

Habitat and Recreation Lands Coordinating Group

Charter 2019 update

Purpose and Duration

The Habitat and Recreation Lands Coordinating Group (Lands Group) was created by the 2007 Legislature (79A.25.260 RCW -Attachment A). This was in response to the 2005 “Toward a Coordination Strategy for Habitat and Recreation land Acquisitions in Washington State; Final Report” by the Recreation and Conservation Office (formerly Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation). In 2012, the Legislature extended the Lands Group sunset date to July 31, 2017. And again in 2017 it was extended until July 31, 2027. In recognition of the limited resources for the group, the reauthorization directed the Lands Group to prioritize its requirements and implementation plan.

Mission Statement

The Lands Group’s mission is to coordinate state habitat and recreation land acquisitions and disposals through improved communication, documentation, data monitoring, reporting, transparency, and planning.

Roles & Responsibilities

Primary roles and responsibilities are outlined in subsections 3, 4, 5 and 6 of RCW 79A.25.260 (Attachment A). The Lands Group may engage in additional activities if it can demonstrate sufficient progress toward completing its primary responsibilities and if it can demonstrate adequate resources are available for such additional activities.

Membership

1. Lands Group membership must include representatives from the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO), Washington Parks and Recreation Commission (State Parks), Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). Membership may also include additional representatives from stakeholder organizations, and local, state or federal government agencies by express invitation and appointment by the RCO Director (79A.25.260 RCW). Those groups appointed by the director are as follows:
 - a) Washington Department of Ecology (DOE)
 - b) Washington Conservation Commission (WCC)
 - c) Washington Department of Transportation (DOT)
 - d) County governments/Douglas County
 - e) City government park and recreation planner/Washington Recreation and Parks Association
 - f) Pacific Coast Joint Venture
 - g) Puget Sound Partnership (PSP)
 - h) The Nature Conservancy (TNC)

- i) Forterra
 - j) Trust for Public Land
 - k) Washington Association of Land Trusts
 - l) American Farmland Trust
 - m) Forest Products Industry, represented by a Washington Forest Protection Association member
 - n) Not-for-profit conservation organization
2. Representatives from the statutory agencies will be appointed by their agency's director and will be confirmed by the RCO Director (Director) through official invitation.
 3. Official membership will be established by a member's acceptance of a written invitation or appointment letter from the Director.
 4. While consistent and dedicated participation is expected of Lands Group members, alternates may be identified and established by the designated agency / entity representative through written notice to RCO staff (staff).

Members' Roles

1. Lands Group members accept the responsibility to come to the meetings prepared for the discussions.
2. Members will make a special effort to listen carefully, ask pertinent questions and educate themselves and those they represent about the interests and needs presented. Members understand that issues will be addressed in a problem-solving and collaborative atmosphere.
3. Members are expected to attend regularly scheduled Lands Group meetings and shall notify staff of any expected absence. In this event, the member may send his/her designated alternate to attend the meeting in his/her place. The member may also submit written comments to staff for distribution to the other Lands Group members.
4. Members are expected to be pro-active in conveying issues raised by their agency or constituency to the attention of the Lands Group.
5. In the event that a member wishes to resign from the Lands Group, that member should notify the Director and Lands Group of his/her decision thirty days prior to the effective date of resignation. If the notice does not recommend a new agency/entity representative, the Director may request a new representative from the agency's/entity's director to replace the resigning member.
6. If any member misses two consecutive meetings or a majority of meetings within a biennium, the director shall evaluate the circumstances for potential removal.

7. Each member will continually communicate the Lands Group's progress to the agency or entity that he/she represents and routinely seek their advice before making decisions.

Workgroups

1. The Lands Group may form voluntary workgroups to complete statutory tasks and implement action plan.
2. Workgroups will be established on an *ad hoc* basis and should include at least two official Lands Group members.

Quorum

A quorum must be present in order to conduct official business. The quorum of the Lands Group shall consist of at least 51 percent of statutory members or their alternates (at least 3 of 4 statutory members). Director designees do not affect quorum. If a quorum is not present, the only final actions that may legally be taken are to fix a time of adjournment, adjourn, recess, or to take measures to obtain a quorum.

Decisions

Lands Group shall always first attempt to make decisions as a whole based on consensus. However, in the event a consensus is not achievable, the Director may call for a majority vote by the statutory members or their alternates (at least 3 of 4 statutory members).

Meetings, Agenda, Summaries and Reports

1. All regular meetings of the Lands Group are open public meetings as defined in Chapter 42.30 RCW. The Lands Group shall meet at least three times per year, one meeting to include an interagency forecast forum on even years and one meeting to include an interagency monitoring forum on odd years. The Lands Group may schedule additional special meetings. When a quorum of members is gathered to discuss business of the Lands Group, in person or electronically, their discussions or actions must be consistent with the open public meeting laws, including notice to the public if required.
 - a. Lands Group members will avoid sending email correspondence or replying to email correspondence with copies being sent to all other members or to a quorum of members when the content or subject matter pertains to Lands Group actions. Such actions are deemed to be meetings and therefore would trigger open public meetings act requirements including public notice.
 - b. Staff will distribute documents to the Lands Group using an email "bcc" function to avoid members "replying all" and inadvertently initiating an

electronic meeting that has not adhered to the open public meetings act.

- c. Staff will solicit feedback on Land Group documents from members, who will reply only to staff. Staff will summarize and distribute those comments to the Lands Group for further consideration.

