



Fish and Wildlife Commission Presentation Summary/Decision Sheet

Meeting date:

4/19/2024

Agenda item:

4. Land Transaction

Presenter(s):

Cynthia Wilkerson, Lands Division Manager
Mike Livingston, Regional Director, Region 3
Lisa Coffman, Lands 20/20 & Acquisition Funding Coordinator

**Item 1: Acquisition of 1,166 (+/-) Acres in Kittitas County, Region 3
Springwood Ranch**

Background summary:

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) staff request Commission approval to acquire 1,166 (+/-) acres in Kittitas County, Region 3, pursuant to [RCW 77.12.037 Acquisition, use, and management of property—Condemnation—When authorized](#). The Springwood Ranch property, totaling approximately 3,600 acres, is located about 15 miles east of Cle Elum, 3 miles west of Thorp and lies north of I-90. At the [January 25, 2024 Habitat Committee meeting](#) WDFW staff Mike Livingston and Cynthia Wilkerson, Commissioner Cory Wright from the Kittitas County Board of County Commissioners, Dave Blodgett the Yakama Nation Fisheries Program Manager, Urban Eberhart from the Kittitas County Reclamation District, and Peter Dykstra from Plauche & Carr LLP, representing the Trust for Public Land presented this dynamic partnership project in support of the [Yakima Basin Integrated Plan](#) (YBIP). The YBIP is a collaboration of state, federal, tribal, business, and community organizations to address water, fishery, habitat, and climate variability challenges to ensure a robust Yakima River Basin within its built and natural systems. A significant portion of the full Springwood Ranch acquisition is intended to be managed by the Kittitas Reclamation District as an off-channel reservoir to capture and hold water early in the year and strategically release it in spring to coincide with juvenile salmon and steelhead migration to improve their survival. A recording of that presentation can be viewed online at [Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission Habitat Committee - TVW](#) (minute 1:09:40).

The funding for the entire Springwood Ranch property acquisition is provided through a direct appropriation from the Capital Budget through RCO and the Trust for Public Land, who was able to purchase and hold the ranch for conservation value while state funding was procured. The funding prescribes that the future owners will include Kittitas County, the Yakama Nation, the Kittitas Reclamation District, and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. This acquisition is unique in that the DFW-owned portion would be co-owned by WDFW and the Yakama Nation, managed under an MOU and an initial interim management plan, followed by a more comprehensive management plan.

WDFW's acquisition of these 1,166 (+/-) acres was approved through an expedited Lands 20/20 in 2022. The entire project would conserve up to 4.5 miles of Yakima River shoreline (right bank) and .7 miles of

Taneum Creek (both banks) and includes the confluence of Taneum Creek with the Yakima River. The WDFW portion would include 2.5 miles of that Yakima River shoreline. This area in the upper Yakima River Basin has been the focus of significant investment in fish recovery and is targeted for reintroduction of threatened Bull Trout, supports Spring Chinook, Coho Salmon and listed Mid-Columbia Steelhead. This location contains critically imperiled and imperiled ecological systems as identified in WDFW's State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). The natural landscape includes lands important for its cultural, historic, and natural resources. The land is key for habitat protection purposes, including, shrub steppe habitat. Additionally, this location is significantly important winter range for mule deer.

Ongoing operation and maintenance costs for this proposed 1,166 (+/-) acre acquisition property is currently estimated to be \$125 per acre and will be multiplied by the final acreage at the time of acquisition. The applicable amount will be included in WDFW's 9v decision package for ongoing operation and maintenance for newly acquired land.

Per [RCW 77.12.201](#), Kittitas County currently opts into PILT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) as provided for in [RCW 77.12.203](#). In 2023, WDFW paid \$451,953.57 in PILT payments in Kittitas County.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommend Commission approval pursuant to [RCW 77.12.037](#).

Policy issue(s) and expected outcome:

Providing conservation and public 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.