

STATE LAND ACQUISITION FORECAST REPORT

Habitat and Recreation Lands Coordinating Group



Table of Contents

- 1 | Introduction..... 1**
- This Report..... 1
- Report Contents..... 2
- Report Terms..... 2
- 2 | Context..... 3**
- Vision for the Future..... 3
- DFW..... 3
- DNR..... 3
- State Parks..... 4
- 3 | State Agency Profiles and Acquisition Priorities..... 6**
- State Agency Profiles 6
- DFW..... 7
- DNR..... 7
- State Parks..... 8
- Acquisition Priorities..... 9
- DFW..... 9
- DNR..... 9
- State Parks..... 9

1 | Introduction

In 2007, the Legislature created the Habitat and Recreation Lands Coordinating Group to improve the visibility and coordination of the purchase and sale of land by state agencies for habitat and recreation.

The intention is to ensure that state agencies acquiring lands are coordinating their efforts with one another. That directive was driven in part by citizens and local officials who wanted to know about purchases planned in their areas. Different land buyers using different planning processes had made it difficult for them to track what was going on. They wanted to know: Who was planning to buy land in their counties?

What land was planned for purchase? Why was the land being bought? How could they get involved in the planning process?

The lands group has become a key vehicle for improving the visibility and coordination of land purchases by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW), Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the State Parks and Recreation Commission (State Parks).

The Washington State Legislature has asked the Recreation and Conservation

Office to provide an update to the inventory of lands in Washington owned by federal, state, and local governments. The resulting 2018 Washington Public Lands Inventory Web application is at <https://wa-rco.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/2f8aa05d2a074cc0b4e18cb0b88006ab>.

This Report

The report provides early notification about plans for land purchases by the state natural resources agencies. This and previous years' reports are available on the lands group Web site:

<https://rco.wa.gov/boards/habitat-and-recreation-lands-coordinating-group/>.

Early notification about projects—The forecast provides early information on state land acquisition project proposals for the upcoming biennium. The forecast is published several months before final state capital funding is approved by the Legislature to give citizens time to engage in the planning process.

Comprehensive overview—The report gives a comprehensive look at what's being planned around the state. It provides county-wide and statewide

maps and data, as well as maps and data about specific project sites.

Clear and accessible data—The forecast provides data such as project descriptions, number of acres, costs and types of acquisitions, future costs, and funding sources. The data are standardized to allow comparative analyses, such as comparing the cost of one agency's proposal with the cost of another's. The forecast also includes Geographical Information System (GIS) data and is published on the lands group Web site for easy access.

Potential projects—The projects in this report are potential acquisitions and disposals that are either in the planning stage or part of a grant application or an agency budget request to the Legislature. The agencies do not have money for these transactions and will not proceed until all approval processes have been completed. The projects and costs in this report may differ from those in the presentations on the lands group Web site because they were refined as the agencies submitted grant applications.

Snapshot information—This report provides a snapshot designed to help planners and others who want to know the status of project proposals. The data

are based on best estimates. Because the projects are in the early planning stages, the data are likely to change before the projects are complete.

Natural resource agency projects—This report covers information about potential habitat and recreation land acquisition and disposal projects proposed for funding by the following state agencies:

- DFW
- DNR
- State Parks

Report Contents

Proposed State Land Acquisitions

Dashboard—Presents acquisitions proposed for funding. Provides a summary table and maps of proposed acquisitions by county, as well as maps and details of each project. Data and maps were provided by the purchasing agency. The land for these projects has not yet been purchased and the funding has not been approved. Data shown are not final; final data will be available after this report is published.

Report Terms

Acquisition type—Type of real property interest that is proposed to be purchased. May indicate fee simple,

conservation easement, or leasehold interest.

Agency plan name—Name of agency plan that the proposed acquisition relates to.

Anticipated future cost—Cost estimates on future capital, operating, and maintenance costs, and additional costs to the agency from the addition of the property.

Legislative district—Legislative district in which the proposed project is located.

