Status table.
- A one-page PDF for the environmental benefits statement, using 8.5" x 11" paper with one-inch margins and a twelve point font.

⁷⁸Revised Code of Washington 36.60A

⁷⁹Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.065

These materials, along with an application fact sheet and the acquisition strategy for Natural Areas Category projects, comprise the primary materials that are viewed electronically by the advisory committees.

Evaluating Critical Habitat, Riparian Protection, and Urban Wildlife Habitat Projects

Evaluations of critical habitat, riparian protection, and urban wildlife projects involve an applicant's **virtual oral and graphic presentation** to an advisory committee. RCO provides the committees with summary application materials.

The applicant is asked to provide additional information. See the [Applicant's To-Do List](#) for details.

While the evaluation meetings are open to anyone, they are not public hearings. As such, only applicant-designated spokespersons may address the advisory committees. At these meetings, RCO staff serve as a nonvoting moderator. Scoring is confidential. Following the meetings, RCO staff uses PRISM to tabulate and compile all scores to establish ranked lists of projects. The ranked lists are the basis for funding recommendations to the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board.

Evaluation Criteria

Critical Habitat Category

“Critical habitat” means lands important for the protection, management, or public enjoyment of certain wildlife species or groups of species, including, but not limited to, wintering range for deer, elk, and other species; waterfowl and upland bird habitat; fish habitat; and habitat for endangered, threatened, or sensitive species.”⁸⁰

Critical Habitat Category Evaluation Summary		
Criteria	Evaluation Elements	Possible Points
Unscored		
Project Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project goals and objectives Location maps 	Not scored
Scored by the Advisory Committee		
1. Ecological and Biological Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The bigger picture Uniqueness and significance of the site Statewide significance Fish and wildlife species or communities Quality of habitat 	20 points
2. Species and Communities with Special Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Threat to species or communities Importance of acquisitions Ecological roles Taxonomic distinctness Rarity Pollinator habitat 	10 points
3. Manageability and Viability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Threat to the habitat Consideration of a conservation easement Long-term viability Enhancement of existing protected land Ongoing stewardship Livestock grazing uses 	15 points
4. Public Benefit and Community Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community support Educational and/or scientific value 	5 points
5. Multiple Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recreation uses Resource uses and management practices 	3 points
Total Points Possible		53

⁸⁰Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.010(3)

Detailed Scoring Criteria for Critical Habitat Category

Project Introduction. This is an opportunity to set the stage for the project. Provide maps showing the location of the project on the landscape and briefly provide a broad overview of the site and the project's goals and objectives.

Project Goals and Objectives

Briefly introduce the site and the project's goals and objectives. The following criteria will provide an opportunity to describe the project in more detail; however, the intent here primarily is to help orient the evaluators to the project.

Statewide, Vicinity, and Site Maps

Locate the project on statewide, vicinity, and site maps to help orient the evaluators to the project site.

To demonstrate how the project supports connectivity to other important landscapes, please include on a map other sites in the area with similar habitat components.

▲ Project introduction is not scored.

1. Ecological and Biological Characteristics. Why is the site worthy of long-term conservation?⁸¹

"Paint a picture" of the project for the evaluators—the what, where, and why. This is the heart of the presentation and evaluators will draw conclusions based on the information presented about the quality and function of the habitat and the demonstrated need to protect it for fish and other wildlife.

The Bigger Picture

How is this project supported by a current plan (i.e., species management population plan, habitat conservation, local, conservation futures, watershed, statewide, agency, or conservation), or a coordinated region-wide prioritization effort? What is the status of the plan? Does this project assist in implementation of a local shoreline master program, updated according to Revised Code of Washington 90.58.080 or local comprehensive plans updated according to Revised Code of Washington 36.70A.130? 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 or habitat? For Water Resource Inventory Areas 1-19, how is the project referenced in the *Action Agenda* developed by the Puget Sound Partnership? The

⁸¹Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.060 (6)(a)(iii, v - vii, xi, xiv); (6)(b)(ii)

[Action Agenda](#) can be found on the Puget Sound Partnership's website. Evaluators should ignore this question for projects outside Water Resource Inventory Areas 1-19.

Uniqueness and Significance

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, and rarity?
- How is the site important in providing critical habitat or biological function for wildlife species or communities?
- How does this site compare to others of the same type?

Statewide Significance

What is the statewide significance of the project site? Does it meet priorities identified in a state plan? What elevates this site to a state significance level in addition to needs identified for the local community?

Fish and Wildlife Species or Communities

Which, if any, are the target species or communities?⁸² (Target species may or may not be special status species.) Are the target species or communities geographically isolated to this particular site? Explain the condition of the population of target species. Which species have the potential and likelihood to use the site in the future and will reintroduction occur naturally or otherwise?

Quality of Habitat

Describe the ecological and biological quality of the habitat. What specific role does the habitat play in supporting the species or communities using the site? How is this habitat important in providing food, water, cover, connectivity, and resting areas? Are the size, quality, and other characteristics of the habitat adequate to support the target species or communities within the context of the project areas? Has the habitat or characteristics of the site been identified as limiting factors or critical pathways to the target species and communities?

▲ Point Range: zero to twenty points

⁸²A target species or community is the project's primary objective for protection and stands to gain the greatest benefit from the acquisition. For example, a project's primary objective may be to acquire and protect high quality shrub-steppe. This is the "target community" but that community also provides important habitat for shrub-steppe-dependent species.

Revised February 2016

2. Species or Communities with Special Status

What is the significance of each species or community listed on the required Species and Communities Status table (see appendix A)?⁸³

This question's intent is to determine the significance of the species or communities with special status and how they may benefit from the project. Some special status species or communities may benefit on a more passive basis, while others may benefit directly. In the interest of time, consider addressing only the species or communities that benefit the most from this project.

Immediacy of Threat to the Species or Communities

Describe the immediacy of threat to the species or communities (e.g., imminent danger of extinction or extirpation; threatened within the foreseeable future, or concern because of current trends; population stable, but catastrophic event could threaten; no foreseeable threat).

Importance of Habitat Acquisition to Species or 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, or regulatory protection. Describe the distribution or range and, if known, the abundance of the species or communities. Identify any recovery plans, conservation strategies, or similar plans that reference this site. How does this project assist with recovery efforts for endangered, threatened, or sensitive species?

Ecological Roles

Does the species play an especially important role in the ecosystem in which it lives? Do other species depend on it for their survival? Will its loss substantially alter the functioning of the ecosystem?

