

## Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program Habitat Conservation Account

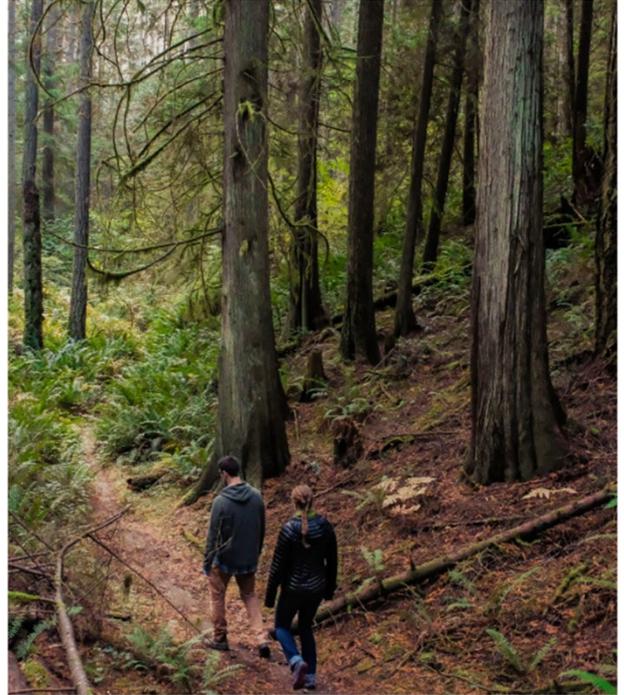
### Protecting Urban Wildlife Habitat: Policy and Evaluation Criteria Changes

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board recently adopted changes to the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program's Urban Wildlife Habitat Category.

Below are the details of each update that was adopted: These include a new project location policy, funding allocation policy, and evaluation criteria

If you have questions about a project, applying for a grant, or the revised criteria, please [contact your grants manager](#).

If you have questions about the process to develop the revised criteria, please contact [Ben Donatelle](#), Natural Resource Policy Specialist.



### Project Location Policy

To be eligible in the Urban Wildlife Habitat program, the land where the project is located must be:

- Within five miles of the designated urban growth area of a city or town, or a designated urban cluster with a population of 5,000 or more; or
- 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 is developing a map application that will easily show applicants whether their project is eligible for Urban Wildlife Habitat funding. The web map will be published on RCO's website prior to the 2020 application cycle.

### Funding Allocation Policy

Funding awards in the Urban Wildlife Habitat Category are allocated to ensure projects sponsored by state agencies and local entities receive funding. The board sets the percentage of funds that are allocated to each type of sponsor. The allocation was adjusted to more equitably distribute funds. The funding will be awarded as follows:

*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 organization projects; then fully fund partially funded state agency projects, and apply any remaining amount to the next highest ranked project(s), regardless of sponsor*

## Urban Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Criteria

Urban Wildlife Habitat means lands that provide habitat important to fish and wildlife in proximity to a metropolitan area.<sup>1</sup> 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			
Score By	Criteria	Evaluation Elements	Possible Points
Not Scored	Project Introduction	Location maps Project goals and objectives	Not scored
Advisory Committee	1. Ecological and Biological Characteristics	Project area composition Species and communities Pollinator habitat Landscape characteristics	40
Advisory Committee	Planning and Community Support	Plan support Public engagement Threat to the site Level of protection	15
Advisory Committee	Public Access and Community Benefits	Public access, health, recreation, or cultural opportunities Education and citizen science Underserved communities Multiple benefits	35
Advisory Committee	Management and Stewardship	Management and stewardship plan Restoration needs Organizational and Staff capacity	15
RCO Staff	Growth Management Act	Growth Management Act preference	0
RCO Staff	Population	Population of, and proximity to, the nearest urban area	10
<b>Total Possible Points =</b>			<b>115</b>

<sup>1</sup>Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.010 (12)

## 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 is primarily 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; and
- 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.**

## Detailed Scoring Criteria

### 1. Ecological and Biological Characteristics

- a. Describe the project area and the ecological makeup of the site(s): Include in your 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.
- b. 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.
- c. How does the site support the feeding, nesting and reproduction of pollinator species (e.g. bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, etc.)?<sup>2</sup>
- d. Define your service area or jurisdiction. How unique is this site within your service area or jurisdiction? Is this site part of a larger ownership or management unit?
- e. 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 the site that have

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<sup>2</sup> Laws of 2019, Ch. 353, §3

complementary or compatible habitat characteristics for the target species (consider wide-ranging or migratory species)?

