

Appendix 4. List of priority habitats that have either been added, replaced, or have had a change in priority status as a result of this update to the PHS List. Click on priority habitat's name for more details.

Priority habitat	Added or removed from PHS List or other change	Other comments
Biodiversity Areas and Corridors	Added to PHS List	Replaced Urban Natural Open Space and Rural Natural Open Space
Coastal Nearshore	Added to PHS List	Replaced Estuary/Estuary Like, Marine/Estuarine Shorelines, and Vegetated Marine/Estuarine
Eastside Steppe	Added to PHS List	Replaced Prairie and Steppe
Herbaceous Balds	Added to PHS List	
Inland Dunes	Added to PHS List	Will be added to PHS but priority area for this habitat has not been defined yet.
Open Coast Nearshore	Added to PHS List	Replaced Estuary/Estuary Like, Marine/Estuarine Shorelines, and Vegetated Marine/Estuarine
Puget Sound Nearshore	Added to PHS List	Replaced Estuary/Estuary Like, Marine/Estuarine Shorelines, and Vegetated Marine/Estuarine
Westside Prairie	Added to PHS List	Replaced Prairie and Steppe
Estuary/Estuary Like	Replaced	See Coastal Nearshore, Open Coast Nearshore, and Puget Sound Nearshore
Marine/Estuarine Shorelines	Replaced	See Coastal Nearshore, Open Coast Nearshore, and Puget Sound Nearshore
Prairie and Steppe	Replaced	See Westside Prairie and Eastside Steppe
Rural Natural Open Space	Replaced	See Biodiversity Areas and Corridors
Urban Natural Open Space	Replaced	See Biodiversity Areas and Corridors
Vegetated Marine/Estuarine	Replaced	See Coastal Nearshore, Open Coast Nearshore, and Puget Sound Nearshore
Aspen Stands	Other change	
Old-Growth/Mature Forest	Other change	
Riparian	Other change	
Shrub-Steppe	Other change	
Other Priority Habitats	Other change	

Appendix 6. Detailed descriptions of changes to priority habitats.

Subject: Change in minimum acreage threshold for priority Aspen Stands from 2 acres to an acre.

RATIONALE:

Recommend that the acreage threshold be downgraded from 2 ac to 1 ac. There are many aspen stands that are not being afforded any protection or mitigation in E WA (K. Divens & H. Ferguson, Personal Communication). We are rapidly losing last remaining stands (K. Divens & H. Ferguson, Personal Communication).

PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS:

K. Divens, WDFW Habitat Biologist. Suggestion received at January 24, 2007 PHS List Advisory Group meeting.

H. Ferguson, WDFW Wildlife Biologist. Suggestion received at January 24, 2007 PHS List Advisory Group meeting.

Subject: **Biodiversity Areas and Corridors** (BAC) was developed as a replacement for Urban and Rural Natural Open Space. BAC also captures areas identified for their high biodiversity.

RATIONALE:

A number of agency staff mentioned that the current definitions for urban natural open space (UNOS) and rural natural open space (RNOS) left a lot of subjectivity open to those who are mapping these priority habitats. Reasons why biologists mapped areas of UNOS and RNOS widely varied due to this subjectivity. A decision was made to rewrite the definitions for these priority habitats to remove much of that subjectivity and to make the priority habitat more defensible.

A sub-group was formed with a variety of agency experts to develop an alternative to UNOS and RNOS and to deal with the major shortcoming of these priority habitats. During several meetings, this subgroup worked on developing a refined definition that captures areas in the rural and urban landscape that are important, but may not be captured in other priority habitat categories. During these meetings, the group added a component to the definition to also capture areas of importance because they have been identified for their high biodiversity.

The details of the subgroup meetings are available upon request. Meeting notes are on file electronically and in the PHS List "Final Decision Reports" notebook.

PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS:

WDFW Natural Open Space Subgroup, Suggestion and direction received during March 2nd, 16th and July 24th meetings.

Subject: All nearshore priority habitats (Estuary/Estuary-Like, Marine/Estuarine Shorelines, Vegetated Marine/Estuarine definitions were changed because they were found to be confusing. These habitats were redefined, reorganized, and renamed.

RATIONALE:

Agency marine habitat experts identified problems with the marine habitats that are found in the 1999 PHS List (P. Erstad and G. Bargman, Personal Communications). They pointed out that these habitats were not mutually exclusive. Instead they had a fair amount of overlap. For instance, a given location could fit under more than one of the marine priority habitats. Also, they pointed out that the names of the three habitats were very confusing. For instance, all habitat names used some form of the word estuary, which made it hard to figure out which type of estuary fell under which of the three priority habitats.

The marine subgroup met on a couple occasions to rewrite and reorganize the marine priority habitats. What they developed captures the same areas that were captured in the previous marine priority habitat categories. However, there is no overlap and the definitions are easier to interpret.

The new marine priority habitats are called:

- Open Coast Nearshore
- Coastal Nearshore
- Puget Sound Nearshore

PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS:

WDFW Marine Habitats Subgroup, Suggestion and direction received during April 3rd and May 3rd.

P.Erstad, WDFW Habitat Biologist, Suggestion received at January 24, 2007 PHS List Advisory Group meeting.

G. Bargman, WDFW Fish Biologist, Suggestion received at January 24, 2007 PHS List Advisory Group meeting.

Subject: Redefinition of the **Eastside Steppe** areas that were previously covered by the Prairie and Steppe priority habitat category.