Taxonomic Distinctness

How evolutionarily distinct is the species in question? That is, is it recognized as the only species in its genus or is it one of ten species in the genus? Is it only recognized as a subspecies? Example: Some scientists think that more evolutionarily distinct organisms should have a higher priority for protection. Based on this assumption, if all else is equal, saving the sole surviving member of a genus may have a higher priority than saving an imperiled species within a

⁸³Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.060 (6)(a)(iv, ix, xiii)

large genus that contains many other species. Similarly, protecting a full species normally would be given a higher priority than protecting a subspecies and population. Example: The Olympic mudminnow (*Novumbrahubbsi*) is the sole surviving member of its genus *Novumbra*, whereas the peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) is a member of a large genus containing thirty-seven species.

Rarity

Describe the distribution or range and, if known, the abundance of a species or community. Examples: The Olympic mudminnow occurs in western Washington and nowhere else in the world. The number of populations are fewer than in the past, but fourteen of sixteen populations monitored from 1993-1998 appear stable and in no immediate danger of extinction. The peregrine falcon is cosmopolitan, occurring on every continent. The two Washington subspecies were endangered; they increased from a low of one known breeding pair in 1978 to fifty-six breeding pairs in 1999. The federal government considers this species recovered in the United States; it was removed from the federal endangered species list in 1999, but will be monitored for another decade.

Pollinator Habitat

Describe how the site supports the feeding, nesting, and reproduction of pollinator species (bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, etc.)?⁸⁴

▲ Point Range: zero to ten points

Revised January 2020, Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2020-05

3. Manageability and Viability

What is the likelihood of the site remaining viable over the long term and why is it important to secure it now?⁸⁵ This question's intent is to determine whether the site can be managed, and how it will be managed, to protect the target species or communities.

Immediacy of Threat of the Habitat

What, and how immediate or imminent are the threats to the habitat at the site (i.e., inherent, ecological, human, conversion, abatable or non-abatable threats)? Are these new threats or ongoing threats? How do or will these threats affect the function of the habitat? How will protection of the site affect these threats? What steps already have been taken to secure the land or reduce the threats?

⁸⁴Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.060 (5)(a)(xvii).

⁸⁵Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.060 (6)(a)(ii, iv, viii, x)

Consideration of a Conservation Easement

Would a conservation easement provide an appropriate level of protection for this habitat? If yes but fee-simple acquisition is the preferred approach, describe the reasons why a conservation easement is not being pursued.

- Characterize the components of the easement under consideration and state why and how those components provide adequate conservation of the site and its features.

Long-Term Viability

What regulatory protections currently are afforded the site (county comprehensive plan, critical areas ordinances, zoning, development regulation, shoreline management rules, forest practice rules including landowner landscape plans, habitat conservation plans, etc.)? Demonstrate how the site will be managed over time to maintain the desired characteristics. Who will maintain it and what human and financial resources are available to do it? What management needs are there? Is the habitat recoverable? What restorative efforts, if any, are needed and planned? What is happening across the landscape or watershed that may affect the viability of the site? Describe any long-term site monitoring plans and identify who will implement monitoring?

Enhancement of Existing Protected Land

Are there other protected lands (public and private) near or adjoining this site that have complementary or compatible land uses for the target species (consider wide-ranging or migratory species)? Are they managed in a manner consistent with the needs of the target species or communities? Is this site part of a larger ownership? If so, describe the connectivity and management of the other land.

Ongoing Stewardship

- Describe the ongoing stewardship program for the project area including the estimated costs of maintenance and operation and the control of noxious weeds, detrimental invasive species, etc.
- What is the source of funding for this stewardship work?

Livestock Grazing Uses

Livestock grazing may not diminish the essential purposes of the proposed project. Describe livestock grazing uses of the property that would occur if the property were acquired. Describe the site-specific management plan for livestock grazing that protects or enhances the health of the species targeted in the grant proposal. The site-specific management plan must incorporate current laws, rules,

and guidelines for wildlife species protection and include a duration and periodic renewal schedule.

▲ Point Range: zero to fifteen points

Revised February 2018, Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2018-06

4. Public Benefit and Community Support

To what degree do communities, governments, landowners, constituent groups, or academia benefit from or support the project?⁸⁶

This question's intent is to find out the unique public benefits are of the project. Public benefit should not be equated with "public access." The question is not meant to discount projects for *not* having overwhelming support or educational opportunities. It may be that the project has one or the other qualities and not both. The answer will be scored on those unique qualities and how they are appropriate for, or of benefit to, the project.

Community Support

- Describe the support or partnerships from the community including local citizens, local organizations, local elected officials, interest groups, volunteers, public agencies, etc. How have these groups been involved in project development? Explain any known opposition to the project.
- Describe and document other monetary means that have been secured to help cover the costs for the project, such as grants, donations, in-kind contributions, etc.

Educational and/or Scientific Value

Describe the scientific and educational values of the site. Is there an identified research or educational need documented in a management plan, thesis, or scientific journal related to the habitat, species, or communities at the site? How likely is it that these opportunities will come to fruition? How accessible is the site for these activities?

▲ Point Range: zero to five points

Revised February 2018, Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2018-06

⁸⁶Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.060 (6)(a)(i, xii)

5. Multiple Benefits

Recreation Uses

Does the project area include recreational uses that are compatible with habitat conservation?

Explain these recreational uses and how they are compatible with the habitat conservation objectives of the project.

- Provide an evidenced based explanation of compatibility.
- Explain how recreational uses are managed on the landscape and balanced with habitat conservation.
- Discuss the quality of the recreational experience.

Resource Uses and Management Practices

Does the project area include resource uses or management practices that are compatible with and provide the ability to achieve additional conservation benefits?

Describe the resource uses or management practices and explain how they are compatible with conservation and achieve additional conservation benefits.

- Provide an evidenced-based explanation of (1) compatibility with conservation and (2) achieving additional conservation benefits.
- How will these resource uses and management practices be managed?
- Describe how the local or regional communities and their leaders value these resource uses or management practices.

Evidence provided by the sponsor showing local support for conservation due to the applicant continuing a compatible historic use or practice that would otherwise be threatened may be considered as meeting the criteria of achieving additional conservation benefits.

Scoping the project to avoid impairing a locally preferred resource use or management practice may be considered as meeting the criteria of achieving additional conservation benefits.