2. The tentative schedule of meetings, forums and reports follows:

Month	Meeting (Even Years)	Meeting (Odd Years)	Location
February	Regular Mtg.	Regular Mtg.	Capitol Campus, Natural Resource Bldg, Olympia, TBD
May	Forecast Forum and Regular Mtg.	Regular Mtg.	Capitol Campus, Natural Resource Bldg, Olympia, TBD
October	Regular Mtg.	Monitoring Forum and Regular Mtg.	Capitol Campus, Natural Resource Bldg, Olympia, TBD
Lands Group Expires July 31, 2027			

- 3. Meetings of the Lands Group will be task-oriented. Staff will prepare draft agendas which reflect suggestions by Lands Group members. Draft agendas will be distributed to the Lands Group members for approval at least one week before a meeting. The agenda will describe the matter for discussion and be accompanied by information necessary to support informed discussion.
- 4. Following the conclusion of each meeting, staff will develop a summary of key decisions and agreements to be distributed to Lands Group members before the next scheduled meeting.
- 5. Lands Group members are obligated to review the summaries for accuracy and to alert the staff or Lands Group if they find mistakes or omissions.

Agreement and Recommendations

- 1. The Lands Group will strive to use consensus to reach decisions. Consensus is defined as unanimous agreement or a lack of opposition of all the parties at the table. Its use precludes the need for voting.
- 2. In the absence of consensus, Lands Group members will determine areas of agreement and disagreement, and meeting summaries or Lands Group reports will document these areas. Every effort will be made to state all points of view clearly, accurately and fairly. Meeting summaries and reports will present terms of where disagreements lie. In the absence of consensus, a vote may be taken and majority and

minority reports shall be included in the record. When formal Lands Group action is necessary, such action shall proceed generally by Robert's Rules of Order.

Interim Reports and Final Recommendations

1. Lands Group members accept the responsibility of assisting staff in composing annual reports due to OFM, as per RCW 79A.25.260 subsection 2 (Attachment A).
2. Lands Group members accept the responsibility of assisting staff in development of a formal recommendation to the legislature as to whether the Lands Group should be continued beyond 2027, and if so, how the enabling statute should be modified, if at all.
3. Staff will prepare the final recommendation and each annual report and distribute these documents to all members for review, edits, and approval. After approval, each document will be submitted to the Governor and Legislature as provided in the legislation, and to other agreed-upon parties.

Ethics

The requirements of state ethics laws apply to all Lands Group members operating in their Lands Group role. (See RCW43.52 and the reference resources at the website for the Executive Ethics Board, <http://ethics.wa.gov/>.) The laws include prohibitions against conflicts of interest, acceptance of most gifts, and release of confidential information. The Lands Group and its members will strive to maintain full awareness and compliance with these requirements in the conduct of its work.

Approved by: Kaleen Cottingham Date: October 16, 2019
Kaleen Cottingham,
Director, Recreation & Conservation Office

Adopted by: Habitat & Recreation Lands Coordinating Group
Date: October 16, 2019

Attachment A

RCW 79A.25.260

Habitat and recreation lands coordinating group – members – progress reports – duties. (expires July 31, 2017.)

(1) The habitat and recreation lands coordinating group is established. The group must include representatives from the office, the state parks and recreation commission, the department of natural resources, and the department of fish and wildlife. The members of the group must have subject matter expertise with the issues presented in this section. Representatives from appropriate stakeholder organizations and local government must also be considered for participation on the group, but may only be appointed or invited by the director.

(2) To ensure timely completion of the duties assigned to the group, the director shall submit yearly progress reports to the office of financial management.

(3) The group must:

(a) Review agency land acquisition and disposal plans and policies to help ensure statewide coordination of habitat and recreation land acquisitions and disposals;

(b) Produce an interagency, statewide biennial forecast of habitat and recreation land acquisition and disposal plans;

(c) Establish procedures for publishing the biennial forecast of acquisition and disposal plans on web sites or other centralized, easily accessible formats;

(d) Develop and convene an annual forum for agencies to coordinate their near-term acquisition and disposal plans;

(e) Develop a recommended method for interagency geographic information system-based documentation of habitat and recreation lands in cooperation with other state agencies using geographic information systems;

(f) Develop recommendations for standardization of acquisition and disposal recordkeeping, including identifying a preferred process for centralizing acquisition data;

(g) Develop an approach for monitoring the success of acquisitions;

(h) Identify and commence a dialogue with key state and federal partners to develop an inventory of potential public lands for transfer into habitat and recreation land management status; and

(i) Review existing and proposed habitat conservation plans on a regular basis to foster statewide coordination and save costs.

(4) If prioritization among the various requirements of subsection (3) of this section is necessary due to the availability of resources, the group shall prioritize implementation of subsection (3)(a) through (d) and (g) of this section.

(5) The group shall revisit the planning requirements of relevant grant programs administered by the office to determine whether coordination of state agency habitat and recreation land acquisition and disposal could be improved by modifying those requirements.

(6) The group must develop options for centralizing coordination of habitat and recreation land acquisition made with funds from federal grants. The advantages and drawbacks of the following options, at a minimum, must be developed:

(a) Requiring that agencies provide early communication on the status of federal grant applications to the office, the office of financial management, or directly to the legislature;

(b) Establishing a centralized pass-through agency for federal funds, where individual agencies would be the primary applicants.

(7) This section expires July 31, 2027. Prior to January 1, 2027, the group shall make a formal recommendation to the board and the appropriate committees of the legislature as to whether the existence of the habitat and recreation lands coordinating group should be continued beyond July 31, 2027, and if so, whether any modifications to its enabling statute should be pursued.

[2016 c 151 § 1; 2012 c 128 § 1; 2007 c 247 § 1.]

NOTES:

Finding—2012 c 128: "The legislature finds that participation by the state's habitat and recreation land management agencies in the habitat and recreation lands coordinating group is an inherent part of transparent, efficient, and effective state habitat and recreation land management, and must be conducted within existing resources." [2012 c 128 § 2.]