



ISLAND COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

Department of Natural Resources

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TO: Michala Milewski

FROM: Jessica Reed, Watershed Planner

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SUBJECT: 2023 Conservation Futures Fund – Capacity Analysis

Summary

The Island County Conservation Futures Fund, governed by Island County Code Chapter 3.22, is a special fund created in the County Treasurer's office for the purpose of acquiring rights and interests in open space land, farm and agricultural land, and timberland. According to RCW 84.34.200, in order to avoid loss of "open areas and spaces" that could have significant public value, public funds are allowed to be used for the purposes of acquisition "of interests or rights in real property," so that they may "continue to contribute to the welfare and well-being of the citizens of the state as a whole." These projects have been proposed for parcels that are currently undeveloped and are adjacent to property already being used for recreational purposes, and are proposed to be used for public recreational purposes if approved. When researching each parcel, ICGeo maps, SmartGov, and the Assessors database public portal were used to determine any existing permits, improvements, or natural features. Please see below for a more detailed description of each parcel.

Proposed 2023 Conservation Easement Acquisitions

1. Freund Marsh Expansion - \$582,490

The City of Oak Harbor proposes to acquire three lots adjacent to Freund Marsh. The proposal is comprised of three parcels: R13203-050-4580, R13203-047-4190, and R13203-430-4530. These three parcels total 3.96± acres, adding to the 44.31± acres of wetland and estuarine marsh the City owns west of Windjammer Park (formerly known as City Beach).

Parcel R13203-050-4580

This parcel is adjacent to two other properties currently owned by the City of Oak Harbor, and SW Bayshore Dr on the remaining side. There is a stream that runs along the western property line of the proposed parcel as shown on ICGeo.

Parcel R13203-047-4190

This parcel is located slightly south of properties containing apartment buildings, and directly north of a parcel already owned by the City of Oak Harbor. This parcel contains a stream that runs through the rough center of the property as shown on ICGeo.

Parcel R13203-430-4530

This parcel contains a stream that runs through the rough center of the property as shown on ICGeo maps, and one edge of this parcel is shoreline, designated as a smelt spawning beach. The proposal includes a plan to upgrade an existing tidal gate on the property; current science suggests that degraded tidal gates should be removed and/or replaced with upgraded fish passage gates that support salmon in various life stages.

Tidal gates have physical, chemical, and biological implications such as changes in velocity and temperature patterns of freshwater discharge and saltwater mixing, increases of water nutrient concentrations upstream from the gate, and obstruction to fish migration and alterations of aquatic plants, among other effects (Vranken and Oenema 1990; Charland 1998; Portnoy 1987; Vranken and Oenema 1990; Eliasen 1988; Charland 2001). These parcels are located in Salmon Priority Area 2, which is further described in the Island County Fish Passage Barrier Inventory: Priority Area 2 report.

According to ICGeo maps, the adjacent City properties have streams, wetlands, and walking paths. All parcels are in a FEMA flood zone. No documented culverts or Island County water sampling sites exist on the parcels. All parcels are zoned as "municipality/NMUGA" and "urban areas" for land use, designated as "medium susceptibility" for aquifer recharge, and do not have any species of local importance listed on the map. According to both the Assessor's office and SmartGov, no current or past building, septic, or other development permits are listed for any of the three parcels.

2. Fosseck Forest Parcel - \$700,000

The Whidbey Camano Land Trust proposes securing a conservation easement on parcel R32903-301-1780. This 25.48± acre parcel falls within the City of Langley Joint Planning Area and the application was submitted with documents that show unanimous support from the Langley City Council for the Land Trust's proposal. The project application states that the parcel would be used for public recreation, including trails that would connect to an existing trail system owned by the Langley Parks and Open Space Commission.

Parcel R32903-301-1780

According to ICGeo maps, this parcel contains no streams, wetlands, or lakes/ponds. The parcel is designated as "forest" and "rural" land uses, is on the City of Langley water system, and designated as "high susceptibility" for aquifer recharge. There are no culverts or water sampling sites listed, and no species of local importance listed. There

is a well shown on the parcel directly adjacent on the northwest side of the property. According to the Assessor's office and SmartGov, there are no active or past applications for building, septic, or other development. The surrounding parcels are largely forested and undeveloped.

3. Freeland Wetlands Preserve - \$295,512

Whidbey Watershed Stewards proposes to acquire two lots adjacent to the Newman Ponds wetland in the Freeland area of unincorporated Island County. The proposal is comprised of two parcels: R22911-122-2990, and R22911-093-3070. The total acreage of the two parcels is 2.83± acres, adding to the 38.33± acres of the Freeland Wetland Preserve.

Parcel R22911-122-2990

This parcel sits against property currently owned by the Whidbey Watershed Stewards and is designated as a Nature Conservancy by the State of Washington, according to the application. The proposed purchase parcel is currently being used by the Conservancy with property permission for public use and provides access for the trails on the adjoining parcels. According to ICGeo maps, there is a designated wetland (bog) on most of the parcel, but no streams, lakes, or ponds. It currently shows that the parcel has been slightly developed with the addition of a gravel parking lot, partial fence, kiosk and picnic shelter. The only permit according to the Assessor's office and SmartGov is for an address application as there is access to Newman Road. This parcel is part of a retired parcel (R22911-108-3080) according to ICGeo; the other portion of the retired parcel is also being proposed for purchase.

Parcel R22911-093-3070

This parcel is part of a retired parcel (R22911-108-3080) that adjoins the proposed parcel described above. According to ICGeo, this parcel has trails that are part of a larger system owned by the Whidbey Watershed Stewards; the parcel is already being used by the Stewards with permission from the owners, according to the application. No current or past permits for development or septic are listed on the Assessor's office or SmartGov.

Both parcels are zoned as "business general" and designated as an urban area on ICGeo. The parcel is in the Freeland Water and Sewer District water system and in the Freeland Critical Drainage area and is listed as "medium susceptibility" for aquifer recharge. Neither parcel has any species of local importance listed on ICGeo.

Conclusion

Island County Natural Resources Department has reviewed these projects and reported with as much certainty as is possible with the available resources the status of critical areas, permits, development, and salmon priority areas. These projects appear to add value to the citizens of Island County as is laid out in RCW 84.34.200 by protecting

open spaces and providing the public with recreational opportunities while maintaining habitat areas for natural processes and wildlife.