▲ Point Range: zero to three points

Zero points	No multiple benefits provided or multiple benefits are not compatible with or achieve additional conservation benefits.
One to three points	More points shall be given to the extent multiple benefits exist, recreational uses are compatible with conservation, and resource uses and management practices achieve additional conservation benefits.

Adopted February 2018, Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2018-06

Natural Areas Category

“Natural Areas” means areas that have, to a significant degree, retained their natural character and are important in preserving rare or vanishing flora, fauna, geological, natural, historical, or similar features of scientific or educational value.⁸⁷

Natural Areas Category Evaluation Summary		
Criteria	Evaluation Elements	Possible Points
Unscored		
Project Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project goals and objectives • Location maps 	Not scored
Scored by the Advisory Committee		
1. Ecological and Biological Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The bigger picture • Uniqueness or significance of the site • Statewide significance • Species or communities • Quality of habitat and natural features 	20 points
2. Species and Communities with Special Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threat to species or communities • Importance of acquisition • Ecological roles • Taxonomic distinctness • Pollinator habitat 	10 points
3. Manageability and Viability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediacy of threat to the site • Consideration of a conservation easement • Long-term viability • Enhancement of existing protected land • Ongoing stewardship 	15 points
4. Public Benefit and Community Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community support • Educational and/or scientific value 	5 points
5. Multiple Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreation uses • Resource uses and management practices 	3 points
Total Points Possible		53

⁸⁷Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.010(6)

Detailed Scoring Criteria for Natural Areas Category

Project Introduction

This is an opportunity to set the stage for the project. Provide a broad overview of the site and the project's goals and objectives.

Project Goals and Objectives

Briefly introduce the site and the project's goals and objectives. The following criteria will provide an opportunity to describe the project in more detail; however the intent here primarily is to help orient the evaluators to the project.

Statewide, Vicinity, and Site Maps

Locate the project on statewide, vicinity, and site maps to help orient the evaluators to the project site.

In order to demonstrate how the project supports connectivity to other important landscapes please include on a map other sites in the area with similar habitat components.

▲ Project introduction is not scored.

1. Ecological and Biological Characteristics

Why is the site worthy of long-term conservation?⁸⁸

"Paint a picture" of the project for the evaluators—the what, where, and why. This is the heart of the presentation and evaluators will draw conclusions based on the information presented about the *quality and function of the plant community*, *habitat* or other unique geological or natural historical features and the *demonstrated need to protect* it.

The Bigger Picture

- How is this project supported by a current plan (i.e., Natural Heritage Plan, habitat conservation, local, watershed, statewide, or species/community management or recovery plans) or a coordinated region-wide prioritization effort? What is the status of the plan?
- Does this project assist in implementation of a local shoreline master program updated according to Revised Code of Washington 90.58.080 or local comprehensive plans updated according to Revised Code of

⁸⁸Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.060 (6)(a)(iii, v-vii, xi); (6)(b)(ii)

Washington 36.70A.130? 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 or habitat?

- For Water Resource Inventory Areas 1-19, how is the project referenced in the *Action Agenda* developed by the Puget Sound Partnership? The [Action Agenda](#) can be found on the Puget Sound Partnership's website. Evaluators should ignore this question for projects outside Water Resource Inventory Areas 1-19.

Uniqueness and Significance

- 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, and rarity?
- How is the site important to the target species and/or communities? Are the target species and/or communities geographically isolated to this particular site?
- How does this site compare to others of the same type?

Statewide Significance

What is the statewide significance of the project site? Does it meet priorities identified in a state plan? What elevates this site to a state significance level in addition to needs identified for the local community?

Species or Communities

- What significant species and/or communities currently exist on or use the site? Which, if any, are the target species and/or communities? (*Target species or communities may or may not be special status species.*)
- Describe the community type(s) and explain the relative condition of the population of target species and/or communities.
- Which species and/or communities have the potential and likelihood to use the site in the future and will reintroduction occur naturally or otherwise?

Quality of Habitat or Natural Features

- Describe the ecological and biological quality of the site and how it supports the species or communities present.
- Describe how this site represents a native ecosystem or its rarity in relation to other types. Describe how this site has retained, to a significant degree, its natural character.
- Are the size, quality, and other site characteristics adequate to support the target species or communities within the context of the project area?
- Has the habitat or characteristics of the site been identified as limiting factors or critical pathways to the target species/communities?

▲ Point Range: zero to twenty points

Revised February 2018, Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2018-06

2. Species or Communities with Special Status

What is the significance of each species or community listed on the required Species or Communities with Special Status table (see appendix A)?⁸⁹

This question's intent is to determine the significance of the species or communities with special status and how they may benefit from the project. Some special status species or communities may benefit on a more passive basis, while others may benefit directly. *In the interest of space consider addressing only the species or communities that benefit the most from this project.*

Threat to the Species and Communities

Describe the immediacy of threat to the species or community (e.g., imminent danger of extinction or extirpation; threatened in the foreseeable future, or concern because of current trends; population stable, but catastrophic event could threaten; no foreseeable threat).

Importance of Acquisitions

- Describe how this acquisition contributes to the conservation of these species or communities with special status.
- Describe the distribution or range and, if known, the abundance of the species or community.

⁸⁹Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.060 (6)(a)(iv, ix, xiii)

- Identify any recovery plans, conservation strategies, or similar plans that include reference to this site.
- How does this project assist with recovery efforts for endangered, threatened, or sensitive species?

Ecological Roles

How will these communities or species benefit from this project?

- Describe how this project will provide ecological support for the communities or species with special status.

Taxonomic Distinctiveness

How evolutionarily distinct is the species in question (is it recognized as the only species in its genus, is it one of ten species in the genus, is it only recognized at the subspecies level, i.e., as a variety or subspecies)?

Example: Water howellia (*Howellia aquatilis*) is the only recognized species in the genus *Howellia*, whereas Buxbaum's sedge (*Carex buxbaumii*) is a member of a very large genus, consisting of more than one thousand recognized species. Presumably, the genetic material of water howellia is more distinctive from all other living species than is Buxbaum's sedge. Some scientists believe that more evolutionarily distinct organisms should have a higher priority for protection. Based on this assumption, if all else is equal, it would be more important to conserve water howellia than Buxbaum's sedge.

Pollinator Habitat

Describe how the site supports the feeding, nesting, and reproduction of pollinator species (bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, etc.)?⁹⁰

▲ Point Range: zero to ten points

Revised January 2020, Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2020-05

3. Manageability and Viability

What is the likelihood of the site being viable (functioning) over the long term and why is it important to secure it now?⁹¹

⁹⁰Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.060 (5)(a)(xvii).

