

Bush Prairie HCP

Community Meeting



6:30 – 8:00 PM, November 14, 2019 | Tumwater Middle School

Attendees (12)

Reasons for attending:

- Has written an HCP for private land previously
- Consultants looking for survey opportunities
- Interested in prairies
- Members of the Tumwater Planning Commission
- Owns 5 acres of private land
- Interested in wetlands and frogs

Questions:

- Does this HCP mean landowners will get a permit from the City instead of needing to do their own HCP for their property?
 - o HCP team: Yes, that is true, but we do not know what the fee will be yet.
- Did the HCP consider other species, like the spotted butterfly?
 - o HCP team: Yes, others were considered. The team provided an explanation for species inclusion.
- Would activities like plowing land be considered a covered activity?
 - o HCP team: Not necessarily, because there are exemptions to the Endangered Species Act under the 4(d) rule for these types of activities. Covered activities are only those activities that require a permit or are routine operation and maintenance by the City or the Port.
- Comment: Their work with pocket gophers has led them to the determination that the airport is the most desirable habitat. Also asked about adaptive management plan.
 - o HCP team: Discussed the modeling around the airport that we are working on adaptive management right now. Even if the airport were going to expand, the expansion would not be a covered activity under this HCP, so it would have a permit process of its own.



- Comment: USFWS does not want to do translocation of the pocket gophers currently because it previously was not successful.
- For the land that is currently been put aside for HCPs, how is that affected and how will additional land be selected?
 - HCP team: Land set aside for other HCPs would be unaffected. The fees that come in for this HCP will be used to purchase land separately from the landowners.
- Would gophers be put on one acre of land in the middle of a development and then allowed to die off?
 - HCP team: That would not be the primary method, because we want the best habitat for mitigation within larger, continuous tracts and in locations that are more secure.
- For the lands that are purchased for mitigation, is there a guarantee they will remain in long term mitigation?
 - HCP team: Yes, they will be protected for 30 years under the HCP and then managed in perpetuity as well. They will also be monitored to make sure they are performing. There will be annual reports on performance of those lands.
- For the Oregon spotted frog, there are other river tributaries that are not in the area, what about those?
 - HCP team: We are just looking at a few little spots within the permit boundary - mitigation can occur in the plan area in the county - there are so many other permits in place for the rivers and wetlands.
- How is Tumwater getting information on frog survival? Baseline information? It could be easy to get and could be serendipitous.
 - HCP team: We are not doing baseline work, but Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife has done a lot of work. We are using their data, but not conducting additional studies.
- Comment: I sense that it could take a while to accumulate the amount of money needed to get conservation sites, but there is pressure to build right now.
 - HCP team: Once the HCP is final, there is federal funding for land acquisition as part of any approved HCP, which is competitive, but it exists to jump-start the conservation program within 5 years. There could also be state funds. There is a stay-ahead provision in the HCP that mitigation needs to stay ahead of impacts but there is leeway in the first 3-5 years.
- Is purchasing mitigation land the only thing, or could it be conservation easements too?
 - HCP team: Conservation easements would count too. We also offer the option of bringing land into the process.
- Is there a difference between this HCP and the Thurston County HCP?
 - HCP team: There is overlap but only in space. The activities that the County has jurisdiction over would be considered under their HCP but there is no overlap in permitting at all.



- Comment: At the present time, we are setting aside an acre here and an acre there, I understand that's not very effective for conservation.
 - o HCP team: That is the benefit of this HCP, which functions better for the species by pursuing a strategy of larger mitigation areas than one-off acres.
- Comment: The conservation land is being set aside is for the general public, so the property manager of the building should not have to pay, the public should have to pay for it.
 - o HCP team: Some properties might not require public access.
- How confident are you about where the species are right now and where they might be because those lands are areas where you had access to survey?
 - o HCP team: This is more of a tool for conservation than where the impacts are.
 - o HCP team: The whole reason we did a model is that the data is incomplete. It is less important to know if they are there or not, rather estimating over the next 30 years where they might be, knowing there is incomplete survey data.
- Some parts of the prairie grew forests overtime. Does the conservation strategy consider removing those and go back to prairie?
 - o HCP team: Yes, restoring prairie is a mitigation strategy.
- What if the status of a species changes, like the streaked horned lark being changed from threatened to endangered?
 - o HCP team: It does not change the species strategy at all because the idea is to fully mitigate the effects on them regardless of their listing status.
- In June, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife suggested a 5-year review on the status of the gopher - did Tumwater submit comments on this?
 - o HCP team: Cannot comment on Tumwater HCP.
- Comment: If you own property in the county, then you have to decide should I wait for the HCP. I have elected not to sit and wait for the county to finish their HCP. The process takes too long.
- Will there be an interim process so people can do work on their property while waiting for the HCP?
 - o HCP team: No, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife helped make that decision.
 - o Comment: I'm not against the law, I'm mad there is no process in place until these come together
 - HCP team: We are pushing as fast as we can for the process to be in place.
- Why is not there a distinction between lands that have the type of soils that gophers want versus just gophers on those lands?
 - o HCP team: The map you saw is based on soil and landcover, not just if you have gophers or not have gophers - not the case under the current process but will be the case moving forward.

