



## Fish and Wildlife Commission Presentation Summary/Decision Sheet

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**Meeting date:**

8/9/2024

**Agenda item:**

4. Land Transactions

**Presenter(s):**

Lisa Coffman, Real Estate Services, Lands 20/20, and Acquisition Funding Coordinator

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**Item 1 Wenas Black Canyon, Acquisition of 150 (+/-) acres in Yakima County, Wenas Wildlife Area, Wenas Unit, Region 3**

**Background summary:**

The proposed Wenas Black Canyon project is the acquisition of 150(+/-) acres in the Wenas Unit of the Wenas Wildlife Area in Yakima County. This acquisition will protect and conserve an area that is almost entirely shrubsteppe habitat, bordering a small annual stream on the southeast corner. The property is situated in the foothills of the cascade mountains sharing three of its borders with the Wenas Wildlife Area. Conservation of the property is key to wildlife habitat, adding to winter range for mule deer populations, white headed woodpecker, and loggerhead shrike along with a large and diverse bird population. Recreational opportunities here will include hunting, hiking and bird watching.

The property was approved through Lands 20/20 in 2023 and funding is provided through a Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO), Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP), Critical Habitat grant as well as an additional 40 acres that has been identified as an exchange property. The exchange property was acquired from DNR in 2012 as part of a larger WDFW exchange/acquisition. It is an isolated parcel, bisected by a county road, and, therefore, provides negligible public benefit and wildlife habitat. The appraised value of the property is \$175,000 and purchase agreement will be \$119,000 after the exchange. The original funder of the exchange property has approved this exchange.

Ongoing operation and maintenance costs for this proposed property is expected to be \$95 per 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](#), Yakima County does currently opt into PILT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) as provided for in [RCW 77.12.203](#). This property is expected to add an additional \$710 annually to Yakima County's PILT payment.

**Item 2 WSDOT Naches, Acquisition of 11(+/-) Acres in Yakima County  
Oak Creek Wildlife Area, Oak Creek Init Unit, Region 3**

**Background summary:**

The proposed WSDOT Naches property is the acquisition of an 11(+/-) acre inholding to the Oak Creek Unit, Oak Creek Wildlife Area. Designated as surplus by WSDOT this acquisition is valuable habitat for big horn sheep, multiple game bird species, mule deer, providing key winter range for elk and a protection buffer from surrounding land uses. The habitat here is primarily shrub steppe and the property will provide opportunities for hiking, hunting and bird watching.

The WSDOT Naches property was approved through Lands 20/20 in 2023 and is funded by a Special Wildlife Account, West Fork Timber Settlement. The WSDOT estimated value of this Naches acquisition is \$33,782.

Ongoing operation and maintenance costs for this proposed property is expected to be \$95 per 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](#), Yakima County does currently opt into PILT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) as provided for in [RCW 77.12.203](#). This property is expected to add an additional \$52 annually to Okanogan County's PILT payment.

**Items 3 Moss Caves, Acquisition of 67(+/-) Acres as Conservation Easement in Skamania  
County, Mt St Helens Wildlife Area, Merrill Lake Unit, Region 5**

**Background summary:**

The Moss Caves conservation easement acquisition will protect 67(+/-) acres in the Mt St Helens WLA near the Merrill Lake Unit. This project will ensure long term maintenance of the site in a favorable habitat condition allowing perpetual conservation and will allow Department of Fish and Wildlife staff to continue to monitor and protect the Townsend big-eared bat population in the caves. The property is currently owned by The Nature Conservancy and will be sold to Pacific Corps who will perform management of the property.

The Moss Caves conservation easement property was approved through Lands 20/20 in early 2020 and will not require any funding, it will be received as a donation.

As this is a conservation easement O&M and PILT will not apply.

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**Staff Recommendation:**

Staff recommend Commission approval to acquire all three properties pursuant to [RCW 77.12.037](#).

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**Policy issue(s) and expected outcome:**

Protecting critical habitat and riparian habitat and providing recreational opportunities.

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**Fiscal impacts of agency implementation:**

Operation and maintenance costs.

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**Action requested and/or proposed next steps:**

Approval of these land transactions.

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**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.

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**Post decision communications plan:**

WDFW will distribute a press release informing the public of this action.