



Fish and Wildlife Commission Presentation Summary/Decision Sheet

Meeting date:

12/13/2024

Agenda item:

6. Land Transactions

Presenter(s):

Matthew Trenda, Real Estate Manager, & Lisa Coffman, Lands 20/20 & Acquisition Funding Coordinator

**Item 1: Acquisition of 15(+/-) Acres in Skagit County, Region 4
 Skagit Wildlife Area, Milltown Unit, Milltown Island Addition Property**

Background summary:

The proposed Milltown Island project is the donation of 15(+/-) acres in the Skagit Wildlife Area, Skagit County. As an inholding to the Skagit Wildlife Area the property is surrounded by WDFW land on three sides and the Skagit River on the other, making it only accessible by water. There are failing structures located on the property in a cluster on the high bank of the river that will be removed. The remainder of the property is undisturbed intertidal wetlands with trees, scrubs, and emergent wetland plants. The habitat at this site is valuable to a variety of wetland dependent species such as waterfowl, shorebirds, water birds, bull and brown trout, and salmon species to include chinook.

Ownership would allow WDFW to protect the wetlands and remove the failing structures to restore the site to natural conditions. The property was approved through Lands 20/20 in December 2023, and will be accepted as a donation from the landowner.

Ongoing operation and maintenance costs for this proposed property are expected to be approximately \$95 an acre and will be included in WDFW's 9v decision package for ongoing operation and maintenance for newly acquired land.

Per [RCW 77.12.201](#), Skagit County does not currently opt into PILT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) as provided for in [RCW 77.12.203](#).

**Item 2: Land Use Agreement of 33(+/-) Acres in Okanogan County, Region 2
Highlands Fire Camp Extension/Expansion**

Background summary:

The proposed issuance of a Land Use Agreement to the Washington Dept. of Natural Resources (WDNR) is for the use of the Highlands Fire Camp, a portion of property located in the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area, Okanogan County. WDFW and WDNR would like to renew the agreement for the next 50 years. The camp has been used by WDNR for fire suppression since the first agreement between parties in December of 1959. The extended Land Use Agreement would expand the size of the area from 16 to 33 acres. All 33 acres are currently in use already.

Operation and expansion of the labor and fire camp will not interfere or conflict with the original purchase purpose. The remote location provides a strategic base for fire-fighting assistance, which could reduce response time drastically in the event of local wildfires.

There is no change to operation and maintenance costs for this Land Use Agreement as it is already included in the wildlife area payment. The agreement will bring \$12,000 annually to WDFW, which will provide program income for the PR contract and be applied to grant F24AF02729-00.

WDFW staff believe that the presence and expansion of the camp has direct benefits to the wildlife area and the region, concluding that approval of this preferred alternative is the best option.

The agreement does require commission decision due to the length of the agreement.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommend Commission approval to acquire property and accept the agreement renewal pursuant to [RCW 77.12.037](#).

Policy issue(s) and expected outcome:

Protecting critical habitat and riparian habitat and providing recreational opportunities.

Fiscal impacts of agency implementation:

Operation and maintenance costs.

Action requested and/or proposed next steps:

Approval of the land transaction and extension of the land use agreement.

Draft motion language:

Motion: I move to approve the land transactions as presented by staff.

Is there a "second"?

If so, then motion maker discusses basis for motion; other Commissioners discuss views on motion; amendments, if any, proposed and addressed.

Post decision communications plan:

WDFW will distribute a press release informing the public of these actions.