

## 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.”<sup>91</sup>

### Critical Habitat Category Evaluation Criteria Summary

Criteria	Evaluation Elements	Points
<b>Unscored</b>		
Project Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scope</li> <li>• Project goals and objectives</li> <li>• Location maps</li> </ul>	
<b>Scored by Advisory Committee</b>		
1. Habitat Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landscape significance</li> <li>• Ecological role</li> <li>• Adequacy</li> <li>• Distribution and range</li> <li>• Acquisition importance</li> </ul>	20
2. Species Significance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity</li> <li>• Special status</li> <li>• Vulnerability</li> <li>• Ecosystem impact</li> </ul>	10
3. Manageability and Viability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Threat</li> <li>• Restoration and management</li> <li>• Stewardship</li> <li>• Nearby lands</li> <li>• Conservation easement</li> <li>• Regulatory protections</li> <li>• Livestock grazing</li> </ul>	10
4. Partnerships and Community Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement</li> <li>• Partnerships</li> </ul>	5

<sup>91</sup>Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.010(3)

Criteria	Evaluation Elements	Points
5. Public Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreation</li> <li>• Resource uses</li> <li>• Research and education</li> <li>• Landscape features</li> <li>• Ecosystem services</li> </ul>	5
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>

### Detailed Scoring Criteria for Critical Habitat Category

**Project Introduction.** Set the stage for the project and orient evaluators to the project site. This introduction should include the following:

- **Scope.** The type of acquisition, number of acres, any proposed development, and connection to past or future phases if applicable.
- **Goals and Objectives.** A brief overview of the project’s goals, objectives, target wildlife species,<sup>92</sup> and environmental benefits.
- **Location Maps.** Statewide and vicinity maps, as well as site maps that demonstrate how the project is connected to other important landscapes and show nearby sites with similar habitat components.

▲ Project introduction is not scored.

#### 1. Habitat Impact<sup>93</sup>

To what extent does the site represent critical habitat that directly benefits target wildlife species? How is this demonstrated in plans, such as the *State Wildlife Action Plan*, and other analyses or prioritization efforts?<sup>94</sup> A complete response should address the following:

<sup>92</sup>A target wildlife species is the project’s primary objective for protection and stands to gain the greatest benefit from the acquisition. Target species may or may not be special status species. There may be multiple target species depending on the project and the applicant’s priorities.

<sup>93</sup>Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.060 (5)(a)(v, vii, ix, xiii, xv, xvi)

<sup>94</sup>Examples include the *State Wildlife Action Plan*, *Priority Habitat and Species*, *State of Washington Natural Heritage Plan*, *Puget Sound Action Agenda*, local land-use plan, local comprehensive plan, local shoreline master plan, watershed plan, statewide recreation or resource plan, habitat conservation plan, species recovery plan, limiting factors or critical pathways analysis, other coordinated regionwide prioritization effort, etc.

- **Landscape Significance.** The uniqueness and significance of the site in the broader landscape, watershed, or statewide picture, and its importance for overall ecosystem function and impact on other project phases.
- **Ecological Role.** The importance of the site for habitat quality, diversity, or rarity, and the specific roles the site plays in supporting the target wildlife species on the site (connectivity, breeding and nesting grounds, food and water access, etc.).
- **Adequacy.** The extent to which the size, quality, and other characteristics of the habitat are adequate to support the target wildlife species together with adjacent protected lands.
- **Distribution and Range.** The distribution, range, and abundance of the target wildlife species on the site and adjacent lands now and the potential and likelihood for future use of the site (naturally or via reintroduction).
- **Acquisition Importance.** The importance of acquisition compared to other protection or recovery tasks identified for the target wildlife species (i.e., captive breeding, regulatory protection), and the role of the acquisition in enabling habitat restoration or other recovery efforts for the target wildlife species.

▲ Point Range: 0-10 points, which are multiplied later by two

## 2. Species Significance<sup>95</sup>

What is the collective significance of the target wildlife species and other wildlife species that will benefit from the project? A complete response should address the following:

- **Diversity.** Overall diversity of wildlife species using the site and adjacent protected lands.
- **Special Status.** The presence of endangered, threatened, sensitive, or other special status wildlife species, as further demonstrated on the required Species and Communities Status table (see appendix A).

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<sup>95</sup>Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.060 (5)(a)(viii, xi)

- **Vulnerability.** The population condition, rarity, and/or taxonomic distinctness of the target wildlife species.
- **Ecosystem Impact.** The importance of the target wildlife species in supporting overall ecosystem function.

▲ Point Range: 0-10 points

### 3. Manageability and Viability<sup>96</sup>

To what extent can the site be managed to protect habitat condition and target species long term and why is it important to secure the site now? A complete response should address the following:

- **Threat.** How protection will address threats to the site (i.e., inherent, ecological, human, conversion, abatable or non-abatable threats).
- **Restoration and Management.** Planned near-term restoration or management to support desired habitat function and how they will be funded.
- **Stewardship.** The proposed stewardship program for the site (annual maintenance and operations, noxious weed and invasive species control, site monitoring, etc.) and how it will be funded.
- **Nearby Lands.** How nearby protected lands (public and private) will help support efficient and effective management and stewardship of the site.
- **Conservation Easement.** Whether a conservation easement provides an appropriate level of protection for this habitat, and if not used, explain why.
- **Regulatory Protections.** Current regulatory protections on the site (critical areas ordinances, zoning, development regulations, shoreline management rules, forest practice rules, habitat conservation plans, etc.).

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<sup>96</sup>Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.060 (5)(a)(ii, iv, vi, x, xii)

- **Livestock Grazing.** The amount, location, and seasonal duration of livestock grazing that would occur if the site were acquired, planned efforts to mitigate impacts to wildlife, and an evidence-based rationale for how the proposed grazing approach protects or enhances desired habitat function.

▲ Point Range: 0-10 points

#### 4. Partnerships and Community Support<sup>97</sup>

To what degree do the community (local residents, local organizations, local governments and elected officials, or others) and Tribal governments support and benefit from the project? A complete response should address the following:

- **Engagement.** Which people most impacted by the project were engaged, how they were engaged, and how local input influenced the project scope and approach.
- **Partnerships.** Any partnerships that are supporting the project through financial, in-kind, project delivery, or other means, and the significance of the partnerships in the local community or region.

▲ Point Range: 0-5 points

#### 5. Public Benefits<sup>98</sup>

What additional public benefits will the site provide when protected as critical habitat? A complete response should address the following as applicable:

- **Recreation.** How recreational uses will be managed, the quality of the recreational experience, and an evidence-based explanation of compatibility with the habitat conservation objectives of the project.
- **Resource Uses.** Resource uses and/or management practices compatible with the habitat conservation objectives of the project and how additional conservation benefits will be achieved.

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<sup>97</sup>Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.060 (5)(a)(iii)

<sup>98</sup>Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.060 (5)(a)(i, xiv)

- **Research and Education.** Opportunity for scientific research and education.
- **Landscape Features.** Preservation of geological or historical landscape features of public interest (lava tubes, inland dunes, waterfalls, fossil sites, coulees, etc.).
- **Ecosystem Services.** Ecosystem services such as aquifer recharge, flood control, or habitat benefits for the feeding, nesting, and reproduction of pollinators.

▲ Point Range: 0-5 points