Planning link—How the proposed project aligns with statewide and other strategic plans and how it is a strategic investment for the agency.

Principal current use—The current use of the land, under current ownership.

Principal intended use—The use that the purchasing agency intends to use the land for.

Project outcomes and current progress—Anticipated outcomes of the acquisition in detail, including specific development plans, service improvements, habitat restoration needs, and projected accomplishments. Current progress on achieving the detailed project outcomes.

Proposed acquisition cost—Total cost proposed for purchasing.

Proposed acres—Total acres proposed for purchase.

Proposed funding source—All sources of funding proposed for purchasing the land. May include state, federal, and other sources, including grants.

Proposed project description—Project description, what makes it significant, and details about how the purchasing agency intends to use the land.

Revenue generation—The money the agency expects to raise from use of the land.

2 | Context

Vision for the Future

DFW

Washington's population has more than quadrupled in the past 80 years, reducing wildlife habitat to a fraction of what existed in the early 1900s. With the population expected to grow from the current 7 million to 8.7 million by 2030, critically important lands and waterways will face increasing development pressure.

In this context, land acquisition and conservation easements are important strategies for preserving Washington's legacy of habitat and recreational lands. With broad public support, they have become two of DFW's most successful conservation tools. Once the agency acquires property or a conservation easement, it strives to be a good neighbor by restoring habitat, controlling weeds, providing quality recreation access, and undertaking a myriad of other stewardship and conservation activities. This proven combination—sound acquisition priorities and responsible stewardship—reinforced by strong community partnerships across the state, will continue to guide DFW land acquisition in the coming years.

In 1939, the Department of Game purchased about 14,000 acres of winter range for mule deer—land that became the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area in Okanogan County. Since then, the DFW lands portfolio has grown to about 1 million acres and more than 700 water access sites. In addition to conserving fish and other wildlife habitat, these properties generate substantial economic benefit by employing local residents and providing places for millions of Washingtonians and visitors to fish, hunt, watch wildlife, and enjoy other recreational activities.

DFW conducts a rigorous process to determine whether acquisition is the best conservation strategy available. Local community support is essential, as is the application of science to determine which lands are best-suited for habitat and wildlife needs. In addition to extensive internal review, acquisition options are reviewed by local governments, citizens, and other interested parties.

Partnerships with conservation groups, hunting and fishing organizations, and other public agencies help DFW preserve iconic landscapes that no single organization could do on its own.

Partners include The Nature Conservancy, Conservation Northwest, Ducks Unlimited, the Mule Deer Foundation, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, the Wilderness Society, and local lands conservancies and councils.

DFW strives to acquire lands that provide the highest benefit to wildlife and the public, and only from willing sellers. Broad public support also is critical.

These principles have served wildlife and the people of Washington very well over the years and will continue to guide the department's efforts in the future.

DNR

DNR manages two different kinds of natural areas to conserve and restore special state-managed lands.

Natural Area Preserves—Natural Area Preserves protect the best remaining examples of many ecological communities including rare plant and animal habitat. The DNR Natural Heritage Program identifies the highest quality, most ecologically important sites for protection as natural area preserves. The resulting network of preserves represents a legacy for future generations and helps

ensure that blueprints of the state's natural ecosystems are protected forever.

The preserve system includes more than 38,290 acres in 56 sites throughout the state. In eastern Washington, habitats protected on preserves include outstanding examples of arid land shrub-steppe, grasslands, vernal ponds, oak woodlands, subalpine meadows and forest, ponderosa pine forests, and rare plant habitats. Western Washington preserves include several large coastal preserves supporting high quality wetlands, salt marshes, and forested buffers. Other west side habitats include mounded prairies, sphagnum bogs, natural late-successional forests, and grassland balds.

Natural Resources Conservation

Areas—Natural Resources Conservation Areas protect outstanding examples of native ecosystems; habitat for endangered, threatened, and sensitive plants and animals; and scenic landscapes.

