

“GREEN SHEET”

Meeting: October 1-2, 2010

Agenda Item 8: WDFW Lands Acquisition Process - **Briefing**

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Background

The Department has authority under RCW 77.12.037, RCW 77.12.210 and RCW 77.12.220 to acquire lands. Department Policy 6010 – Acquiring and disposing of real property and Policy 6011 – Purchasing land for fish and wildlife currently set forth the basis of the Department’s land acquisition process.

The Department began acquiring lands in 1939, its first purchase known as the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. Since that time, the Department’s owned and managed lands have grown to encompass approximately 900,000 acres. Today the Department uses a strategic approach to acquire lands that can range from a landowner’s donation of a specific parcel to identified larger landscape corridors. One to two times a year (as needed), potential acquisitions are reviewed by a cross-program and regional team (RDs), where regional acquisition priorities and potential funding sources and partnerships are identified.

The Department acquires land only from willing sellers, at a fair market value. Acquisitions are conducted in a manner that respects the private property rights and choices of the landowner. Landowners decide the type of transaction in which they will participate. These choices range from a fee acquisition – in which the Department receives full title – to conveyance of a conservation easement granting the Department development rights to the land.

Targeted lands and landscapes are assessed to provide the highest benefit to fish, wildlife, and the public. Acquisition projects take into account a multitude of criteria including fish and wildlife needs, as defined by science, and can include game management planning and recovery planning documents. Landscape connectivity is also becoming a larger consideration, where the agency can focus on acquisition areas that address multiple species needs (biodiversity). Criteria can take into consideration local city and county open space planning as well as working landscapes. Public access for hunting, viewing, and other outdoor recreational opportunities also affect the overall decision of acquisition.

Over the years, the Department has acquired lands largely with grant funding, utilizing over 20 grant sources. Most often the requirements of the granting body dictate how the lands will be managed and what they will be managed for. As an example, lands acquired with grant funding from the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) are awarded for critical habitat and riparian protection, and often target the protection of specific species. Other lands are acquired as mitigation to address habitat and species losses resulting from hydropower developments. Additional acquisitions are funded with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) funds specifically for sensitive species management.

Throughout the acquisition process there are multiple opportunities for local government and public input; however, as stated above this must be carefully managed to ensure property owners rights to privacy. In general, outreach begins at the Department's internal review process, where county support is assessed. Submittal of individual grants can result in review by external panels and include federal agency ranking. More recently now, projects also go through a public presentation to the state lands coordination forum.

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

This is a Commission request for an informational briefing.

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

This is a Commission request for an informational briefing.

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

This is a Commission request for an informational briefing.

Draft motion language:

None.

Justification for Commission action:

None.

Communications Plan:

None.
