

Meeting Summary  
Habitat and Recreation Lands Coordinating HRLCG

Olympia, Washington, July 16, 2008

Attendance

Senator Linda Evans Parlette (R-12)  
Erika Keech (Sen. Parlette's office)  
Elizabeth Rodrick (Department of Fish and Wildlife)  
Pene Speaks (Department of Natural Resources)  
Shannon Stevens (State Parks)  
Steve Hahn (State Parks)  
Leslie Betlach (WA Recreation and Parks Assn.)  
Mike Rundlett (Western Washington Ag Association)  
Bill Robinson (The Nature Conservancy, WA Wildlife & Recreation Coalition)  
Joe LaTourrette (Pacific Coast Joint Ventures, Ducks Unlimited)  
Sarah Gage (Biodiversity Council)  
Kammie Bunes (RCO)  
Heath Packard (RCO)

Introductions, agenda review, RCO staff change

After introductions and agenda review, the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) provided a staffing update. Kammie Bunes, the RCO staff who has coordinated the Habitat and Recreation Lands Coordinating HRLCG (HRLCG) for the first year, handed off coordination to new RCO policy staff Heath Packard. Accolades were given by many to Kammie for her great launch and shepherding of the HRLCG through its first year.

Proposed charter

Heath introduced a draft HRLCG charter and provided a brief orientation. He highlighted several elements of the charter including the fact that the HRLCG is subject to the Open Public Meetings act (RCW 42.30) which requires annual publication of "regular meetings" and announcements of "special meetings."

Impromptu email dialogues among all HRLCG members constitute a "special meeting" and should be avoided. So, electronic communications from RCO staff to the HRLCG will be done using "bcc" email features. HRLCG comments will be collected and synthesized by RCO staff and circulated to the HRLCG for consideration. This will minimize risk of an inadvertent "reply all" quorum discussion by the HRLCG a violation of the Open Public Meetings Act.

Heath proposed that the charter be circulated electronically to members for comment. A second draft will then be circulated for another round of comments which will culminate in a final proposed draft for adoption at the October HRLCG meeting. The distribution of this document will follow the email protocols mentioned in the charter. This approach was approved by HRLCG.

Next Steps

- Heath circulates draft charter to HRLCG members with comment deadline (done 8/5/08).
- HRLCG members provide comments to Heath by August 29.
- Heaths circulates 2<sup>nd</sup> draft to HRLCG for comment/sign-off.
- HRLCG approves final charter October, 2008 mtg.

Formalizing membership

Heath briefed the HRLCG on formalizing the group's membership. As per RCW 79A.25.260 the Washington Departments of Fish and Wildlife, Natural Resources, State Parks and the RCO are required to participate in the HRLCG. The RCO Director is authorized to invite or appoint members to the HRLCG who represent appropriate stakeholders. To formalize the HRLCG's

membership and participation, RCO Director Kaleen Cottingham sent invitation letter to the members that have been participating and to others who have expressed interest in participating.

Membership discussion centered on whether there was adequate private land owner representation on the HRLCG. HRLCG agreed to recommend to RCO Director Cottingham that she invite someone representing industrial forest land owners and small family foresters. She should consider someone from the Washington Forest Protection Association or the Washington Family Forest Association. The HRLCG also suggested that Director Cottingham coordinate with the Washington State Association of Counties to establish Okanogan County Commissioner Andrew Lampre's seat as a standing position representing County governments. The group also suggested memorializing the official HRLCG membership seats or positions, in the group's charter.

#### Next Steps:

- Heath briefs Director Cottingham on HRLCG membership recommendations and implements her direction.
- Heath includes membership composition in 2<sup>nd</sup> draft of charter (to be circulated after first round of comments is collected).
- Heath confirms acceptance of membership invitations.
- Heath updates membership roster with contact info and circulates to the HRLCG (attached).

#### Senator Parlette, background and local government perspective

Senator Parlette thanked the HRLCG for its work and provided background on the genesis of the HRLCG dating back to a series of reports and projects including:

1. The 1999 Public and Tribal Lands Inventory;
2. Toward a Coordination Strategy for Habitat and Recreation Land Acquisition in Washington State (2005 report to the Legislature required by SSB 6242); and,
3. Projection of the Impacts of payments in Lieu of Taxes as mandated by Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5396 (2006 report to the legislature).

The senator reminded the HRLCG that several county governments have land bases that consist of a majority of public lands and that this can impact county revenues related to property tax roles. While those counties recognize the benefits of these public lands to their communities and economies, such lands could generate additional revenues if they were in private ownership. In light of this the Chelan County Commission established a "no net loss/no net gain" lands policy to ensure that there is neither a net gain nor net loss of public or of private lands.

