Habitat & Recreation Lands Coordinating Group

Date: December 11, 2014
Time: 9:00 AM – 11:30 AM
Location: Pritchard Building, Washington Room

Attendees:

Kaleen Cottingham	Washington Recreation and Conservation Office
Wendy Brown	Washington Recreation and Conservation Office
Wendy Loosle	Washington Recreation and Conservation Office
Meg O'Leary	Washington Recreation and Conservation Office
Sheilah Kennedy	Okanogan County Commissioner
Brian Cochrane	Washington State Conservation Commission
Lora Leschner	Pacific Coast Joint Venture
Tom Bugert	The Nature Conservancy
Pene Speaks	Washington Department of Natural Resources
Joe Stohr	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Leda Chahim	Washington Association of Land Trusts
Cynthia Wilkerson	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Eric Beach	Washington Forest Protection Association
Steve Hahn	Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission

Item 1: Welcome, Introductions, and Review of Agenda

Wendy Brown welcomed the members of the Habitat and Recreation Lands Coordinating Group (Lands group) and reviewed the agenda. The members and attendees introduced themselves.

Item 2: Updates

2014 State Land Acquisition Forecast Report

The report is currently with the Office of Financial Management and nearing completion. Once approved, Lands group members will have the opportunity for final a review before submitting it to the Legislature.

Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) Ranked Lists

All WWRP 2014 ranked lists were approved by the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board at their October meeting, and submitted to the Legislature. To view the lists, please visit RCO's website: http://www.rco.wa.gov/documents/rcfb/wwrp/2014GrantsAwarded.pdf.

Round Table Updates

Tom Bugert provided an update on payment in lieu of taxes (PILT). Recent attempts to restore funding for PILT were not successful, and another attempt will be made in the 2015 session. Vlad Gutman, Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition Policy Director, is the primary contact for this effort; feedback is welcome.

Sheila Kennedy shared an example from Okanogan County regarding PILT payments. The county billed amounts for PILT payments which were lowered significantly due to the 2009 level payment ability, causing economic hardships.

Tom Bugert also shared that the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) will release a study regarding the economic impact of public lands, with a preliminary section due for publishing in January.

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The study describes agency roles and priority lands. The Lands group will continue to serve an important role coordinating the work and informing the public. Once the report comes out, members are encouraged to share and talk about agency roles as they relate to the study.

Pene Speaks notes that the finding from the JLARC study may show that agencies are not documenting the processes that lead to decisions thoroughly for acquisitions; however, the lack of documentation is not synonymous with a lack of process. She suggested enhanced documentation measures to demonstrate agency transparency. Additionally, she proposed that the Lands group support agencies as they work through clearly documenting acquisitions in a manner that can be shared with the public and inform legislators, which will then support funding decisions and coordination with other agencies and partners.

Cynthia Wilkerson noted that communication about acquisitions could be enhanced, including more efficient ways to communicate the ever-changing nature of the acquisition process. She suggested that the Lands group serve as a "thought forum" for improving processes and agency transparency.

Sheila Kennedy inquired about opportunities for public input in the process. Currently, a number of agencies, such as the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), hold a public hearing in the county where the site under consideration is located. While it is not required to be held within the county, the acquiring agency is required to coordinate with local authorities and county commissioners.

Ms. Wilkerson noted that support was provided by WDFW to Okanogan County for wildfire assistance, considering the impacts to leases and relocation needs. Ms. Kennedy shared that through a $20M request for assistance they intended to partner with fruit producers in the area to mitigate the impact to species while protecting harvest. She requested additional coordination and assistance with this effort.

Kaleen Cottingham noted that up to $1M in funding from the Salmon Recovery Funding Board supported rebuilding a bridge on Frazer Creek; additional funding from other sources will ultimately support rebuilding five bridges at this site.

Joe Stohr provided an update on the process for hiring a new WDFW director. The Fish and Wildlife Commission selects the agency director, and they hope to have new director in mid-January.

