

“GREEN SHEET”

Meeting: November 2-3, 2007
Agenda Item 14: **Skookumchuck Watershed Habitat Conservation Project -- Briefing**
Prepared By: Mark Teske, Habitat Biologist
Presented By: Mark Teske

Background:

The Skookumchuck Watershed proposal is a partnership between WDFW and the Trust for Public Land (TPL) that seeks to acquire and protect approximately 12,360 acres. The target property consists primarily of shrub steppe habitat which contains stream, riparian, cliff, talus and cave habitats as well. This acquisition will complete our efforts to acquire 17,500 acres, establish a landscape scale linkage between the Whiskey Dick and Quilomene Wildlife Areas and protect virtually an entire watershed in a key location.

Skookumchuck is an in-holding between wildlife areas and a gap between protected areas within the largest swath of shrub steppe remaining in the state. Numerous plans and studies point to the significance of the Skookumchuck as fish and wildlife habitat. The WDFW Greater Sage-Grouse Recovery Plan, the Upper Middle Mainstem Subbasin Plan, the Nature Conservancy’s Columbia Plateau Ecoregional Assessment all identify this area as a conservation target. The Skookumchuck is listed as an Audubon Important Bird Area (IBA). A long list of shrub steppe obligate and associated species will benefit from this acquisition including sage grouse, sage thrasher, sage sparrow, loggerhead shrike, sagebrush lizard and striped whipsnake. NOAA Fisheries has designated Skookumchuck Creek as critical habitat for steelhead, threatened in the Upper Columbia ESU. The significant public investment that the adjoining wildlife areas represent would be safeguarded from conflicting management. The project has broad support.

Policy Issue(s) you are bringing to the Commission for consideration:

N/A

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

We worked closely with the Kittitas County Commissioners on the project and explained how this project was a key link in a much larger public/private conservation effort. As a result of our educational effort, we received support from the Kittitas Board of County Commissioners. The project has support from the entire 13th legislative district delegation. The project also enjoys broad support from many diverse organizations. Conservation groups, business, education as well as sporting groups gave the project the endorsement it needed.

Action requested (identify the specific Commission decisions you are seeking): N/A

Briefing only.

Draft motion language:

N/A

Justification for Commission action:

N/A
