

Bush Prairie HCP



Stakeholder Meeting, December 9, 2016

Attendees (25):

BUSH PRAIRIE HCP STAKEHOLDERS:	
Name	Organization
Debra Nickerson	Black Hills Audubon Society
Laurence Reeves	Capitol Land Trust
Patrick Dunn	Center for Natural Lands Management
Janell Barrilleaux Cayla Morgan Randall Anton	FAA (all attended via telephone)
Jeff Pantier	Hatton Godat Pantier
Theresa Wall	Kaufman Construction
Wendy Stephenson	LOTT Cleanwater Alliance
Joel Baxter	Olympia Master Builders
David Schaffert	Thurston County Chamber of Commerce
Cindy Wilson Andy Deffobis	Thurston County
Katrina Van Every	Thurston Regional Planning Council
Mel Murray	Tumwater School District
Theresa Nation Michelle Tirhi	Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife
BUSH PRAIRIE HCP APPLICANTS:	
Mike Matlock Chris Carlson Brad Medrud	City of Tumwater
Rachael Jamison Rudy Rudolph	Port of Olympia
BUSH PRAIRIE HCP CONSULTANT TEAM:	
Chris Earle	ICF
Ruth Bell Lynn Knapp	Cascadia Consulting Group

Arrival and Welcome:

- Meeting began at 9:14 AM
- Ruth Bell introduced facilitation ground rules
- Rachael Jamison introduced Port of Olympia Commissioner Bill McGregor¹

Introductory Remarks (Commissioner Bill McGregor):

- Proud of strong working relationship with City of Tumwater; happy to partner because economic development is the Port's mandate. Encouraged by the group today; will benefit both Port and City to have an HCP. Committed to getting sustainable outcomes; outcomes that will enhance the community.

Overview of Habitat Conservation Plan (Chris Earle):

- Background:
 - Prairies are the most desirable areas for development and agriculture. About 90-98% of the prairies have been lost - species have had considerable reduction. The Endangered Species Act (ESA) can be used to stop or substantially change development. Many of the species that are in Bush Prairie are or prospectively could be protected under the ESA.
- “Take” is any action with adverse result to the endangered species. Complying with these standards is hard for landowners. It is never a simple process and requires deep understanding of ESA. HCP provides take for specified covered activities. Many HCPs cover large parcels of land. Many current HCPs are for large areas and cover different types of activities.

Project Structure and Timeline (Chris Earle):

- 1st goal for the Bush Prairie HCP: Develop a conservation reserve system - lands managed for benefit of species - monitoring will occur during that time. 2nd goal: reduce cost and delay for development in this area - will cost \$\$ but will be more favorable than not having these in place. 3rd goal: Concern about maintenance on roads and the airport in this area.
- 1st phase HCP: unofficial phase where basic principles are decided on principal issues: determining species, plan area, permit term, types of covered activities, how the plan will affect covered species, and how the impacts will be mitigated.
- One of the main challenges (shown in map): 90% of all Olympia pocket gophers are within small area centered on Tumwater - this HCP is key to conservation of that species.
- Oregon spotted frog - likely will be covered under HCP.
- 2nd phase: Phase 2 - in 2017: formal part of HCP - prepare draft documents HCP, NEPA/SEPA - public comment process - finalization of documents.
- Today we will discuss interests, concerns, stakeholders. Memoranda discussing the main points of HCP content will be distributed. There will likely be two more stakeholder meetings after this one.
- Question from stakeholders:
 - Michelle Tirhi - How do you treat future annexed land?

¹ City of Tumwater Mayor Pete Kmet had also planned to speak, but was unable to attend because of the weather.

- Lands in urban growth area that will likely be annexed are under Thurston County HCP and we will work out a process with the county.

