



Fish and Wildlife Commission Presentation Summary Sheet

Meeting date:

12/13/2024

Agenda item:

Lands 20/20 - Briefing

Presenter(s):

Matthew Trenda, Real Estate Services Manager, and Lisa Coffman, Lands 20/20 and Funding Coordinator

Background summary:

The annual Lands 20/20 process has identified 20 potential land acquisition projects under consideration by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Director for the annual 2024 cycle. These projects have been through internal cross-programmatic technical and funding review, an opportunity for federally recognized Tribes with interests in Washington State to be briefed via a virtual presentation, an offer of consultation to those same Tribes, and a three-week public comment process, and are being presented to the Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) as a briefing. The next step is for WDFW's Director to approve the list of projects to pursue funding through grants or other sources. This early review process provides the Commission with information on these potential land acquisition proposals, including a summary of public comments.

Projects:

Chief Joesph Exchange – Asotin County – Region 1

This proposed acquisition exchange project exchanges 10 acres of WDFW land for 13 acres of the adjoining property owner's land within the 4-O Unit of the Chief Joesph Wildlife Area.

The 10 acres WDFW is exchanging have a spring the landowner currently uses for livestock, while the 13 acres WDFW is acquiring is already within the wildlife area's boundary fence. The exchange simplifies land ownership and management.

The acquisition is also important for protecting the lower Cougar Creek Riparian Zone, which contains threatened steelhead.

Headgate Park – Asotin County – Region 1

This proposed acquisition project is for 28 acres to be added to the George Creek Unit of the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area.

This site provides opportunities for wildlife viewing, serves as a starting point for hunting, and is a popular fishing site with an existing fishpond and access to Asotin Creek.

Big Valley Addition – Okanogan County – Region 2

The Big Valley project is the proposed acquisition of 142 acres in the Big Valley Unit of the Methow Wildlife Area.

This project provides floodplain, riverine and mixed riparian woodlands habitat along the Methow River corridor, protecting spring chinook, bull trout, mule deer, and western gray squirrel. Recreational opportunities include hunting, fishing, and year-round trail opportunities.

Lockman Ridge – Okanogan County – Region 2

This project is the proposed acquisition of 960 acres within the Tunk Valley Unit of the Scotch Creek Wildlife Area.

The goal of this acquisition is to secure a critical biodiversity corridor comprised of mixed habitats including conifer and riparian, which benefit elk, mule deer, State Endangered Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, and golden eagle.

The property offers ample wildlife-related recreation in the forms of hiking, biking, horseback riding, nature viewing, and high-quality hunting opportunities, particularly big game.

Scotch Creek Addition – Okanogan County – Region 2

The project is the proposed acquisition of 93 acres surrounded by the Scotch Creek Unit of the Scotch Creek Wildlife Area.

The habitat in this location includes grassland birch dominated riparian and emergent wetland. It supports mule deer, is primary winter range forage for State Endangered Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, and is actively used by gray wolves.

The area provides for excellent wildlife viewing and hunting opportunities, as well as a chance to experience high quality riparian and riverine habitats.

Happy Hill - Okanogan County – Region 2

This proposed acquisition is to acquire 1,372 acres to be managed as part of the Scotch Creek Unit of the Scotch Creek Wildlife Area.

This project provides critical shrubsteppe habitat and mule deer winter and migratory corridors, and supports the recovery of State Endangered Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, gray wolf, and golden eagle.

Recreational opportunities include wildlife viewing, hunting, and edible plant foraging.

Ellemeham Mountain – Okanogan County – Region 2

This project would acquire 109 acres in the Ellemeham Unit of the Scotch Creek Wildlife Area.

The Ellemeham Mountain project supports mule deer, gray wolves, golden eagles, and Townsend big eared bats.

Recreational opportunities include hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities.

Chewuch River – Okanogan County – Region 2

This property would add 90 acres to the Methow Unit of the of the Methow Wildlife Area.

The Chewuch River property provides forested wetland habitat along with riverine floodplain. It will benefit mule deer, western gray squirrel, Sandhill crane, bull trout, and Upper Columbia steelhead.

Recreational opportunities include hunting, wildlife viewing, and fishing.

West Foster Creek – Douglas County – Region 2

This proposed project will add 5,100 acres to the West Foster Creek Unit of the Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area.

The West Foster Creek project supports State Endangered Columbian sharp-tailed grouse and greater sage grouse.

Recreational opportunities include wildlife viewing and hunting.

Horse Heaven Hills – Benton County – Region 3

This proposed project is 535 acres to be added to the Horse Heaven Hills Unit of the Sunnyside-Snake River Wildlife Area.

This acquisition would protect ferruginous hawk, American badger, burrowing owl, loggerhead shrike, and Townsend ground squirrel.

Recreational opportunities include hiking, horseback riding, and wildlife viewing.

Lavender Lake & Easton Ponds – Kittitas County – Region 2:

This property will add two water access areas of 45 total acres to the Yakima River Unit of the L.T. Murray Wildlife Area. Both properties are owned by the Washington State Dept. of Transportation, though Lavender Lake is currently under WDFW management.

Both properties are popular recreation areas for fishing and both support rainbow trout.

Luna Ponds – Klickitat County - Region 5

This property is 480 acres to be added to the Simcoe Unit of the Klickitat Wildlife Area.