Pene Speaks (DNR) reminded the HRLCG that the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) managed state trust lands are tax exempt because the trust lands generate revenues for trustees including public schools and rural county governments. The state treasurer makes payments in lieu of taxes to county governments for all the Natural Area Preserves and Natural Resource Conservation Areas managed by the DNR. Elizabeth Roderick reminded the HRLCG that a significant portion of the Department of Fish and Wildlife's habitat and recreation lands also make in lieu of tax payments. These include sites greater than 100 acres and sites not transferred to the agency after April 23, 1999. Bill Robinson (TNC) pointed out that non-government land owners, like the Nature Conservancy also make payments in lieu of taxes.

#### Next Steps

- HRLCG members review
  - Toward a Coordination Strategy for Habitat and Recreation Land Acquisition in Washington State (2005 report to the Legislature required by SSB 6242)  
<http://www.rco.wa.gov/documents/rcfb/6242/LandsFinal.pdf>
  - Projection of the Impacts of payments in Lieu of Taxes as mandated by Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5396 (2006 report to the legislature)  
[http://www.rco.wa.gov/documents/rco/rpt\\_to\\_leg\\_impact\\_pay\\_in\\_lieu\\_of\\_taxes.pdf](http://www.rco.wa.gov/documents/rco/rpt_to_leg_impact_pay_in_lieu_of_taxes.pdf)

- HRLCG and its work groups watch for opportunities to further address county government revenue concerns related to state land acquisition and disposals.

#### Action Plan

RCO staff introduced the HRLCG to a revised draft action plan that incorporated suggestions from RCO and DNR staff. The recommendations included adding two statutory reporting requirements as action items and establishing five work HRLCGs to implement specific tasks within the action plan.

The HRLCG affirmed this approach. They walked through the action plan, named members and leads to each work HRLCG, and refined timelines and tasks necessary to complete the action items. They also asked for a reorganization of the document. Details are reflected in the Action Plan, August 14 Update.

A number of members raised questions about the HRLCG's scope of work and whether other action items could be entertained by the HRLCG. Specific suggestions included broader coordination of state land acquisition with related initiatives like the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and eco-regional assessments. Other potential action items included: improved coordination around land exchanges and transfers; recommendations for protecting ecological values, agricultural lands and private lands; helping agencies to get strategic divestments to work; maintaining a record of past acquisitions; and recommendations regarding state tax structure.

It was agreed that the HRLCG must first prioritize its resources on its statutory obligations. As progress towards those action items is made, the HRLCG will look for opportunities to expand its scope of work commensurate with available resources. In the meantime, these ideas are reflected in the Action Plan for consideration by work HRLCGs provided these additions do not distract from primary work HRLCG duties.

#### Next Steps

- Heath updates Action Plan and circulates to the HRLCG (Done 8/14/08)
- Each work group lead convenes work group and
  - Completes work plan complete with tasks, timelines, outputs, outcomes
  - Provides draft to Heath [heath.packard@rco.wa.gov](mailto:heath.packard@rco.wa.gov) by October 10, 2008
  - Prepares to brief HRLCG on draft work plan at October 28 Mtg.
- Heath circulates action plan with work plan updates to HRLCG by Oct16, 2008
- Group reviews and approves work plans and action plan October 28

#### Meeting schedule / logistics

The HRLCG agreed to try to schedule their next meeting for Tuesday, October 28 or Wednesday, October 29<sup>th</sup>. Heath will poll the HRLCG to maximize attendance at this meeting and to set schedule for quarterly meetings in 2009. The HRLCG agreed that work groups need to meet one or two times before the next HRLCG meeting in October. HRLCG expressed interest in learning more about the Conservation Registry and how it might benefit the tasks of this group. Heath will explore whether a presentation to the entire group is a possibility and makes sense or not.

#### Next Steps

- Heath polls HRLCG for October 28 / 29 mtg. (Done 8/5/08)
- Heath polls HRLCG for 2009 meeting dates.
- Heath sets meetings and locations based on feedback.
- Heath publishes meetings times/locations in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act.
- Heath explores possibility of a presentation on the Conservation Registry to October mtg.
- Heath/RCO staff establishes a web presence for HRLCG.

Next Meeting  
Tuesday October 28, 2008  
8:30 a.m. - Noon  
Room 175A  
Natural Resource Building  
1111 Washington St. SE  
Olympia, WA 98501