Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas Update Public Participation Plan & Preliminary Scope of Work

1. Public Participation

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to ensure early and continuous public participation during the update of the Island County Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO), as required by RCW 36.70A. The preliminary schedule and scope of work outlined in this plan is based on a deadline mandated by the Growth Management Hearings Board.

1.2 Goals

1. Allocate resources and coordinate outreach efforts to ensure Island County complies with the dates and deadlines mandated by the Growth Management Hearings Board.

2. Notify the public of all meetings, hearings, and legislative actions.

3. Create a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) that includes habitat experts and other members who have technical expertise to provide peer review of the Best Available Science (BAS).

4. Ensure the Island County CAO is based on Best Available Science.

5. Accommodate budgetary and staffing constraints by supplementing local resources with any available grant funding.

6. Make use of communication technologies to efficiently distribute information, post notices, and conserve limited resources.

1.3 Program Structure

In order to comply with the deadline mandated by the Growth Management Hearings Board, this plan identifies essential public participation strategies that will be employed at designated stages in the planning process. The constrained timeframe limits the opportunity for extensive public outreach; however, Island County is committed to ensuring that any group or member of the public interested in the CAO update is able to stay informed.

The deliverables noted in the timeline are based on deadlines associated with grant funding from the Washington State Department of Commerce. Meetings associated with deliverables will likely occur before the date identified in each step in section 2.1.

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In some cases, the final action may occur before or after the target date due to constrained resources, the need for additional collaboration with key stakeholders, the need for additional collaboration with a consultant, or other unforeseen circumstances.

1.4 Methods

The public participation methods that will be employed by Island County may include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following techniques and strategies.

1. Public Hearings – Public Hearings are a formal public process conducted and held before the Board of Island County Commissioners or the Island County Planning Commission.

2. Public Meetings - Planning and Community Development will utilize work sessions with the Board of County Commissioners to ensure elected officials and the public are informed of developments in the update process.

3. Island County Planning and Community Development Website – Planning and Community Development will periodically update its website. Relevant documents and research will be posted on the website along with announcements and notices concerning upcoming meetings, hearings, and public involvement opportunities.

4. Technical Advisory Group (TAG) – In order to solicit guidance on complex technical issues, Planning and Community Development will utilize a Technical Advisory Group. This group will include members who have specific knowledge in relevant topics such as local habitat, wildlife corridors, geospatial analysis, watersheds, and water quality. Island County will invite representatives from state agencies, affected tribes, and NGOs with technical expertise in Island County habitat issues to form the TAG.

5. E-mail List – Planning and Community Development will maintain a list of individuals or groups who have expressed an interest in the CAO update process. The e-mail list will be used to disseminate announcements and notices. Any member of the public can ask to be added to or removed from the list at any time during the update.

6. Public Workshops – Public workshops are informal gatherings used to provide information regarding the CAO update and answer questions from the public. Public workshops may involve presentations by Island County staff or consultants if resources are available.

1.5 Essential Public Participation Strategies

Essential public participation strategies have been outlined in section 2.1. In addition to these strategies, Island County will ensure that any other meeting, hearing, notification, or procedure required by State law or Island County Code is adequately addressed.

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1.6 Availability of Documents

Island County will make every effort to post all relevant documents on the Planning and Community Development website. When new materials associated with the update are posted on the website, County staff will use the CAO update email list to notify the public. The webpage designed specifically for the update of the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations for Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas is:

http://www.islandcounty.net/planning/FishandWildlifeHabitatConservationAreaUpdate.html

2. Preliminary Schedule

Island County Planning and Community Development has identified the following specific steps which must be completed as part of the CAO update for Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas. This schedule is based on deadlines mandated by the Growth Management Hearings Board and grant funding provided by the Washington State Department of Commerce.

2.1 Phase I

1. Establish Preliminary Scope of Work and Public Participation Plan
    - *Estimated Completion Date:* September 30, 2013
    - *Essential Public Participation:* Update website, Planning Commission hearing, Board of County Commissioners hearing
    - *Deliverable:* Resolution adopting the Public Participation Plan and Preliminary Scope of Work
2. Technical Advisory Group formation
    - Estimated Completion Date: September 16, 2013
    - *Essential Public Participation*: Invite state agencies, tribes, and NGO's to participate in the TAG; update website, Board of County Commissioners work session
    - *Deliverable*: Formation of a Technical Advisory Group to provide technical assistance during the CAO update process
3. Review of Best Available Science
    - *Estimated Completion Date:* November 18, 2013

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- *Essential Public Participation:* TAG review and feedback, website update, Island County Planning Commission meeting, Board of County Commissioners work session

- *Deliverable:* Presentation of BAS bibliography and findings to the Island County Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners.

4. Assessment of habitat conditions

   - *Estimated Completion Date:* December 16, 2013

   - *Essential Public Participation:* TAG review and feedback, website update, Island County Planning Commission meeting, Board of County Commissioners work session

   - *Deliverable:* Presentation of habitat analysis and maps to the Island County Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners.

5. Best Available Science report and recommendations

   - *Estimated Completion Date:* January 15, 2014

   - *Essential Public Participation:* TAG review and feedback, website update, Board of County Commissioners work session, Island County Planning Commission meeting

   - *Deliverable:* Presentation of findings and recommendations to the Island County Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners

6. Critical Areas Ordinance policy and regulation revisions

   - *Estimated Completion Date:* April 7, 2014

   - *Essential Public Participation:* TAG review and feedback, website update, one public workshop in each planning area (planning areas include South Whidbey, Central Whidbey, North Whidbey and Camano), Island County Planning Commission hearing, Board of County Commissioners hearing

   - *Deliverable:* Presentation of staff report and draft regulations to the Island County Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners

7. SEPA analysis and Public Review Period

   - *Estimated Completion Date:* April 4, 2014 (*Notice of intent to adopt and 60-day public comment period will likely occur shortly after April 4th).

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- *Essential Public Participation*: Update website, send notice to adopt to State agencies, email notification
- *Deliverable*: SEPA checklist and threshold determination

8. Final Adoption

- Estimated Completion Date: July 21, 2014
- Essential Public Participation: Update website, Planning Commission Hearing, Board of County Commissioners Hearing
- Final Action: Formal adoption of updated FWHCA policies and regulations

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