This proposed acquisition property contains Columbia Basin foothills and canyon dry basin grassland, as well as intermountain basin big sagebrush steppe. The property protects mule deer winter range, pheasant, waterfowl, and the western fence lizard.

Recreational opportunities include hunting, hiking, horseback riding, and wildlife viewing.

Big Beef Creek – Kitsap County – Region 6

This proposed project would acquire 451 acres in the Big Beef Creek Unit of the North Olympic Wildlife Area.

This property contains instream, floodplain, and riparian forest, and benefits waterfowl, blue heron, bald eagle osprey, and pileated woodpecker, as well as serving as a management buffer for spotted owl.

Recreational opportunities include hiking, hunting, and fishing.

This property is owned by the Washington Department of Natural Resources and may be transferred through the [Trust Land Transfer Program](#).

Duckabush – Jefferson County – Region 6

This proposed acquisition project is 6.3 acres in the Duckabush Unit of the North Olympic Wildlife Area.

This project would conserve natural nearshore habitat and is an integral part of the Duckabush Restoration Project. Species found in the area include Puget Sound Chinook and summer chum—both ESA-listed—Puget Sound steelhead, hard shell clams, and waterfowl concentrations.

This property is ideally suited for wildlife viewing, shell fishing, and hunting.

Lucky Deer – Jefferson County – Region 6

This proposed acquisition is .29 acres in the Discovery Bay Unit of the North Olympic Wildlife Area and is an inholding.

This project consists of tidal flats, mud marsh, and low riparian forest, and it protects summer chum, coho, and Puget Sound winter steelhead.

Recreational opportunities support wildlife viewing and the Discovery Trail is very near the property.

Conservation partners here include the Jefferson Land Trust and North Olympic Salmon Coalition.

North Willapa Bay – Pacific County – Region 6

This project consists of the proposed acquisition of 75 acres in the North Willapa Unit of the Johns River Wildlife Area and includes three properties.

This proposed project would conserve wetland, riparian, and shoreline forest for marbled murrelet, North American green sturgeon, dusky Canada goose, winter steelhead, and waterfowl.

Recreational opportunities include wildlife viewing, hunting, fishing, and hiking.

Salmon Creek – Thurston County – Region 6

This proposed acquisition project would acquire 44 acres in the Salmon Creek area and would be added to the Scatter Creek Wildlife Area.

The primary goal of this project is to preserve and protect reed canary grass, freshwater wetlands, and riparian for Oregon spotted frog, Olympic mudminnow, Cope's giant salamander, and hoary and silver haired bats.

Recreational opportunities include waterfowl hunting, fishing, boating, and wildlife viewing.

Black River – Thurston County – Region 6

This proposed is 2,382 acres in the Scatter Creek Wildlife Area vicinity. It would create the largest wildlife area corridor region between Black River riparian, Scatter Creek Wildlife Area, Capital Forest, and Glacial Heritage Preserve.

The acquisition is made up of primarily conifer forest and will protect species such as elk, Columbian black-tailed deer, coho, coastal cutthroat, and Townsend's big-eared bat.

Recreation would not be included, as the property would be under a conservation easement.

Silver Springs – Thurston County – Region 6

This proposed acquisition project is for 1,100 acres to be added to the Scatter Creek Unit of the Scatter Creek Wildlife Area.

This project is adjacent to Joint Base Lewis McCord Ownership and contains prairie mosaic, Oregon white oak, wetlands, and mima mounds. The property protects Mazama pocket gopher, Taylor's checkerspot butterfly, Oregon vesper sparrow, and Federally Threatened and State Endangered streaked horned lark.

Recreation here would include wildlife viewing, fishing, hunting, and hiking.

Maytown West Rocky Prairie – Thurston County – Region 6

This proposed project would acquire 743 acres to be added to the West Rocky Prairie Unit of the Scatter Creek Wildlife Area.

This proposal contains prairie oak woodland, prairie mosaic, and wetlands, and it protects Taylor's checkerspot butterfly, Federally Threatened and State Endangered streaked horn lark, Oregon vesper sparrow, western gray squirrel, Mardon skipper butterfly, and numerous other endemic butterfly species.

Recreational opportunities include wildlife viewing, hunting, and hiking.

Policy issue(s) and expected outcome

Thorough analysis and evaluation of proposed land acquisition projects intended to protect and preserve critical habitats and recreational access. Outcome of Director approval is the pursuit of funding. Upon receipt of funding, eventual acquisition for either fee title or conservation easement.

Fiscal impacts of agency implementation

None

Public involvement process used and what you learned

Public involvement included regional staff coordination with tribal and local governments and conservation, recreation, and community partners, a virtual review of the Lands 20/20 process and proposed acquisition projects with federally recognized Tribes with interests in Washington State, offer of consultation to those same Tribes, and a three-week web based public review period. We received 117 public comments, 112 of which were positive. Positive comments were received on individual projects as well as all projects. There were 5 negative comments received.

Organizational support letters were received from:

- Black Hills Audubon Society
- Legacy Forest Defense Coalition
- Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society
- SCI First for Hunters
- Audubon Washington
- Friends of West Rocky Prairie

One letter of opposition was received from the Douglas County Cattleman's.

Action requested and/or proposed next steps

Briefing only

Draft motion language

None, briefing only

Post decision communications plan

Briefing only
