

Section 4: Project Evaluation

This section covers the following:

- ✓ How project evaluation works
- ✓ Evaluation criteria

How Project Evaluation Works⁸⁴

The evaluation process begins when the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board adopts the evaluation process⁸⁵ and evaluation criteria during public meetings.

The RCO director appoints people to serve on an advisory committee to evaluate each grant proposal. In recruiting members for the committee, RCO seeks to appoint people who possess a statewide perspective and are recognized for their experiences and knowledge of forestland management in Washington. The director may appoint *ex officio* members to the advisory committee to provide additional representation and expertise. Visit RCO's website for [membership and other details](#).

An applicant prepares written responses to address the evaluation criteria. Advisory committee members individually review the written responses, graphics included in the applications, and summary application materials, and score the projects. Scoring is confidential.

Letters and other documented expressions of project support provided to RCO by the technical completion deadline will be provided to the advisory committee as part of the evaluation materials packet. An applicant also should summarize this support when responding to evaluation Criterion 5: Community Values.

⁸⁴Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2016-37

⁸⁵Washington Administrative Code 286-13-020

At the same time, RCO staff score the objective sections of the application, such as the amount of matching share an applicant is providing. Staff scores are based on information submitted by the applicant.

The advisory committee and staff scores are combined for an application’s total evaluation score. The resulting ranked list is 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.⁸⁶ The public is given an opportunity to comment on the grant proposals before the board makes its decision.

Forestland Preservation Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation Criteria Summary

Criteria	Evaluation Elements	Possible Points
Scored by the Advisory Committee		
1	Viability of the Site	15 points
2	Forestland Stewardship	8 points
3	Stewardship Practices	2 points
4	Threat to the Land	8 points
5	Community Values	4 points
6	Community Support	2 points
7	Multiple Benefits	2 points
Scored by RCO Staff		
8	Match	2 points
Total Possible Points		43

Detailed Evaluation Questions⁸⁷

- 1. Viability of the Site.** What is the viability of the site for commercial timber production?
 - What are the major tree species and their sizes, ages, and conditions?
 - What is the long-term forest management strategy? Will it result in ongoing commercial timber production?
 - Is there enough income generated on the property to sustain the long-term forest management strategy goals?

⁸⁶Washington Administrative Code 286-13-050

⁸⁷Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2016-37

- How many acres is the area proposed for conservation? Evaluators provide a preference for larger areas.

▲ Point Range: zero to fifteen points based on the viability of the site for commercial timber production.

2. Forestland Stewardship. What stewardship practices beyond the Forest Practices Act are in place that support timber production or provide ecological benefits?⁸⁸ What is the experience of the applicant to monitor the conservation easement to ensure the forest stewardship activities proposed are realized?

Examples of stewardship that achieve sustainable forest management include practices in accordance with any of the following:

- Integrated forest management plan
- Forest stewardship plan (approved by the Washington Department of Natural Resources)
- Conservation activity plan (National Resources Conservation Service)
- Tree farm management plan (Washington Tree Farm Program)

Ecological benefits include clean air, clean water, stormwater management, wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration, and other benefits. Examples of stewardship that achieve ecological benefits include the following:

- Managing for wildfire
- Managing the spread of invasive species
- Managing for forest health and climate change
- Obtaining a third-party certification (e.g., Sustainable Forestry Initiative, Forest Stewardship Council, American Tree Farm System)
- Demonstrating an estimate of the amount of biological carbon stored in trees and understory plants
- Efforts to protect state priority plant and animal species and ecosystems
- Flood reduction and floodplain connections
- Removal or correction of fish passage barriers

⁸⁸Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.130(12)(f)

- Dedication of stream and wetland riparian areas larger than the minimum requirements in the Forest Practices Act

▲ Points Range: zero to eight points

Zero points	There are no specific stewardship practices in place and the applicant has minimal experience managing easements or leases.
One to four points	There are one or more stewardship practices planned and the applicant has moderate experience managing easements or leases.
Five to eight points	There are one or more stewardship practices in place and the applicant has strong experience managing easements or leases.

3. Stewardship Practices. What voluntary stewardship practices (described in question 2) will be included in the terms of the conservation easement or lease as required stewardship practices?

▲ Point Range: zero to two points.

4. Threat of the Land. What is the likelihood the land will be converted to some other use than forestland if it is not protected?⁸⁹

Score the question based on the severity of the threat that the property will be converted to some use other than forestland within the next five years. Threat may include lack of protection of the land, landowner circumstances, adjacent land uses, zoning supports ability to develop the land, or other conditions.

▲ Point Range: zero to eight points

Zero points	Low likelihood it will be converted to another use
One to four points	Medium likelihood it will be converted to another use
Five to eight points	High likelihood it will be converted to another use

⁸⁹Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.130(12)(c)

- 5. Community Values.** How will protecting the land for timber production provide benefits to the community? Do the community and area Native American tribes support the project?⁹⁰

Preference is provided to projects that are identified in community planning efforts in one or more of the following ways:

- Is the project recommended in a limiting factors analysis or critical pathways analysis?
- Is the project recommended in a watershed plan developed under Revised Code of Washington 90.82 or other planning effort?
- Is the project recommended in a conservation plan (other than a habitat conservation plan required under the Endangered Species Act)?
- Is the project recommended in a coordinated, region-wide prioritization effort?
- Is the project consistent with a regional or statewide recreational or resource plan?
- Is the project consistent with the local comprehensive plan as forestland of long-term significance or other local planning effort?
- Does the project assist in the implementation of a local shoreline master plan updated according to Revised Code of Washington 90.58.080?

Benefits to the community also may include the following:

- Creation or protection of jobs
- Support for local mills
- Viewshed and scenic beauty
- Research and educational opportunities

Support from the community and Native American tribes may be demonstrated by letters of support or donations to assist with implementing the project.

▲ Point Range: zero to four points

⁹⁰Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.130(12)(a), (b), and (d)

Zero to two points The project will provide few additional benefits to the community.

Three to four points The project will provide many additional benefits to the community.

6. Community Support. Are there one or more letters in the application that demonstrate community support for the project?

▲ Point Range: zero or two points

Zero points There are no letters of support in the application.

Two points There are one or more letters of support in the application that demonstrate community or Native American tribal support for the project.

7. Multiple Benefits

- 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.

- 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 two points

Zero points No multiple benefits provided or multiple benefits are not compatible with or achieve additional conservation benefits.

One to two 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.

8. Match (applicant does not answer this question.). Is the applicant providing additional match above the minimum requirement?

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

▲ Point Range: zero or two points

Zero points The applicant is providing less than 55 percent match.

Two points The applicant is providing 55 percent or more match.