Pene Speaks shared that DNR experienced some difficulty managing trust lands recently and looked to Oregon's Elliot State Forest as they are facing similar issues. DNR is currently coordinating with Oregon to learn about trust land management issues.

Lora Leschner shared that the *State of the Birds Report 2014* was released. To learn more, please visit: http://www.stateofthebirds.org/.

Leda Chahim provided an update on new staff and a new executive director for the Washington Association of Land Trusts, Hannah Clark.

Recreation and Conservation Office Economic Study

Wendy Brown presented information and general results from the *Economic Analysis of Recreation In Washington State*. The data were peer-reviewed by two independent economists prior to publishing. The statistics covered overall outdoor recreation expenditures, the contributions to the Washington State economy, out-of-state tourism contributions, taxes generated, and valuation of ecosystem services. The report demonstrates the relative public use (measured by day use) as compared to funding expended across various land types, including expenditures by land type and by legislative district.

In a national comparison of tourism spending by state, Washington State is unique in that it does not fund tourism. Typically, states agencies do not provide advertising and marketing for tourism; however, some agencies may use other funding sources to support counties.

Report edits and revisions were submitted to the contracted consultant, and some work is needed to fine-tune the graphics. Once finalized, the report will be submitted to the Governor's Office. RCO may hold a press release to support public engagement, but these plans are open to suggestion.

Item 3: 2015-17 Budget

Round Table Agency Budget Requests

RCO Budget Requests: Wendy Brown summarized RCO's general operating and capital budget requests, including a $97M ask for the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP). RCO also included special request to change the WWRP administrative rate calculation. Permission was received to run the bill, and RCO is currently looking for sponsors in order to drop the legislation in the 2015 session. All requests were submitted to the Governor's Office in September.

The WDFW budget requests focused on emergency area restoration. They are hoping to keep maintenance level funding, with support for fire management, performance tasks, and enforcement for cannabis regulation. The 15% general funds reduction exercise affected PILT, and there are efforts to increase the fund using other sources. The PILT is one of the only sources that WDFW has the ability to change, and they are opting to have the Legislature issue payments versus the State Treasury. Additional fees are due to expire, such as the salmon stamp that pays for enforcement measures.

DNR maintained a conservation and recreation program focus, submitting capital requests for development on natural areas and recreation sites, forest lands, Teanaway development, some for recreation development in Darrington for recovery efforts post-landslide in the Oso area. The request to increase funds to approximately $1M for 91 natural areas is hopeful. DNR has been unable to replace natural areas managers since 2009, and requires about $1M for land management capacity and weed control. They also forwarded a request for the Natural Heritage Program – by statute DNR must update this program every two years. The request included $400K to update the draft plan. Finally, DNR PILT payments are issued through the Office of the State Treasurer; the request this biennium was $3M for lands managed by the natural areas program. The statute that established the Teanaway indicates that DNR pays the PILT, so they are looking into what amount this will be (it is not included in the $3M request).

State Parks budget requests were challenging based on the 15% reduction exercise. A large portion of their funding comes from acquisitions, including about 70% from RCO in State Parks grant categories. The agency requested about $65M to maintain "healthy state parks," but the current budget constitutes a $10M bridge for the biennium. Public health and safety consume a large part of the requests, and some funding from the Discover Pass will support the agency. The current budget floor is $0, making for a very volatile general fund budget.

Request Legislation

WDFW did not have any specific requests for the Legislature; they are engaged in moving PILT forward.

DNR provided an update on an issue from the 2014 session which became request legislation to develop a grazing policy for DNR land. The process kicked off in October with an open house and a request for nominations to an advisory group. They focused on 2.2M acres of forest on DNR lands and recreation trails in conservation areas. The first advisory group meeting is next week in North Bend. Their initial intent is to gather information about what should be addressed in a trails policy. This is anticipated to be

a challenging process, and DNR hopes to assist with clarifying the supporting policies, procedures, and standards. They expect the process to take several months. Meetings are open to the public and public comment/input is encouraged.