Environmental education and low-impact public use are appropriate on conservation areas where they do not impair the protected features. Critical habitat is conserved in these areas for many plant and animal species, including rare species. Natural Resources

Conservation Areas include coastal and high elevation forests, alpine lakes, wetlands, scenic vistas, nesting birds of prey, rocky headlands, and high-quality native plant communities. Conservation areas also protect geologic, cultural, historical, and archeological sites. More than 118,700 acres are conserved in 36 Washington State Natural Resources Conservation Areas.

State Parks

The state park system continues as a “work in progress” since its creation by the Legislature in 1913. At the core of the commission’s approach is the recognition that as the state’s population grows, so too must its park system to meet expanding demand. During times of economic hardship, land prices are low and owners of priority lands are more willing to sell. Even if funds are not available to develop properties into full-service state parks, acquiring property for future generations is necessary and appropriate. State Parks’ land acquisitions typically fall into one or more of the following categories:

Properties that address park

management—These properties fall within a designated long-term park boundary identified through the agency’s public planning process. These properties

address park management concerns, remove incompatible land uses, resolve trespasses, connect disjointed properties, and remove inholdings. These smaller properties come on the market quickly and require swift action to acquire.

Stand-alone properties held for future

generations—These are properties held for development of new parks, have extensive natural and/or cultural resources, and clearly meet the agency’s vision of premier destinations of uncommon quality. These are typically very high-quality properties (e.g. expansive undeveloped waterfront) that form the nucleus of a future major park. Over time, adjacent properties are acquired as landowners become willing sellers and as funding permits. In most cases, these properties remain undeveloped for decades with access limited to pedestrian use only. Full-scale development of these properties only occurs after critical mass is achieved and there is sufficient public will to commit necessary funds.

Properties that serve a sub-system

—Park sub-systems are properties that work together to create a natural, cultural, or recreational experience that is greater than the sum of its parts. An example of this is the Cascadia Marine Trail where even small, modest sites are

acquired for overnight campsites to facilitate use of the iconic marine trail.

Properties that assist with the agency's transition to self-sufficiency—These include properties that can be used to enable partnerships with other organizations or that generate operating income (e.g. waterfront, residential properties rented as public vacation rentals). These properties also lend themselves to day-use activities that likely will attract a lot of visitors, and therefore promote the sale of Discover Passes and daily permits. An example of these are small properties that serve as trailheads for the agency's cross-state trail and regional trail systems.

Long-term development—As State Parks transitions to a self-funding model without significant General Fund support, the agency is evaluating what kinds of overnight and day-use opportunities are feasible to provide the public. With limited General Fund support, many park operating expenses must be covered by funds from permits and fees. Some additional work may be offset by expanded volunteer efforts and activities that promote sale of Discover Passes (e.g. special events, arts festivals, interpretive and recreational programs).

3 | State Agency Profiles and Acquisition Priorities

State Agency Profiles

This section describes the state agency land acquisition processes and priorities.

State agency acquisition goals are based on recreation and conservation needs expressed by the public and on state and federal legal requirements to provide recreational opportunities and protect threatened and endangered wildlife. Each agency has distinct missions directed by legislation designed to meet those needs.

Agency acquisition plans establish criteria for identifying priority purchases that will best fulfill the agency mission, and processes for pursuing the priorities.