RATIONALE:

During the first meeting of the PHS List Technical Advisory group in January, 2007 the group was asked for suggestions of possible changes to the 1999 version of the PHS List. One suggestion that received a lot of attention had to do with the priority habitat category called Prairie and Steppe. The group made it clear that the current definition did a poor job capturing representations of priority prairie and steppe. In particular, the definition as written pretty much captured something along the lines of pristine representations of these habitats. Since no pristine steppe or prairie exists, little could be mapped under the definition in the 1999 prairie and steppe category.

The group made it clear that most steppe is fairly degraded and the definition should capture areas that may be significantly less than pristine because these areas still retain significant wildlife value.

Another problem with the prairie and steppe category was that it attempted to capture eastside steppe and westside prairie in a single definition. These were noted as being very different habitats that were in need of separate definitions.

An Eastside Steppe subgroup was formed to develop a definition. This group provided comments on an initial draft and then commented on a final, agreed upon draft.

PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS:

WDFW PHS List Technical Advisory Group, Suggestion to revise the Prairie and Steppe PHS Habitat Category on January 27, 2007.

WDFW Eastside Steppe habitat subgroup, Suggestion and direction received during two separate reviews of definitions that were developed for this priority habitat.

Subject: Inclusion of **Herbaceous Bald** as a new priority habitats

RATIONALE:

Early in the PHS List update, a number of individuals suggested that this priority habitat be added to the PHS List. This is a new priority habitat. An Herbaceous Bald subgroup was formed to develop a definition for this new priority habitat. The group began by discussing the rationale for including this new habitat on the PHS List. After much discussion and research, it was determined that this did indeed fit the criteria for being a priority habitat. The group then reviewed two separate drafts before coming to a draft that they could all agree upon.

Notes on the rationale justifying the inclusion of this priority habitat are available upon request. These notes are on file in electronic form and in hard copy form in the “Final Decision Reports” notebook.

PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS:

WDFW Herbaceous Bald Subgroup, Reviewed two drafts of the bald definition and were involved in coming to the conclusion that this habitat did fit the priority habitat criteria.

Subject: Addition of a minimum size threshold for priority **Old-growth and Mature Forest**.

RATIONALE:

Prior to the beginning of the PHS Update, WDFW staff working with local jurisdictions identified a need to add a minimum area threshold for old growth and mature forested priority habitat. The current criteria are based purely on structural characteristics and some counties have had questions. Such questions include “does a single large tree represent priority old growth?” After much discussion, a decision was made to look into this further and to see if a logical threshold could be included in the definition for this priority habitat.

After much literature research was done to evaluate the size of old-growth that closely associated wildlife will use, a threshold was determined and included in the definition for this priority habitat. Old Growth and Mature Forest under this threshold can still be captured using the new priority habitat called Biodiversity Areas and Corridors.

Subject: Modification of **Riparian** priority habitat

RATIONALE:

Recently, an update to the PHS Riparian Management Recommendations has begun. A technical advisory group was formed to oversee this process and this group agreed that riparian should not only address riparian along flowing water (streams and rivers), but also it should cover areas along standing water (e.g., ponds and lakes). That said, the new definition has been modified to capture these areas.

Subject: Modification of **Shrub-steppe** priority habitat

RATIONALE:

The definition of the priority habitat, Shrub-steppe, was rewritten to make it more consistent with the Eastside Steppe habitat that was recently developed. In general, Shrub-steppe Habitat is essentially Eastside Steppe with shrub in the overstory layer. With that said, we wanted to make sure that these two similar habitats were consistently defined. The rewrite of Shrub-steppe was meant to accomplish that objective.

Subject: Redefinition of the Westside Prairie habitats

RATIONALE:

During the first meeting of the PHS List Technical Advisory group in January, 2007 the group was asked for suggestions of possible changes to the 1999 version of the PHS List. One suggestion that received a lot of attention had to do with the priority habitat category called Prairie and Steppe. The group made it clear that the current definition did a poor job capturing representations of priority prairie and steppe. In particular, the definition as written pretty much captured something along the lines of pristine representations of these habitats. Since no pristine steppe or prairie exists, little could be mapped under the definition in the 1999 prairie and steppe category.

The group made it clear that most prairie is fairly degraded and the definition should capture areas that may be significantly less than pristine because these areas still retain significant wildlife value.

Another problem with the prairie and steppe category was that it attempted to capture eastside steppe and westside prairie in a single definition. These were noted as being very different habitats that were in need of separate definitions.

A Westside Prairie subgroup was formed to develop a definition. This group provided comments on three drafts of a definition for Westside Prairie. The group also convened in person on February 11, 2008

PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS:

WDFW PHS List Technical Advisory Group, Suggestion to revise the Prairie and Steppe PHS Habitat Category on January 27, 2007.

WDFW Westside Prairie Habitat Subgroup, Suggestion and direction received during a face-to-face meeting and three separate reviews of definitions that were developed for Westside Prairie.

Subject: Change in distribution maps for **All Other Priority Habitats**.

RATIONALE:

Distribution maps for all priority habitats have been updated. The sources of information used to determine range was [Washington GAP Analysis](#) data, published literature, and expert opinion.

Review of distribution maps for any of the priority habitats is encouraged.