⁹¹Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.060 (6)(a)(ii, iv, viii, x)

This question's intent is to determine whether the site can be managed, and how it will be managed, to protect the target species, communities, or natural features.

Immediacy of Threat to the Site

What, and how imminent, are the threats to the site (i.e., inherent, ecological, human, conversion, abatable or non-abatable threats)?

- Are these new threats or ongoing? How do or will these threats affect the function of the site?
- How will protection of the site affect these threats? What steps already have been taken to secure the land or reduce the threats?

Consideration of a Conservation Easement

Would a conservation easement provide an appropriate level of protection for this habitat? If yes but fee-simple acquisition is the preferred approach, describe the reasons why a conservation easement is not being pursued.

- Characterize the components of the easement under consideration and state why and how those components provide adequate conservation of the site and its features.

Long-term Viability

What regulatory protections already are afforded the site (county comprehensive plan, critical areas ordinances, zoning, development regulations, shoreline management rules, forest practice rules including landowner landscape plans, habitat conservation plans, etc.)?

Demonstrate how the site will be managed over time to maintain the desired characteristics.

- Who will maintain it and what human and financial resources are available to do it? What management needs are there? What restorative efforts, if any, are needed or planned?
- What is happening across the landscape or watershed that may affect the viability of the site?
- Describe any long-term site monitoring plans and identify who will implement monitoring.

Enhancement of Existing Protected Land

Are there other lands (public and private) near this site that have complimentary or compatible land uses for the target species or communities?

- Are they managed in a manner consistent with the needs of the target species or communities?
- Is this site part of a larger ownership? If so, describe the connectivity and management of the other land.

Ongoing Stewardship

Describe the ongoing stewardship program for the project area including the estimated costs of maintenance and operation and the control of noxious weeds, detrimental invasive species, etc.

- What is the source of funding for this stewardship work?

▲ Point Range: zero to fifteen points

Revised February 2018, Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2018-06

4. Public Benefit and Community Support

To what degree do communities, governments, landowners, constituent groups, or academia benefit from, or support, the project?⁹²

This question's intent is to find out what the *unique* public benefits are of the project. Public benefit should not be equated with "public access." The question is not meant to discount projects for *not* having overwhelming support or educational opportunities. It may be that the project has one or the other qualities and not both. The answer will be scored on those unique qualities and how they are appropriate for, or of benefit to, the project.

Community Support

Describe the support or partnerships with the community including local citizens, local organizations, local elected officials, interest groups, volunteers, public agencies, etc. How have these groups been involved in project development? Explain any known opposition to the project.

- Describe and document other monetary means that have been secured to help cover the costs for the project, such as grants, donations, in-kind contributions, etc.

⁹²Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.060 (6)(a)(i, xii)

Educational and/or Scientific Values

Describe the scientific and educational values of the site.

- Is there an identified research or educational need documented in a management plan, thesis, or scientific journal related to the habitat, species, or communities at the site? How likely is it that these opportunities will come to fruition? How accessible is the site for these activities?

▲ Point Range: zero to five points

Revised February 2018, Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2018-06

5. Multiple Benefits

Recreational Uses

Does the project area include recreational uses that are compatible with habitat conservation?

Explain these recreational uses and how they are compatible with the habitat conservation objectives of the project.

- Provide an evidenced based explanation of compatibility.
- Explain how recreational uses are managed on the landscape and balanced with habitat conservation.
- Discuss the quality of the recreational experience.

Resource Uses and Management Practices

Does the project area include resource uses or management practices that are compatible with and provide the ability to achieve additional conservation benefits?

Describe the resource uses or management practices and explain how they are compatible with conservation and achieve additional conservation benefits.

- Provide an evidenced-based explanation of (1) compatibility with conservation and (2) achieving additional conservation benefits.
- How will these resource uses and management practices be managed?
- Describe how the local or regional communities and their leaders value these resource uses or management practices.

Evidence provided by the sponsor showing local support for conservation due to the applicant continuing a compatible historic use or practice that would otherwise be threatened may be considered as meeting the criteria of achieving additional conservation benefits.

Scoping the project to avoid impairing a locally preferred resource use or management practice may be considered as meeting the criteria of achieving additional conservation benefits.

▲ Point Range: zero to three points

Zero points	No multiple benefits provided, or multiple benefits are not compatible with or achieve additional conservation benefits.
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One to three points	More points shall be given to the extent multiple benefits exist, recreational uses are compatible with conservation, resource uses and management practices achieve additional conservation benefits.
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Adopted February 2018, Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2018-06

Riparian Protection Category

"Riparian habitat" is defined as land adjacent to water bodies, as well as submerged land such as streambeds, which can provide functional habitat for salmonids and other fish and wildlife species. Riparian habitat includes, but is not limited to, shorelines and near-shore marine habitat, estuaries, lakes, wetlands, streams, and rivers.⁹³

Riparian Protection Category Evaluation Summary			
Criteria	Evaluation Elements	Project Type	Possible Points
Unscored			
Project Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map • Project goals and objectives 	All projects	Not scored
Scored by the Advisory Committee			
1. Acquisition Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecological makeup • Riparian habitat • Pollinator habitat • Surrounding land uses • Level of protection 	All projects	20 points
2. Planning and Community Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan support • Community engagement 	All projects	15 points
3. Stewardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational capacity • Stewardship plan 	Acquisition projects	16 points
		Acquisition and Restoration projects	8 points
4. Restoration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restoration plan 	Acquisition and Restoration projects	8 points
5. Threats to the Habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threats to the site • Immediacy of threat 	All projects	5 points
6. Community Benefits and Public Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple Benefits • Public Access • Education and scientific opportunities 	All projects	10 points
Scored by RCO			
7. Matching Share	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other resources 	All projects	3 points
8. Matching Share Bonus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-federal, non-state contribution 	All projects	1 point

⁹³Revised Code of Washington [79a.15.010](#)

Riparian Protection Category Evaluation Summary			
Criteria	Evaluation Elements	Project Type	Possible Points
9. Growth Management Act		All projects	0 points
Total Points Possible			70

Detailed Scoring Criteria for Riparian Protection Category⁹⁴

Project Introduction

This is an opportunity to set the stage for the project. The following detailed criteria will provide an opportunity to describe the project in more depth; however, the intent here primarily is to help orient the evaluators to the project.