DFW	DNR	State Parks
<p>Missions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish and wildlife species • Maximize the public recreational game fishing and hunting opportunities 	<p>Mission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserving Washington’s native species and ecosystems, today and for future generations. 	<p>Missions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase access to free or low-cost recreational opportunities⁶ • Acquire and manage state park lands to maintain and enhance ecological, aesthetic, and recreational purposes⁷
<p>Statewide Plan <i>Lands 20/20: A Clear Vision for the Future (2005)</i></p>	<p>Statewide Plan <i>Natural Heritage Plan (2011)</i></p>	<p>Statewide Plan <i>Transformational Plan (2010)</i></p>
<p>Statewide Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide benefits for fish and wildlife (identify and prioritize crucial habitats for priority species and habitats as identified in department plans). • Provide benefits for the public (available and accessible fish- and wildlife-related recreation and educational opportunities; local or state economic benefits). • Operational excellence (habitat values maintained, wildlife area management plans updated, operation and maintenance support ensured, partnerships and citizen involvement utilized.) 	<p>Statewide Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify priority ecosystems and species for conservation. • Build and maintain a database for priority ecosystems and species. • Share and use the information to ensure potential public and private acquisitions have high conservation value. • Maintain a statewide system of natural areas representative of Washington’s ecosystems and natural features. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statewide Objectives • Fix what we have. • Upgrade existing parks, trails, and services. • Add new parks, trails, and services and work towards opening new parks.

DFW

Mission

The DFW has a dual mandate to preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems while providing sustainable fish and wildlife recreational and commercial opportunities. The agency is charged with sustaining all wildlife species other than plants, including invertebrates, fish and marine invertebrates, amphibians and reptiles, and birds and mammals.

The department's *2017-19 Strategic Plan* applies conservation principles to the following goals:

Goal 1: Conserve and protect native fish and wildlife

Goal 2: Provide sustainable fishing, hunting, and other wildlife related recreational and commercial experiences

Goal 3: Promote a healthy economy, protect community character, maintain an overall high quality of life, and deliver high quality customer service

Goal 4: Build an effective and efficient organization by supporting the workforce, improving business processes, and investing in technology.

Plan

The department's *Lands 20/20: A Clear Vision for the Future* guides decisions on the agency's land portfolio.

- Provide benefits to fish and other wildlife
- Provide benefits for the public
- Ensure operational excellence

The *2016-2021 Department of Fish and Wildlife Habitat and Recreation Lands RCO Grant Eligibility Plan* qualifies the department to participate in certain Recreation and Conservation Office grant programs that have a planning requirement.

Land acquisition is an essential tool used by the department to meet its legislative mandate. Its land acquisition work is aimed at maintaining a citizen-supported portfolio of lands that will sustain Washington's diverse wildlife and their habitats into the next century.

Land Acquisition Process

The department assesses species and landscape conservation needs using species recovery and management plans, habitat conservation plans, biodiversity conservation framework, habitat connectivity analyses, and other data.

Department staff and conservation partners identify potential habitat and recreation lands using the Lands 20/20 framework. Internal policy and the Lands Evaluation Tool screen projects for grant categories.

The agency evaluates compatibility with statewide and regional conservation initiatives including the Governor's priorities and initiatives from other state, federal, city, county, and non-government organizations.

Staff applies for federal and state grants and, when awarded, works with willing sellers to acquire either conservation easements or fee interest.

DNR

Mission

Habitat and recreation lands purchased by the DNR are managed by the Natural Areas Program. The program's primary mission is to protect outstanding examples of the state's biodiversity. The program manages land under two natural area designations: Natural Area Preserve and Natural Resources Conservation Area. Some sites are given dual designation to provide for low-impact public access while providing protection for more sensitive features.

Natural Area Preserves protect plant and animal populations and ecosystems that are rare or that are representative of healthy, functioning native habitat. The preserves contain some of the most uncommon and sensitive plant and animal communities native to Washington, including several species that are found nowhere else in the world. Some preserves also include intact ecosystems that can be used as reference sites of natural ecological function. While public access to Natural Area Preserves generally is limited to research and education, low-impact recreation is allowed in appropriate areas on some sites.

The Natural Resources Conservation Areas are similar to Natural Area Preserves, with important distinctions. The conservation areas have a broader mission by including as priorities, lands with outstanding natural scenic values, geological or archaeological significance, or environmentally significant sites under threat of conversion to other uses.

Natural Resources Conservation Areas provide opportunities for low-impact recreation.

