



Fish and Wildlife Commission Presentation Summary/Decision Sheet

Meeting date:

5/16/2025

Agenda item:

5. Land Transaction

Presenter(s):

Matthew Trenda, Real Estate Services Manager

Item 1: Acquisition of 4(+/-) Acres in Jefferson County, Region 6

North Olympic Wildlife Area, Duckabush Unit, Duckabush Estuary Property

Background summary

This proposed property, identified as the “Duckabush Estuary Property” includes 4(+/-) acres in the Duckabush Unit of the North Olympic Wildlife Area in Jefferson County, which is in WDFW’s Region 6. The property is within the footprint of the future Duckabush Estuary Restoration project which will restore natural nearshore processes that support nearshore structure and function in a self-sustaining manner. A functioning nearshore reduces fragmentation by increasing habitat connectivity and complexity, as well as the system’s capacity to support biological diversity and production.

Processes improved at the Duckabush Estuary project include the natural formation of tidal channels, unrestricted flow of freshwater into estuaries, and unrestricted movement of saltwater through tidal channels. Restored large river deltas provide valuable nursery habitat for threatened species of juvenile salmon, increasing their survival and supporting population recovery in Puget Sound. Hood Canal Summer Chum and Puget Sound Chinook (both ESA-listed species) are both known to have life history stages with considerable residence time in estuaries.

This project also has the potential for benefits outside of improved nearshore habitat. Ancillary benefits may include reduced upstream flood impacts, modernized and resilient transportation infrastructure, increased habitat connectivity for marine and terrestrial species, reduced vehicle/wildlife interactions, and new recreational features.

The Duckabush Estuary Property was approved through Lands 20/20 in 2024, and the property will be accepted as a donation from the Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group (HCSEG). The donation of this property from HCSEG to WDFW is required for WDFW to begin construction on the Duckabush Estuary Restoration project, which could begin as early as summer 2026.

Ongoing operation and maintenance costs for this proposed property is expected to be \$125 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](#), Jefferson County does not currently opt into PILT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes)

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommend Commission approval to acquire property and accept the agreement renewal pursuant to [RCW 77.12.037](#).

Policy issue(s) and expected outcome:

Protecting critical habitat and riparian habitat and providing recreational opportunities.

Fiscal impacts of agency implementation:

Operation and maintenance costs.

Action requested and/or proposed next steps:

Approval of the land transaction.

Draft motion language:

Motion: I move to approve the land transaction 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.

Post decision communications plan:

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