- Locate the project on statewide, regional, and site maps to help orient the evaluators to the project area and its context within the landscape.
- Briefly provide a broad overview of the site and the project's goals and objectives (e.g., acquisition goals, habitat or ecosystem type, and opportunities for connecting people with nature).

▲ Project introduction is not scored.

1. Acquisition Benefits (acquisition and combination projects)

What are the specific environmental benefits of this project?

- Describe the ecological structure and composition of the property to be acquired. What riparian habitat types exist on the property (wetland, stream, estuary, etc.)? What non-riparian habitat types exist on the property and how do they contribute to the riparian function? Describe the extent to which priority species, including threatened or endangered species, occur on-site?
- How much of the property is considered riparian? How is the riparian area defined (flood maps, channel migration zone, wetland delineation, tree height, local regulations, etc.)?
- How does the site support the feeding, nesting, and reproduction of pollinator species (e.g., honey bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, etc.)?⁹⁵

⁹⁴Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2019-28

⁹⁵Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.060(5)(c)(x).

- What are the land uses surrounding the site? In the description, consider how this site is adjacent to other protected habitat, connects otherwise isolated habitat, or generally improves landscape connectivity.
- What level of protection will be placed on the property? Will the site be protected in perpetuity? If the site will be protected with a conservation easement, describe the plan for inspection and enforcement.

▲ Point Range: zero to twenty points

2. Planning and Community Support (acquisition and combination projects)

- How does this project or its ecological characteristics support a current organizational plan or a coordinated state or regional prioritization effort? Who are the plan's proponents and how does this proposal help meet the goals or strategies of the identified plans (Natural Heritage Plan, watershed plan, salmon recovery plan, climate adaptation plan, or other local comprehensive plan or shoreline master program)?
- What are the future potential additions to the conserved land base in the area? Is this site an anchor site for future conservation opportunities? Why is this site a high priority at this time?
- Describe the community engagement efforts for this project proposal. How was the local community engaged in the scoping and development of this project?

▲ Point Range: zero to fifteen points

3. Stewardship (acquisition and combination projects)

Please describe the following:

- What expertise and capacity the applicant's organization has for long-term management of the site including staff, volunteer, and financial resources, and any other relevant factors.
- What partners are involved and how these partners have demonstrated a commitment to assist with project implementation or long-term management of the site.
- The stewardship plan for the property and the ongoing funding sources to implement the stewardship plan. Include in the discussion consideration of future ecological condition and plans for controlling or removing invasive species and noxious weeds.

- The risks to achieving the stewardship or management goals.

▲ Point Range: zero to sixteen points for acquisition only projects, zero to eight points for combination (acquisition and restoration) projects.

4. **Restoration** (combination projects)

Please describe the following:

- What expertise and capacity the applicant's organization has to conduct this riparian restoration project?
- Other sources of funding or resources that will be used for the restoration activities.
- The desired future condition of the site, the restoration goals, and the project design. What is the restoration plan and timeline? When will it be implemented? How does the restoration plan consider and anticipate future ecological conditions?
- What are the risks that would prevent achieving success of the restoration goals?

▲ Points Range: zero to eight points

5. **Threats to the Habitat**

- Characterize the threats to the site. Threats may be ecological, biological, human-caused, or related to climate change. Include in the discussion the county zoning, critical areas, and shoreline master program regulations, and why these are not adequate to protect the property. Based on this assessment, please also describe the potential for development or conversion of the property.
- What are the near-term consequences of the identified threats to the project site? How do these threats affect the function of the riparian habitat?
- How will this project address these threats? What will happen if this project is not funded?

▲ Point Range: zero to five points

6. **Community Benefits and Public Access**

- How does this project provide multiple benefits to the community, habitat, or surrounding ecological landscape? Include the following in the

discussion:

- Other resource uses or management practices that are compatible with and provide the ability to achieve additional conservation benefits (grazing uplands for weed control, supporting community-based forestry, etc.)
- How this project provides other ecosystem service benefits to the surrounding land (increased tree canopy cover in a dense urban area, aquifer recharge, flood attenuation, increased fire security, etc.).
- If public access is not currently allowed on this site, describe the plans to facilitate public access or recreation. Describe how the recreation opportunities are compatible with the conservation goals of this project? How will public access or recreation opportunities be managed to not interfere with the conservation purpose of this project? If public access will be excluded from some or all the project area, please explain why?
- Describe the plan for community outreach for use of this site. For example, how will this site be used for youth and community education or scientific study (university research, school programming, citizen science, etc.)?

▲ Point Range: zero to ten points

7. Matching Share (applicant does not answer).

To what extent will the applicant match any Recreation and Conservation Funding Board grant funds with other contributions?

This question is scored based on information submitted as part of the application. Native American tribes, local agencies, nonprofits, and lead entities are required to provide a 50 percent match.⁹⁶ Of the 50 percent match, 10 percent of the total project cost must be from non-federal and non-state sources. State agency applicants are not required to provide a matching share.

All applications are scored whether a match is required or not.

To qualify, matching resources must be eligible for Riparian Protection Category funding. An RCO grant used as match will not count toward the award of matching share points.⁸³

⁹⁶Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.120(7)

▲ Point Range: zero to four points

Zero points	50 percent of project's value will be contributed from other resources
One point	50.01-60 percent of project's value will be contributed from other resources
Two points	60.01-70 percent of project's value will be contributed from other resources
Three points	70.01 percent or more of project's value will be contributed from other resources

8. Matching Share Bonus (applicant does not answer).

Does the non-state, non-federal contribution described in the "Matching Share" criterion above equal more than 10 percent of the total project cost?

▲ Point Range: zero to one point

Zero points	No
One point	Yes

9. Growth Management Act (applicant does not answer).

Has the applicant made progress toward meeting the requirements of the Growth Management Act?

State law⁹⁷ requires that:

- A. Whenever a state agency is considering awarding grants to finance public facilities, it shall consider whether the applicant⁹⁸ has adopted a comprehensive plan and development regulations as required by Revised Code of Washington 36.70A.040.
- B. When reviewing such requests, the state agency shall accord additional preference to applicants that have adopted the comprehensive plan and development regulations. An applicant is deemed to have satisfied the requirements for adopting a comprehensive plan and development regulations if it completes any of the following:

⁹⁷[Revised Code of Washington 43.17.250](#)

⁹⁸County, city, or town applicants only. This segment of the question does not apply to state agency, tribal government, nonprofits, or lead entity applicants.