Applicants must complete and submit the “Species or 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. As part of the presentation, applicants must describe the significance of the information to evaluators for scoring.

▲ **Maximum Score: 40 points**

## **2. Planning and Community Support**

- a. How is this project supported by a current plan or a coordinated state or regional prioritization effort? Who is the plan’s proponent(s), and how does the plan address this specific project, habitat, or ecosystem type (e.g., a 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.)?
- b. 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 and/or elected officials engaged, and how was their input incorporated into the project selection and design? Describe the support or partnership commitments you have secured for the project.
- c. What is the threat to the site’s ecological integrity? Include in your 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?
- d. 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.

▲ **Maximum Score: 15 points**

### 3. Public Access and Community Benefits

- a. What public access, public health, recreational, educational, or cultural opportunities will this site provide? In your description, 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 (i.e. is there existing or planned multi-modal transportation that will bring people to or within a 10-minute walk of this site?)
- b. How does this project address the needs of communities who 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.
- c. How does this project provide other multiple benefits to the community, habitat, or surrounding ecological landscape? Include in your discussion:
  - i. Other resource uses or management practices that may help achieve additional conservation benefits (e.g. managed grazing for weed control, supporting a community forest, etc.);
  - ii. How this project provides other ecosystem service benefits (e.g. protecting tree canopy cover in a dense urban area, aquifer recharge, flood attenuation, increased fire security, carbon storage, etc.).
- d. 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?

▲ **Maximum Score: 35 points**

### 4. Management and Stewardship

- a. 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 future climate impacts, changes to surrounding land uses, and development pressure.

- b. 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?
- c. What is your 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?

▲ **Maximum Score: 15 points**

## **RCO Staff Scored Questions**

### **5. Growth Management Act Preference**

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

State law<sup>3</sup> requires that:

- a. Whenever a state agency is considering awarding grants to finance public facilities, it shall consider whether the applicant<sup>4</sup> 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:
  - i. Adopts or has adopted within the time periods specified in state law;
  - ii. Adopts or has adopted by the time it requests a grant or loan; or

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<sup>3</sup> Revised Code of Washington 43.17.250

<sup>4</sup> County, city, or town applicants only. This segment of the question does not apply to state agency, tribal government, nonprofits, or lead entity applicants.

- iii. Demonstrates substantial progress toward adopting within the time periods specified in state law. An agency that is more than 6 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 Management Hearings Board, the agency cannot be penalized during the period of appeal.

▲ Point Range: -1 to 0 points

- 1 point      The applicant does *not* meet the countywide planning policy requirements of Revised Code of Washington 43.17.250.
- 0 points      The applicant *meets* the countywide planning policy requirements of Revised Code of Washington 43.17.250.
- 0 points      The applicant is a nonprofit organization, state or federal agency.

RCO staff subtracts a maximum of 1 point.

## 6. Population

Where is this project located with respect to urban growth areas, cities/towns, and urban clusters?<sup>5</sup>

This question is scored by RCO staff based on a map provided by the applicant. To receive credit, depict on a map 1) your project boundary or your 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 1 and 2 above. Include a scale and legend on the map for reference.

### **Population of, and Proximity to, the Nearest Urban Area**

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<sup>5</sup> Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.060 (5)(b)

- a. The score is based on the population of the largest city, town or urban cluster within 5 miles of the project (using the most current published Washington State Office of Financial Management population estimates):

0 points	0-4,999
1 point	5,000-9,999
2 points	10,000-29,999
3 points	30,000-149,999
4 points	150,000-299,999
5 points	300,000-and above

- b. The project's proximity to the closest city, town, or urban cluster (of any size).

5 points	within 1 mile, or inside the UGA/municipal boundary/urban cluster
4 points	1.01 – 2 miles
3 points	2.01 – 3 miles
2 points	3.01 – 4 miles
1 point	4.01 – 5 miles
0 points	5.01 miles or greater

▲ Point Range: 0-10 points