Plan

The *Natural Heritage Plan* establishes the criteria for natural area selection and the

process by which natural areas are approved. The plan lists the statewide conservation priorities for ecosystems and rare species, which are established by the Natural Heritage Program in consultation with others. The conservation priorities listed in the plan drive the designation of areas as Natural Area Preserves, Natural Resources Conservation Areas, or a combination of the two.

Land Acquisition Process

Natural area boundaries are initially identified by scientists in the Natural Heritage and Natural Areas Programs, primarily based on an assessment of the protection needs of the particular features (species and/or ecosystems) for which the natural area has been identified. Potential and expansions of existing natural areas are presented to the Natural Heritage Advisory Council. Upon approval by the council, proposed sites go through a public process including information meetings, opportunities for landowners to meet with scientists and land managers, and a public hearing. Some Natural Resources Conservation Areas are designated by the DNR without review by the council. Natural Heritage Advisory Council recommendations and information from the public meetings and hearing are

forwarded to the Commissioner of Public Lands. The commissioner establishes the boundary within which staff then is authorized to pursue acquisition. Staff identifies potential funding sources and works with willing landowners.

State Parks

Mission

The State Parks mission focuses on managing how people interact with natural, historic, and developed landscapes. State Parks acquires land to protect and manage natural resources that are important for people. State Parks additionally acquires lands within and adjacent to state parks to provide new or improved recreational opportunities to the public.

Plan

Property acquisitions are prioritized through the Classification and Management Planning or CAMP process. Once prioritized, the commission adopts a biennial listing of priorities through agency's capital budget. The majority of funding used in acquiring new land is provided by grants managed through the Recreation and Conservation Office and other grant sources.

Land Acquisition Process

Properties are acquired from willing sellers after appraisal in accordance with the priority rankings as provided through the CAMP process. State Parks occasionally acquires new lands through land exchanges with second parties, through donations from second parties, or through property transfers from other government organizations.

Acquisition Priorities

DFW

Natural Area Preserves

- Representative examples of highest quality native ecosystems
- Populations of endangered, threatened, sensitive, rare, or diminishing animal species

Wildlife Areas

- **Objective:** Focus on lands that are necessary to recover, maintain, or enhance the integrity of priority species, habitats, and ecosystems.

Criteria

- Priority species, habitat values, biodiversity, appropriate and accessible recreation, research

and education, economics, fiscal accountability, stewardship, partnership, and citizen involvement.

Recreation Lands

- **Objective:** Acquire property to provide fish- and other wildlife-related recreational opportunities for the public and for department administrative support.
- **Criteria:** Need, site suitability and design, diversity and compatibility, performance measures, public benefit, and population proximity.

DNR

Natural Area Preserves

- Representative examples of highest quality native ecosystems
- Rare or diminishing plant or animal populations

Natural Resources Conservation Areas

- **Objective:** Areas with high priority for conservation, natural systems, wildlife, and low- impact public use values
- **Criteria:** Flora, fauna, geological, archaeological, scenic, or similar

features; native ecological communities; connectivity between protected areas; protection of Natural Area Preserves' core areas; and opportunities for low-impact public use

Recreation Lands

- **Objective:** DNR does not buy land primarily for recreation purposes; however, DNR-managed state trust lands offer a variety of public access and uses compatible with the revenue-generation purpose of trust lands and conservation areas offer low-impact recreation as a secondary use when compatible with conservation goals.

State Parks

Natural Area Preserves

- Representative examples of highest quality native ecosystems

Classification and Management Planning

- **Includes:** Natural Area Preserves, Natural Areas, Natural Forest Areas, Resource Recreation Areas, Recreation Areas, and Heritage Areas.

- **Objective:** Protect a view shed or stewardship of natural and cultural resources.
- **Criteria:** Significance, popularity, experiences, uniqueness, flora and fauna, scenery, size,

condition, and revenue.

Recreation Lands

- **Objective:** Acquire parkland for outdoor recreational opportunities for the public.

- **Criteria:** Significance, popularity, experiences, uniqueness, flora and fauna, scenery, size, condition, and revenue