Item 4: 2014 Lands Group Progress Report

Meg O'Leary provided an update on the 2014 forecast and annual reports. RCO will submit the final draft to the Legislature by December 30. The annual report summarizes the progress of respective state agencies and includes the coordinated information from March's annual Lands group forum, the Public Lands Inventory, and the recent Economic Analysis of Outdoor Recreation in Washington. Ms. O'Leary expressed appreciation to DNR, WDFW, and State Parks for submitting their data. RCO will share a draft with the members of the group soon.

Ms. Kennedy noted that citizens want more information on the long term goals of each acquisition included in the forecast and monitoring reports. The goals need to be established and outlined in terms of what will happen when and what will happen when certain goals are reached. This also supports long-term use of the reports, as it would include documentation of what the plans are and when/if goals are met. Ms. O'Leary acknowledged these suggestions and will address them in the report drafts.

Ms. O'Leary provided a summary of the Public Lands Inventory (PLI). The Lands group had requested that forecast data be included in the PLI. These data are not included yet, but will be ready soon. The PLI should be available online by next week and will show the proposed acquisitions submitted in the forecast report.

Break 10:25 a.m. – 10:40 a.m.

Item 5: 2015 Schedule

Reporting requirements

Annual Forecast Report

Pene Speaks discussed the necessary data for reports and forums, explaining the previous process for how and when each agency transfers their information. Usually, the agencies will wait until their respective budgets are approved so they have conclusive data for a forum in the following July or August. This forum often occurs in tandem with a regular quarterly meeting in order to avoid duplicative travel for members.

Lands Forum

Data for the Lands Forum is captured in a standardized PowerPoint (PPT) format. All agencies respond to the same questions for consistency. The templates should be updated for long-term use and to address additional legislative needs. Ms. Speaks suggested that the group should update what is normally done for the forum and streamline that process with the forecast report so that efforts are not duplicative.

The report should clarify how public lands link to the goals, objectives, and missions of contributing state agencies, i.e., here is our mission, here are our priority areas, here are the parcels we want to acquire within priority regions. Monitoring components and top goals should also be included.

Forecast Report

The Forecast Report should be a product of the Lands Forum, sent to contributing agencies for review and additional information as needed. Ms. Speaks asked about where the follow up occurs from data in the forecast report.

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The report tables should have historic properties forecasted in the past 2-4 years, show which properties were funded, and which properties were actually acquired via filtered columns. Then, the data should demonstrate whether the acquisitions meet the intended use or purpose. The report should document and share this information. Not all acquired lands need to be monitored, e.g., for State Parks if land was purchased to create a buffer then it meets the intended use.

The report is useful for communicating use, changes, status, priorities, values, etc. When it's published the pdf is very large, so perhaps the group could look at breaking it out and linking up document links and county specific information in an online format.

Reporting Schedule

The Lands Forum is held each year. On odd years the group shares which projects were funded (monitoring forum). On even year the group shares forecast data, typically in February, and speculate about the next year's funding (forecast forum). The latter should be more of a workshop format, coming ahead of Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) cycle. Projects do not need to be submitted until May 1. TVW may potentially record and store forum presentations online for later access.

2015 Meeting Schedule

Date	Time	Location
March 20, 2015	9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	Room 172 Natural Resource Building 1111 Washington Street SE Olympia, WA 98501
July 9, 2015	1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.	Room 172 Natural Resource Building 1111 Washington Street SE Olympia, WA 98501
September 10, 2015*	9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	Room 172 Natural Resource Building 1111 Washington Street SE Olympia, WA 98501
December 2, 2015	9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	Room 172 Natural Resource Building 1111 Washington Street SE Olympia, WA 98501

*This meeting is likely to change to a date in October to accommodate more members.

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 am.

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