- Adopts or has adopted within the time periods specified in state law.
 - Adopts or has adopted by the time it requests a grant or loan.
 - Demonstrates substantial progress toward adopting within the time periods specified in state law. An agency that is more than six months out of compliance with the time periods has not demonstrated substantial progress.
- C. A request from an applicant planning under state law shall be accorded no additional preference based on subsection (B) over a request from an applicant not planning under this state law.

RCO staff score this question using information from the state Department of Commerce, Growth Management Division. Scoring occurs after RCO's technical completion deadline. If an agency's comprehensive plan, development regulation, or amendment has been appealed to the Growth Management Hearings Board, the agency cannot be penalized during the period of appeal.

▲ Point Range: Minus one to zero points

Minus one point	The applicant does <i>not</i> meet the countywide planning policy requirements of Revised Code of Washington 43.17.250
Zero points	The applicant <i>meets</i> the countywide planning policy requirements of Revised Code of Washington 43.17.250
Zero points	The applicant is a nonprofit, state agency, or tribal government

State Lands Restoration and Enhancement Category

“Restoration” means a project that brings a site back to its historic function as part of a natural ecosystem or improving the ecological functionality of a site.⁹⁹

Enhancement improves the ecological function of a site.

State Lands Restoration and Enhancement Category Evaluation Criteria		
Criteria	Evaluation Elements	Possible Points
Project Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project goals and objectives Location maps 	Not scored
Score by the Advisory Committee		
1. Ecological and Biological Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bigger picture Uniqueness or significance Target species and communities 	15 points
2. Need for Restoration or Enhancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The problem to be addressed Threat 	15 points
3. Project Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Details of project design Best management practices 	15 points
4. Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistency with existing plans Puget Sound Partnership guidelines 	5 points
5. Public Benefit and Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public educational or scientific value 	5 points
Total Points Possible		55

⁹⁹Washington Administrative Code 286-0-010

Detailed Scoring Criteria for the State Lands Restoration and Enhancement Category

Project Introduction

This is an opportunity to set the stage for the project. Provide maps showing the location of the project on the landscape and briefly provide a broad overview of the site and the project's goals and objectives.

Project Goals and Objectives

Briefly introduce the site and the project's goals and objectives. The following criteria will provide an opportunity to describe the project in more detail; however the intent here primarily is to help orient the evaluators to the project.

Statewide, Vicinity, and Site Maps

Locate the project on statewide, vicinity, and site maps to help orient the evaluators to the project site.

To demonstrate how the project supports connectivity to other important landscapes, please include on a map other sites in the area with similar habitat components.

▲ Project introduction is not scored.

1. Ecological and Biological Characteristics

Describe why the site is worthy of long-term conservation. "Paint a picture" of the project site for the evaluators—the what, where, and why.

The Bigger Picture

- Demonstrate what specific role this project plays in a broader watershed or landscape picture. Describe if the project has functional connectivity with existing habitats.
- State if the site is part of a larger ownership or a collaborative effort to support wildlife, plants, or communities. Describe the ecological and biological quality or potential quality of the habitat.

Uniqueness or Significance

- Explain how the site is unique or significant on a regional, ecosystem, watershed, or urban growth area level.

- State if the site is significant in terms of habitat quality, connectivity, diversity, rarity, etc.

Target Species and Communities

- List the target species and communities with special status that occur on the site. This is not intended to be a comprehensive list of all species in the area. Instead try to narrow the description to those species or communities that would be the primary focus of the restoration efforts.
- Demonstrate how the project benefits the species or communities that are being targeted. Include other relevant facts, such as statistics associated with a decline of the target species using the site due to degradation, or how the site supports a larger population than what typically occurs within the rest of the species range, etc.
- Describe the primary habitat functions. State if the habitat or characteristics of the site have been identified as limiting factors or critical pathways to the target species or communities.
- Complete and submit the Species and Communities with Special Status table in appendix A. This is a required part of the application. Staff may verify the information and evaluators will be given a copy of the table along with the other project materials. The table relates directly to the evaluation criteria section titled "Target Species and Communities," with emphasis on the significance of the species.

▲ Point Range: zero to fifteen points

Revised November 2011

2. Need for Restoration or Enhancement

Describe why this restoration or enhancement project needs to be completed.

The Problem to be Addressed

- Describe why this restoration or enhancement project is important. Explain what currently keeps the habitat from being fully functioning.
- Establish need by identifying similar habitats in the area and compare the project site to those in terms of quality and quantity.

Threat

- Describe the current condition of the site and why it is important to restore or enhance the site at this particular time. Discuss what will be lost if deterioration is allowed to continue.
- State if the site is in an ecologically critical area. Discuss if the habitat is recoverable and what factors have caused the site to need restoration or enhancement.

▲ Point Range: zero to fifteen points

Revised November 2011

3. Project Design

Describe how the proposed project will address the problems identified earlier.

Details of Project Design

- Describe the restoration or enhancement plans for the area. Specifically demonstrate how the project design addresses the need described in question 2 above.
- In the description include the work that has gone into the project to date, including any planning or permitting work that has been completed. Describe any public outreach that has gone into early design work.
- Describe how the project design will improve the ecological function of the site and result in a site that is self-sustaining and will not require continual intervention to function as a natural ecosystem.
- If applicable, describe how the project would help to better manage public use to reduce impacts to targeted species or habitats.

Best Management Practices

- State if the project design is consistent with the Washington State Aquatic Habitat Guidelines Program.
- If the project is using a new or innovative process, describe why the design will be successful. For example, state if the design is consistent with other project sites or if there is new research that supports the efforts.

▲ Point Range: zero to fifteen points

Revised November 2011

4. Planning

Specifically describe how the project is consistent with planning efforts occurring in the area.

Consistency with Existing Plans

How does this project help meet the goals of existing planning efforts? Avoid simply listing other plans that the project may be consistent with. Instead, demonstrate how the project furthers specific elements within those planning efforts.

Puget Sound Partnership Guidelines

For Water Resource Inventory Areas 1-19, state how the project is referenced in the *Action Agenda* developed by the Puget Sound Partnership. The [Action Agenda](#) can be found on the Puget Sound Partnership's website. This question does not need to be answered for projects outside Water Resource Inventory Areas 1-19.