Stakeholder Additions (input from all):

- JBLM has land within this jurisdiction and there are ACA properties in Thurston County where they are getting credit - should they be included? (Michelle Tirhi)
- Are there any tribal interests? (Cindy Wilson)
 - Chris Carlson - Chehalis tribe has 10 acres on the north of 93rd
 - Nisqually and Squaxin have an accustomed grounds interest even if they don't own land
- Individual Land owners? Specific individuals that come to meetings and are very engaged.
- WSDOT might want to be involved (Cindy Wilson. Kristina Van Every seconded)
- Michelle Tirhi - US Fish and Wildlife Service?
 - Chris Earle - they are closely involved but felt it may impact the group to be present at meetings
 - Andy Deffobis - they gave the same distance with County's HCP meetings
- Involvement of elected as part of the stakeholder process

Stakeholder Input, Concerns, & Goals:

Patrick Dunn - Center for Natural Lands Management	Both Thurston County and Bush Prairie HCPs are very needed in terms of conservation and management of development. Conservation priorities are extremely high and not easily solved in all cases. CNLM's perspective - effective conservation is best done by nonprofit ownership, there should be sufficient management support for financial reserves to do that in perpetuity. Wants to know what species are going to be covered. Mazama pocket gopher is globally rare - specific threats to gophers from development. Streaked horned lark, Oregon Vesper - all species have unique challenges and HCP needs to take that into consideration. Crediting/debiting system is hard to get over - who decides what is needed for mitigation. See how Thurston County has done it. Thinking about all of the different species and temporary effects that development might have on them.
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Jeff Pantier - Hatton Godat Pantier	<p>If done thoughtfully, the HCP will provide predictability in the process. Saw positive process from the Thurston HCP. Area that is being covered by Thurston UGA - will city and county blend together or compete with each other? Cost of implementing HCP in Tumwater is higher than the County and puts developers in the City of Tumwater at a disadvantage. Suggest working together on funding side. Wants to work with Olympia together on that problem. Once HCP process gets off and running would like to see an interim process for the gopher area that allows abbreviated screening process for developers or property owners who want to build. This process would allow biologists to certify that there are no species in the area. Since this HCP is smaller than the county - and if there are species that represent a small area of the HCP, it may exaggerate costs to include the smaller species in the HCP.</p>
Theresa Wall - Kaufman Construction	<p>Have 100 acres of property that pocket gophers inhabit and have spent the past 9 years on both sides of the fence of this issue. Feels good about having HCP in place now. Sees a lot of growth opportunity for Thurston County. People are quickly going to move on if there is a 3-year permitting process - so please move swiftly with this HCP.</p>
Mel Murray - Tumwater School District	<p>In middle of 6-year capital facilities update - district has 200 acres in Bush Prairie. Trying to purchase properties and appraisers do not know how to set a purchase price based on gophers. Since school district is so large, they should have the same input power as the City and the Port. Fields are used by everyone in the area. Concerned about future residential growth, include a way in HCP to change from residential site to school site.</p>
Cindy Wilson - Thurston County	<p>Interested in helping with Tumwater's plan; wants to mesh into County plan, specifically related to how annexations occur.</p>
Katrina Van Every - Thurston Regional Planning Council	<p>Education is key. Works with south county jurisdictions and hears "why do we care?" We need to let public know why they should care about gophers and this HCP. Most see the gophers as a nuisance.</p>
Joel Baxter - Olympia Master Builders	<p>Important to treat landowners fairly in interim and implementation phases. Housing scarcity is a real issue made worse by permitting requirements with pocket gopher. Thurston County needs to reach its housing needs. Cost to city builders and landowners is a concern.</p>
Theresa Nation - Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife	<p>Many HCPs already in process in the county. Should have good solid science behind this HCP. Once HCP is implemented, how will adaptive management look in the future? Clearly defined triggers - what is going on the ground and emerging science that might allow for better conservation process.</p>
Debra Nickerson - Black Hills Audubon Society	<p>This land is not that large, we need to think out-of-the-box for habitat management. How many interests can we meet and keep these species and as much habitat as possible?</p>
Laurence Reeves - Capitol Land Trust	<p>Worked with landowners through the process of securing conservation easements for pocket gophers. Have two conservation easements for gopher mitigation. Is able to provide insight on conservation easements. Happy to see Thurston County here because we should not reinvent the wheel on the work that has already been done.</p>

David Schaffert - Thurston County Chamber of Commerce	How do we create jobs that can support citizens rather than sending them out of the County to work? Cost should be borne by whole community when the whole community is involved. Creating strong tools for conservation is important for the chamber. Should be a science based process. We should consider increasing the number of biologists in the room. Also on the integration of HCPs - make sure we are paying attention to the Growth Management Act.
Michelle Tirhi - Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife	Citizens in Washington appreciate both successful communities and wildlife. This should accommodate all of the needs. Recommendations need to be science-based. Front cost of doing this planning is expensive - recovery of a species is much more expensive. No one wants to push a species to extinction - and the public does not want to see that.
Cayla Morgan - FAA	FAA is issuing a grant for this HCP and it is interested in airport development. This has been difficult. It does not seem to be the most efficient way to deal with species; it is a conflict to mitigate onsite at the airport. Interested in offsite mitigation opportunities since mitigation on airport property is not feasible.

