

4. LAND TRANSACTION

March 15, 2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Item 1: Acquisition of 90(+/-) Acres in Thurston County, Region 6
Scatter Creek Wildlife Area, Violet Prairie Unit, Violet Prairie Phase 3**

Project Summary/Decision Sheet	1
Location Map	1A
Parcel Map	1B



Fish and Wildlife Commission Presentation Summary/Decision Sheet

Meeting date:

3/15/2024

Agenda item:

4. Land Transaction

Presenter(s):

Karen Edwards, Real Estate Services Manager

**Item 1: Acquisition of 90(+/-) Acres in Thurston County, Region 6
Scatter Creek Wildlife Area, Violet Prairie Unit, Violet Prairie Phase 3**

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) staff request Commission approval to acquire 90(+/-) acres at the Scatter Creek Wildlife Area (WLA), Violet Prairie Unit, in Thurston County, Region 6, pursuant to [RCW 77.12.037 Acquisition, use, and management of property—Condemnation—When authorized.](#)

Background summary:

WDFW proposes to acquire 90(+/-) acres in the Scatter Creek WLA, Violet Prairie Unit (Unit), in Thurston County, located within the city limits of the city of Tenino. This is WDFW's third and final phase of the larger 1,567(+/-)-acre property acquisition from The Conservation Fund (TCF). To date, the following properties have been acquired:

- Phase 1 – Commission approved acquiring the first 1,035(+/-) acres on [March 18, 2022](#) (Item 4 [Summary Sheet, Presentation](#)), which was acquired on May 16, 2022.
- Phase 2 – Commission approved acquiring phase 2, being 350(+/-) acres, on [June 24, 2022](#) (Item 4 [Summary Sheet, Presentation](#)), which was acquired on November 30, 2022.
- Thurston County (TC) acquired 92(+/-) acres on November 22, 2022, in support of their proposed Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) to offset permitting impacts over the next thirty years. This land was acquired by TC using Conservation Futures funding for the protection of Yelm pocket gopher, a subspecies of Mazama pocket gopher, and Taylor's checkerspot butterfly.

The [Violet Prairie Unit of the Scatter Creek WLA](#) is located in south Thurston County about 6 miles east of the I-5 corridor near the city of Tenino and adds to the protected area of the Scatter Creek watershed, a main hub of the county's prairie-oak conservation network. Once this property is acquired the Unit will contain about 260 acres of Puget lowland prairies and oak woodlands. Prairie and oak woodlands were once common in the Puget lowland region, though less than 10% of the original prairie landscape remains. The prairies and oak woodlands found on this Unit support habitat for federally listed Mazama pocket gopher, streaked horned lark and Taylor's checkerspot butterfly, along with the Oregon vesper sparrow which is currently going through the listing process. There is also potential to support habitat for Species of Greatest Conservation Need such as the Puget blue butterfly and Species of Greatest Conservation Concern such as western gray squirrel, western bluebird, and western pond turtle. The extensive mixed conifer forests and associated land features in this Unit support elk, wild turkey, black bear, and a variety of bird species including wood duck and raptors.

This Unit is not currently open for public access, but future public recreation could include hunting, hiking, horseback riding, and wildlife viewing. WDFW staff is currently examining how and where to direct outdoor recreation so it does not impair the lands conservation values or unduly impact adjacent private landowners. Near-term management priorities for this Unit includes initial maintenance work related to fencing and weed management, development of a public access approach, including associated parking infrastructure and protection of sensitive prairie habitats, all of which are currently funded with grants from the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) Critical Habitat (CH) category of the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO).

Through a critical partnership with TCF, they acquired the entire property on May 28, 2021, and have been holding it until WDFW can purchase the property from them as funding is secured. This 90(+/-)-acre property was approved through Lands 20/20 in 2016 and will be acquired for the appraised value of \$1,785,000 using a WWRP-CH grant from RCO and a Cooperative Endangered Species grant from the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Once acquired, the property will be integrated into the [2020 Scatter Creek WLA Management Plan](#) and [2023 plan update](#) which will identify specific management actions, goals, objectives, and timelines that enrich the sensitive habitat present on the Unit.

Ongoing operation and maintenance costs for this proposed 90(+/-)-acre acquisition property is \$52 per acre, being a total of \$4,680 annually, and was included in WDFW's 9v decision package for ongoing operation and maintenance for newly acquired land.

This proposed acquisition property is within Tenino Fire District #12.

Per [RCW 77.12.201](#), Thurston County does not currently opt into PILT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) as provided for in [RCW 77.12.203](#).

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommend Commission approval to acquire 90(+/-) acres at the Scatter Creek WLA, Violet Prairie Unit, pursuant to [RCW 77.12.037](#).

Policy issue(s) and expected outcome:

Protecting critical habitat and providing recreational opportunities.