▲ Point Range: zero to five points

Revised November 2011

5. Public Benefit and Support

Describe the degree to which communities, governments, landowners, constituent groups, or academia benefit from, or support, the project.

Public Educational or Scientific Value

- Describe efforts that have been made to involve these groups in the project development.
- Explain any known opposition to the project.
- Describe the support or partnerships from the community, interest groups, volunteers, public agencies, etc.
- Discuss how the project enhances other opportunities available to the public. If public access is not allowed on the site, describe why not. Note: Not all sites need to be available for public access in order to be of public benefit.

▲ Point Range: zero to five points

Revised November 2011

Urban Wildlife Habitat Category

“Urban wildlife habitat” means lands that provide habitat important to fish and other wildlife in proximity to a metropolitan area.¹⁰⁰ Urban wildlife habitat also provides an opportunity for human awareness of the importance of nature and the environmental benefits it provides.

Urban Wildlife Habitat Category Evaluation Summary		
Criteria	Evaluation Elements	Possible Points
Unscored		
Project Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location maps • Project goals and objectives 	Not scored
Scored by the Advisory Committee		
1. Ecological and Biological Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project area composition • Species and communities • Pollinator habitat • Landscape characteristics 	40 points
2. Planning and Community Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan support • Public engagement • Threat to the site • Level of protection 	15 points
3. Community Benefits and Public Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public access, health, recreation, or cultural opportunities • Education and citizen science • Underserved communities • Multiple benefits 	35 points
4. Management and Stewardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management and stewardship plan • Restoration needs • Organizational capacity 	15 points
Scored by RCO		
5. Growth Management Act	Growth Management Act preference	0 points
6. Population of Urban Area	Population of the nearest urban area	5 points
7. Proximity to Urban Area	Proximity to the nearest urban area	5 points
Total Possible Points		115

¹⁰⁰Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.010 (12)

Detailed Scoring Criteria for the Urban Wildlife Habitat Category¹⁰¹

Project Introduction

This is an opportunity to set the stage for the project. The following detailed criteria will provide an opportunity to describe the project in more depth; however the intent here primarily is to help orient the evaluators.

- Locate the project on statewide, regional, and site maps to help orient the evaluators to the project area and its context within the landscape.
- Briefly provide a broad overview of the site and the project's goals and objectives (for example, acquisition goals, habitat or ecosystem type, and opportunities for connecting people with nature).

▲ Project introduction is not scored.

1. Ecological and Biological Characteristics

- Describe the project area and the ecological makeup of the site(s). Include in the description the ecosystem structure and composition, and/or habitat types targeted for conservation; the number of acres; the plant and animal species present, and the significance of the site to the target species. Describe how the targeted species currently use the site.
- Describe any of the plant or animal species at the site that are considered threatened or endangered by any local, state, federal, or international species list. Describe the extent to which noxious weeds or other invasive species occur on site.
- How does the site support the feeding, nesting, and reproduction of pollinator species (bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, etc.)?¹⁰²
- Define the service area or jurisdiction. How unique is this site within the service area or jurisdiction? Is this site part of a larger ownership or management unit?
- What are the land uses surrounding the project area? How does this project connect, enhance, or provide ecosystem services to the surrounding landscape? Are there other protected lands (public or private) near this site that have complementary or compatible habitat characteristics for the target species (consider wide-ranging or migratory species)?

¹⁰¹Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2019-27

¹⁰²Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.060 (5)(a)(xvii)

Applicants must complete and submit the Species or Communities with Special Status table in appendix A.

▲ Point Range: zero to forty points

2. Planning and Community Support

- How is this project supported by a current plan or a coordinated state or regional prioritization effort? Who are the plan's proponents and how does the plan address this specific project, habitat, or ecosystem type (local open space plan, comprehensive growth management plan, or shoreline master program; a watershed or salmon recovery plan; species management plan; climate adaptation plan; Puget Sound Action Agenda; etc.)?
- Describe the public engagement process used to identify this project or habitat as a priority. For example, how were local citizens, organizations, underserved communities, tribal governments, or elected officials engaged, and how was their input incorporated into the project selection and design? Describe the support or partnership commitments secured for the project.
- What is the threat to the site's ecological integrity? Include in the discussion any anticipated ecological changes, the zoning and land-use potential of the site, and regulatory protections currently afforded to the site. Why are land-use regulations not sufficient to achieve the project goals?
- For acquisition projects, what level of protection (fee title acquisition vs. easement) will be placed on the property? Is this acquisition part of a phased project? Is a conservation easement sufficient to achieve the project purpose? If not, please explain why.

▲ Point Range: zero to fifteen points

3. Community Benefits and Public Access

- What public access, public health, recreational, educational, or cultural opportunities will this site provide? Please describe in detail how the public will experience the site and any plans for integrating environmental education and/or citizen science at this site. Also consider how people may access this site using public and/or active transportation (is there existing or planned multi-modal transportation that will bring people to or within a ten-minute walk of this site?)
- How does this project address the needs of communities that have been

historically underserved by, or excluded from, opportunities to access nature? Please describe how their input was incorporated into the planning and design of this project, how they will safely access this site, how they will experience the stated benefits, and how they may be involved in the future of this project.

- How does this project provide other multiple benefits to the community, habitat, or surrounding ecological landscape? Include the following in the discussion:
 - Other resource uses or management practices that may help achieve additional conservation benefits (managed grazing for weed control, supporting a community forest, etc.)
 - How this project provides other ecosystem service benefits (protecting tree canopy in a dense urban area, aquifer recharge, flood attenuation, increased fire security, carbon storage, etc.).
- If development is being proposed at the site, please describe the development plan, site design, and implementation timeline. How does the proposed development contribute to the public needs (educational, health, recreation, cultural, etc.) described above and encourage an appreciation for the protected ecosystem? How will it be compatible with the surrounding natural habitat?

▲ Point Range: zero to thirty-five points

4. Management and Stewardship

- Describe the anticipated stewardship and management needs of the site, including those related to the species and ecosystems, public access, recreation, education, and cultural opportunities. To the degree possible, include the desired future condition of the site, an estimate of stewardship and management costs, and plans to maintain the ecological viability of the site in consideration of climate impacts, changes to surrounding land uses, and development pressure.
- Describe any restoration actions, if any are needed, to improve the habitat function or complexity on-site. How will the restoration work be funded? Who will complete the work? What is the proposed timeline to complete the restoration work?