Open Discussion & Clarification:

- Debra Nickerson - what do we want to see for Tumwater in the future? Does not want to be a place where houses are put up quickly and are poorly built. What do we want to look like in 20 years? - keep that in mind.
 - Michelle Tirhi- is there a community character package? Or has the public weighed in? Can we include that?
 - Rachael - Port has held many meetings about that and HCP is foundational strategy, and received much public input.
 - Brad - In addition to wanting to be able to develop and maintain land, the City is responsible for regulation and larger comprehensive planning. We are completing a Comprehensive Plan update for the City this year and adopted Citywide Design Guidelines to address community character this summer. This work will feed into HCP. The community needs are being met in a supportive way.
- David Schaffert - HCP as a tool for Tumwater to realize its visions.
- Patrick Dunn - Eventually effectiveness of conservation actions - considering going beyond permit jurisdictions. Consideration of all area that have Olympia pocket gopher - not just in permit area.
- Jeff Pantier - This HCP might need to have uniqueness to address the smaller size of the HCP. The smaller area of the HCP looks like it could be a soft line. Is there detailed scientific information?
- Chris Earle - More information will be provided in the species memorandum. There are two groups of species: 1. Species that are likely to undergo "take" due to development or maintenance 2. Species that we will not expect to be part of "take" due to development, but might be on reserve lands. The species under consideration are: Olympia pocket gopher, streaked horned lark, Oregon vesper sparrow, and Oregon spotted frog. Line on map is pretty well known to hold most of those species. If pocket gopher were found outside line area, it would still be covered. Streaked horned lark is only found on airports in the area. We may need to go very far away in order to find mitigation sites. Same with Oregon vesper sparrow.

Only a few areas would need to be mitigated for the frog. Hydrologic effect is biggest impact on the frog. Most lands would be acquired before the permit.

- Cindy Wilson - Management on the airport for those bird species? Minimize the impacts - but no mitigation. Chris Earle - we expect population to persist there.
- Chris Earle - Stakeholders should provide input on the covered species memorandum.
- Katrina Van Every- how many existing approved HCPs are there in this area?
 - Chris Carlson - 2 exist
- Wendy Stephenson- Habitat corridors in reserve system?
 - Chris Earle- Small number of large parcels with good connectivity would be ideal. Will evaluate.

Next Steps:

- Ruth Bell - Will distribute PowerPoint and meeting notes.
- Chris Earle - Who believes your organization will provide formal support for the City and Port HCP process?
 - The group clarified they are supportive of the process as it is structured now, and believe their Boards will be supportive of the process in many cases.
 - New commissioners will be coming in 2017 so groups will need to educate them on this issue.
 - In support of the process: Cindy Wilson, Andy Deffobis, Wendy Stephenson, Mel Murray, David Schaffert, Michelle Tirhi, Jeff Pantier, Laurence Reeves, Joel Baxter, Teresa Wall, Debra Nickerson, FAA staff (interested in supporting offsite mitigation)
 - Michelle Tirhi - how will Thurston County HCP inform this HCP?
 - Chris Earle- Science baseline will be considered, although knowledge transfer is an issue.
 - Michelle Tirhi - will you adopt the material in its current form?
 - Chris Earle- this is not a “cut-and-paste”. Smaller size, primary stakeholders are all significantly different. USFWS has been supportive of the process so far.
- Rachael Jamison - Appreciate the time that this group has given. Appreciate the input. Thank you.
- Brad Medrud - Appreciate input and recognize that the City and the Port cannot do it themselves. There is a website for the HCP and please contact them directly with concerns and questions.

Meeting Concluded: 10:48 AM