Fiscal impacts of agency implementation:

Operation and maintenance costs.**Action requested and/or proposed next steps:**

Approval of this land transaction.

Draft motion language:

Motion: I move to approve the land transactions as presented by staff.

Is there a "second"?

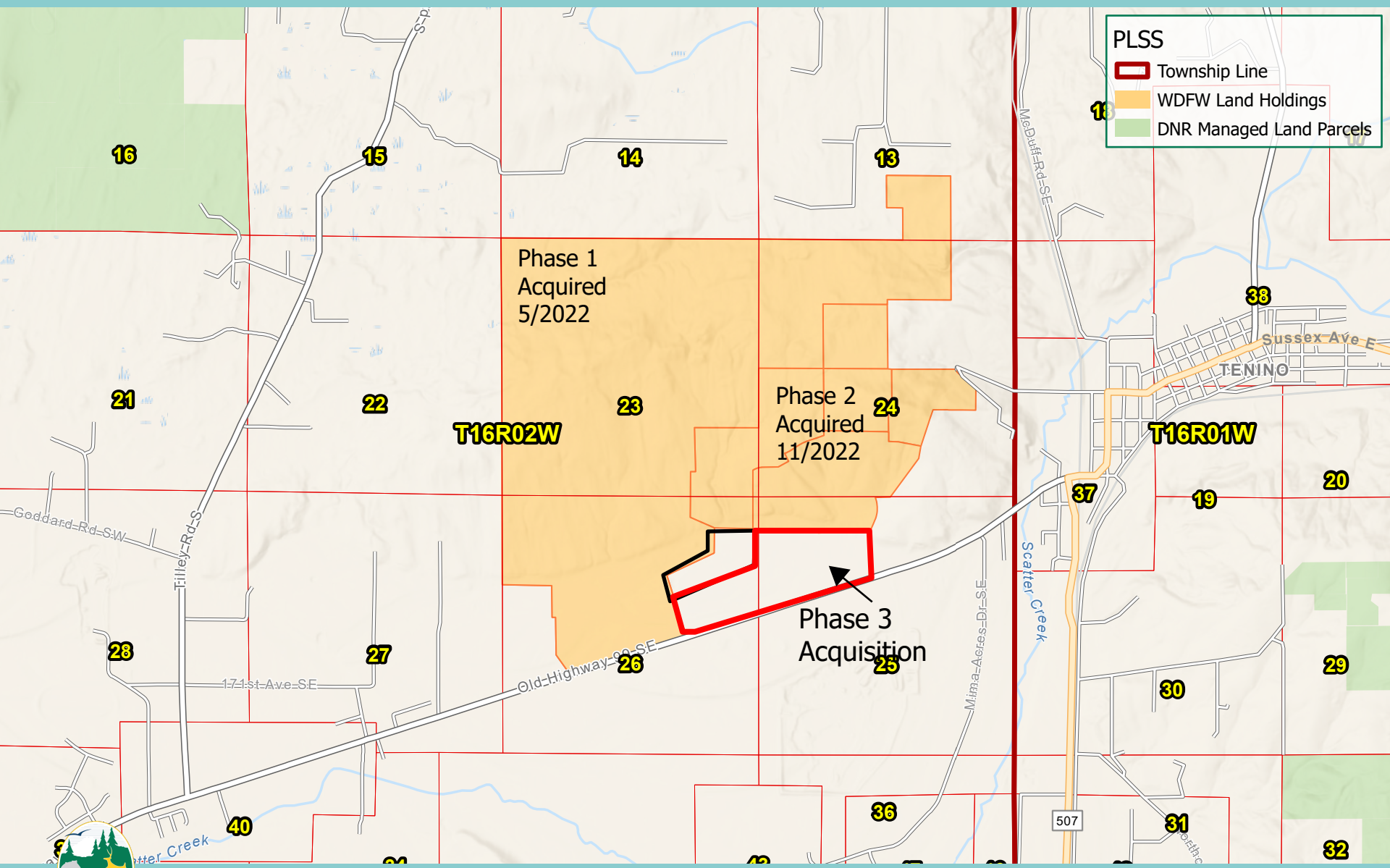
If so, then motion maker discusses basis for motion; other Commissioners discuss views on motion; amendments, if any, proposed and addressed.

Post decision communications plan:

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

Proposed Acquisition, Violet Prairie/Scatter Creek - Thurston County

Township 16N, Range 2 W, W.M., Sections 25 & 26, Acres - 90(+/-)



PLSS

- Township Line
- WDFW Land Holdings
- DNR Managed Land Parcels



Proposed Acquisition, Violet Prairie/Scatter Creek - Thurston County Township 16N, Range 2 W, W.M., Sections 25 & 26, Acres - 90(+/-)