- What is the applicant’s organization’s experience in managing a site with these or similar conservation values, habitat characteristics, and public access opportunities? What staff, volunteer, and financial resources are available to maintain the site? What is the source of funding for this ongoing work?

▲ Point Range: zero to fifteen points

5. Growth Management Act (applicant does not answer).

Has the applicant made progress toward meeting the requirements of the Growth Management Act?

State law¹⁰³ requires that:

- A. Whenever a state agency is considering awarding grants to finance public facilities, it shall consider whether the applicant¹⁰⁴ has adopted a comprehensive plan and development regulations as required by Revised Code of Washington 36.70A.040.
- B. When reviewing such requests, the state agency shall accord additional preference to applicants that have adopted the comprehensive plan and development regulations. An applicant is deemed to have satisfied the requirements for adopting a comprehensive plan and development regulations if it competes any of the following:
 - Adopts or has adopted within the time periods specified in state law.
 - Adopts or has adopted by the time it requests a grant or loan.
 - Demonstrates substantial progress toward adopting within the time periods specified in state law. An agency that is more than six months out of compliance with the time periods has not demonstrated substantial progress.
- C. A request from an applicant planning under state law shall be accorded no additional preference over a request from an applicant not planning under this state law.

This question is scored by RCO staff based on information from the state Department of Commerce’s Growth Management Services. Scoring occurs after RCO’s technical completion deadline. If an agency’s comprehensive plan, development regulation, or amendment has been appealed to the Growth

¹⁰³Revised Code of Washington 43.17.250

¹⁰⁴County, city, or town applicants only. This segment of the question does not apply to state agency, tribal government, nonprofits, or lead entity applicants.

Management Hearings Board, the agency cannot be penalized during the period of appeal.

▲ Point Range: Minus one to zero points

Minus one point	The applicant does <i>not</i> meet the countywide planning policy requirements of Revised Code of Washington 43.17.250.
Zero points	The applicant <i>meets</i> the countywide planning policy requirements of Revised Code of Washington 43.17.250.
Zero points	The applicant is a nonprofit organization or a state or federal agency.

6. Population of Urban Area (applicant does not answer).

What is the population of the largest city, town, or urban cluster within five miles of the project?¹⁰⁵

This question is scored by RCO staff based on a map provided by the applicant. To receive credit, depict on a map (1) the project boundary or the geographic envelop and (2) the nearest city, town, or urban cluster. Next, draw a straight line, measure, and record on the map the shortest distance in miles “as the crow flies” between one and two above. Include a scale and legend on the map for reference.

The score is based on the population of the largest city, town, or urban cluster within five miles of the project (using population estimates published by the Washington State Office of Financial Management).

▲ Point Range: zero to five points

Zero points	0-4,999
One point	5,000-9,999
Two points	10,000-29,999
Three points	30,000-149,999
Four points	150,000-299,999
Five points	300,000-and above

¹⁰⁵Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.060 (5)(b)

7. Proximity to Urban Area (applicant does not answer).

Where is this project located with respect to urban growth areas, cities, towns, and urban clusters?¹⁰⁶

This question is scored by RCO staff based on a map provided by the applicant for the previous question.

▲ Point Range: zero to five points

Zero points	5.01 miles or further
One point	4.01-5 miles
Two points	3.01-4 miles
Three points	2.01-3 miles
Four points	1.01-2 miles
Five points	Within one mile or inside the Urban Growth Area/municipal boundary/urban cluster

¹⁰⁶Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.060 (5)(b)

Appendix A: Species and Communities with Special Status

Species, Community, or Habitat Type

List each species, community, or habitat type with special status that can be found **on the property or in the work site.**

Occurrence

For special status animal species, indicate whether the occurrence of the species on the property or in the work site is “breeding, feeding, migrating, resting, perching, roosting, wintering, rearing, spawning, year-round resident, individual occurrence, future recovery area, or unknown.”

For special status plant species, communities, or habitat types, indicate whether the species, communities, or habitat types are present, part of a future recovery area, or unknown in the occurrence column.

Status and Source

Indicate the status of the species and the source used for the information. A source must be included for each species listed. The following may provide federal and state status and source information:

Federally Listed Species

- [Resident fish and wildlife](#), Endangered Species Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Lacey, (360) 753-9440

- [Pacific salmon species](#), National Marine Fisheries Service West Coast Regional Office, (503) 230-5400

State Listed Species and Candidate Species

- [Species of Concern Section](#), Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, (360) 902-2515

Priority Habitats and Species

- [Priority Habitat and Species Program](#), Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, (360) 902-2543

State Listed Plant Species and Communities

- [Natural Heritage Program, Recommended Guidance for Providing Natural Heritage Data](#), Washington Department of Natural Resources, (360) 902-1667

Other Sources

If species information came from a source other than the sources above (such as a consultant or local biologist), please include reference information on the form.

Federal Status

FE	Endangered
FT	Threatened
FP	Proposed for threatened or endangered
FC	Candidate for listing status review
FSC	Species of concern

State Status

SE	State endangered
ST	State threatened
SS	State sensitive
SC	Candidate for listing status review
PS	Priority species, non-listed but vulnerable
PH	Priority habitat
P1, P2, P3	Priority 1, Priority 2, and Priority 3 (plants)

Property or Work Site

For each species listed, indicate the property or work sites where each species occurs. Work sites may be identified by either a geographic boundary or by an ecologic function, such as habitat type or topography (riparian area, hillside, etc.). For landscape level projects, indicate which species occur within each of the identified work sites.

Example Table-Species and Communities with Special Status

Species, Community or Habitat Type	Occurrence	Status	Source	Property or Work Site: Indicate All That Apply
Douglas Fir/Western Hemlock/Sword Fern Community	Present	P 2	Washington Natural Heritage Program	Property A and B, work site 1
Brown Pelican	Foraging, resting	FE, SE	Priority Habitat and Species Program	Property A and C, work site 1
Thompson's Clover	Unknown	P 2	Washington Natural Heritage Program	Property A, B, and C, work site 1
Chinook Salmon	Rearing	FE	National Marine Fisheries Service; SSHIAP*	Property A, C, and E, work site 1
Western Pond Turtle	Year-round resident	FSC, SE	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; John Smith field survey April 2010	Property D and E, work site 2
Riparian Area	Present	PH	Priority Habitat and Species Program	All properties, all work sites

*SSHIAP=Salmon and Steelhead Habitat Inventory and Assessment Program (Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife)

A downloadable [table](#) is available on the RCO website.